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INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION
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Good Practices in Social Security

Good practice in operation since: 2008

International Agreements System - SIACI

A case of the National Institute of Social Security

Winner of the ISSA Good Practice Award – Americas competition 2009

National Institute of Social Security
Brazil

Summary

Until September 2008, the period for granting Social Welfare benefits between the MERCOSUR countries was very long, since the documents were sent by means of paper forms via conventional mail. For this reason, there was no automated control of the documentation sent or received, which prejudiced efficiency and compromised security, principally in regard of control and monitoring of the exchange of information, causing harm to those covered and generating high costs of managing the process.

To overcome this problem, an ICT system– International Agreement System in Social Security (SIACI) – was developed and implemented that enabled the exchange of information between all the member countries, by electronic means, with digital certification.

The system maintains the control of the protocol data related to the documents sent and received, to allow consultations and auditing of the transactions carried out whenever necessary, progressively reducing the utilization of paper documents as well as the periods for granting the benefits, improving the quality of the service supplied, without prejudice to the security and the confidentiality of the information, with the use of digital certification.

CRITERION 1:

What was the issue/problem/challenge addressed by your good practice?

The period needed to send requests and grant benefits between the countries involved in the International Agreements signed by Brazil, for the exchange of information about Social Welfare, was very long, given that the documents were sent by means of paper forms, using conventional mail companies. There is no automatic control of the documentation sent or received, which complicates the activities of those responsible for such procedures, principally in relation to the control and monitoring of the exchange of information, causing harm to beneficiaries covered by these International Agreements, and raising the cost of managing this process.

To solve this problem, an ICT system that allows the exchange of information between all the member countries by electronic means with Digital Certification was developed and implemented.

CRITERION 2:

What were the main objectives and the expected outcomes?

- To facilitate the transit of documents between the countries participating in international agreements.
- To conclude more rapidly claims by those covered.

- To exchange information in a flexible and secure manner.
- To avoid information being passed on paper.
- To consolidate the information in a single database, accessible by the countries in the agreements.
- To allow the simultaneous receipt of information by the countries in which the claimants have been living, to recognize their right to a benefit.

CRITERION 3:

What is the innovative approach/strategy followed to achieve the objectives?

- Combined specification of the system with the participation of the technical teams, both from Social Welfare and IT, of all the countries involved, and delegation to INSS for development and implementation.
- Bilingual system (in Spanish and Portuguese).
- Use of digital certification to validate the electronic forms transmitted.
- Use of Web service technology.

SIACI is made up of six products:

- data transmission/reception service using Web Services for delivery/receipt of forms in signed XML format (A3 certified);
- digital Certification: reusable component for validating digital signatures, based on the XMLDSig standard, utilizing security levels A1 and A3. In addition, for level A3, a Java Applet is used in the navigator that enables direct communication with the SmartCard/Token;
- data processing log service: storage of information related to processing the forms (transmission, receipt and reading) from all the countries, audited by a central body (OISS);
- online application, accessible via the intranet, to maintain the forms utilized by the users of the appropriate bodies in each country, duly authorized;
- online application, accessible via the intranet, to generate statistical lists about data protocols for transactions between the MERCOSUR countries.

CRITERION 4:**Have the resources and inputs been used in an optimal way to implement the practice?**

For development of the system, the National Institute of Social Security (Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social (INSS)) used the human and technical resources of Dataprev, the information technology company for Brazilian Social Welfare, without the need for external contractors. In addition, the system was specified, by joint agreement between the technical teams of the MERCOSUR countries, to use free software, in order not to incur costs of buying or licensing proprietary software.

CRITERION 5:**What impact/results have been achieved so far?**

- Increased flexibility in sending information between the countries, which enables benefits to be granted in a shorter period, facilitating recognition of the rights of those covered.
- The information exchanged is available for consultation at any time, in a database, allowing the extraction of statistics and various lists for monitoring and management of the process.
- The use of the system facilitates the work of those responsible for the process of exchange, analysis and award of benefit, in all the countries, increasing the reliability level of the information.
- Increased satisfaction both for contributors and for system users in the related bodies of the member countries.

CRITERION 6:**What lessons have been learned?**

The solution to a problem can never be achieved with an individual approach. Frontiers must only be used to mark out a region, and not to isolate or separate it. However organized the Social Welfare system in a country is: will its contributors benefit if they work in various countries? A solution must be implemented that takes everybody into account, and this is the main virtue of the SIACI.

CRITERION 7:**To what extent would your good practice be appropriate for replication by other social security institutions?**

The solution has initially been implemented in the bodies of Social Welfare of each one of the countries in MERCOSUR: INSS (Brazil), National Social Security Administration, (*Administración Nacional de la Seguridad Social (ANSES)*, Argentina), Social Insurance Institute, (*Instituto de Previsión Social, (IPS)*, Paraguay) and Social Insurance Bank, (*Banco de Previsión Social (BPS)*, Uruguay) and in the Ibero-American Social Security Organization - (*Organización Ibero-americana de Seguridad Social (OISS)*). In the future it will be extended to other countries with which Brazil has international agreements, such as Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Cape Verde, Chile and Luxemburg, as well as others who have shown an interest, such as Japan and Germany. In addition, utilizing this solution may also benefit the countries with which Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay maintain agreements.

To sum up, any country that needs to exchange information related to Social Welfare under the terms of international agreements can use the SIACI, for rapid, standardized and secure transmission of information, thereby obtaining a major benefit for their contributors.