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Lessons learned from the SRA preparation for IGD-TP

On request of the Executive Group, the members of the SRA working group that produced the SRA document by mid-2011 have compiled this note. The objective is to have a written document available for the Executive Group that can help them when setting up new working groups or more specifically when an update of the SRA will be needed. This document is not a list of individual views, but rather a synthesis of the most important issues.

What were the good things observed in preparation of the SRA?

- The representatives on the SRA group were well informed about their program needs and fairly well informed about other programs as well, which facilitated discussions.
- The atmosphere of discussions was generally constructive and positive.
- The different ways of thinking stimulated the discussions
- The members had a professional and goal-oriented way of working
- The members of the SRA had a mutual esteem which was necessary to understand different standpoints and to progress even during some hard discussions
- The number of representatives was adequate. A larger number would probably be less efficient.
- The Project Place tool allowed the sharing of documents amongst us

What were the difficulties/hurdles taken to draft the SRA?

- The different repository schedules, concepts, legislative and political situations and needs of the organizations made it challenging sometimes to find themes that are common to a reasonable number of organisations. However, the process of producing the SRA has taught us that the themes don't have to be common to all organisations. This challenging aspect took a lot of time, especially in trying to collectively assess priorities.
- Time constraints were a specific hurdle and this can be seen at different levels
 - On the one hand time constraints for deliverables set contractually or by the EG were sometimes hard, but on the other hand they also forced the representatives to remain goal-oriented and not to endlessly dispute on details.

- For the representatives these time constraints are set on top of the personal work load at her/his home organisation.

Which recommendations can be given for new working groups or in case an update of the SRA needs to be written?

General

- Spend enough time at the beginning to get a clear methodology and structure
- Appoint a chairman that takes a strong role in driving the process
- There might be an advantage in splitting the project development (context and technical/scientific aspects) from the editorial support to enhance the consistency of the document as a whole.
- Set clear schedule targets and outcome expectations
- As strict time schedules will probably be needed, they also need to be respected (e.g. late comments leads to delays) and they should be realistic

Specific in case of an update of the SRA

- Such an update should only be initiated if there are fundamental changes
- If an update is asked for, it is recommended to set-up a document hierarchy that shows the relationship between and levels of details of the different documents of the TP
- Developing a clear methodology and structure for the issues/inputs being evaluated is really necessary. The original table with all the issues, worked out by all representatives, could have used a bit more work to clearly define the R&D needs.
- If not exactly the same group can join, it would be desirable to have some members that produced the first SRA attending the new work group.

Conclusions

Probably the Executive Group can play an important role in assuring the success of a working group. First of all, it is recommended to clearly set the objectives, which are common at the level of the Technology Platform and might differ from the national objectives. Further on, clear schedule targets and outcome expectations need to be defined. Eventually, the choice of representatives is important as they should

- Have good knowledge of the topic at hand
- Preferably, have the responsibility about the topic at the national level
- Be open-minded and goal-oriented
- Be given the necessary time at her/his home organisations for the additional work load.