Define Maintenance Agreement

A “maintenance agreement” or MA is a crucial document that describes the ongoing processes that will be used to maintain the project's deliverables (not only the SDMX artefacts). The MA is required to end this project and to kick-off the maintenance process.

The MA will be mainly used by stakeholders who wish to know how to initiate a change in the domain's artefacts, or to contact someone for help; and by the Ownership Group and other working groups responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the domain.

The MA chiefly documents who is responsible for what (the maintenance information tables), and what can be done and when (the maintenance timelines). There may also be some helpful information on Code List usage.

The document should contain these sections:

- An introduction, explaining the purpose and background of the project, and purpose of the maintenance agreement itself;
- A description of the ownership group mandate, including the domain and sub-domains involved;
- A table of maintenance information broken down by Domain: maintenance agency, main stakeholder(s);
- Contact details for the maintenance agencies;
- Organisational Principles that detail the governance of the ownership group;
- Maintenance Agreement points on the SDMX (and other) guidelines that have been used;
- Technical Arrangements that detail the governance and mandate of the technical group;
- Maintenance Timelines. There should be one table per possible timeline, for example, a table for “Regular maintenance”; and a table for “Fast-track maintenance”. Each table should include:
  - The time frame, e.g. a month;
  - Who can initiate the change, e.g. Anybody; Maintenance Agency; Stakeholders;
  - A description of the timeline phase, e.g. Deadline for change requests; Implement changes; Testing;
  - Deliverable, e.g. Updated DSD matrix; Test reports;
  - A Document History;
- References section, especially with references to the SDMX Guidelines and other helpful information.

Two MA templates are attached. The first one, called "MaintenanceAgreement template.docx", provides a possible structure with no content, while the second template, called "MaintenanceAgreement example.docx", is a real-life example which contains the maintenance agreement for macro-economic statistics decided upon by the organizations involved in these data exchanges.

However, it is important to note that the structure as presented in the enclosed templates is not mandatory; depending on the size and scope of the statistical domain covered, the contents of the MA can vary. The management agreement is your central management tool and as such will be useful only if it covers all the maintenance aspects of your project. Even trivial points belong to the maintenance agreement! Indeed, putting things in writing avoids re-opening the same discussions over and over again, thus saving precious time.

"I find that by putting things in writing I can understand them and see them a little more objectively... For words are merely tools and if you use the right ones you can actually put even your life in order, if you don’t lie to yourself and use the wrong words." (Hunter S. THOMPSON)