3.7.2 Working Group on SINEX Format

General aspects

The IERS Working Group (WG) on SINEX Format was established in early 2011. The Charter of this WG is available on its website maintained at the IERS Central Bureau: https://www.iers.org/WGSINEX

Information related to the working group's activities are available there as well, such as agenda and minutes of the meetings held so far. The latest version of the SINEX format is v 2.02. A full format description is available at: https://www.iers.org/IERS/EN/Organization/AnalysisCoordinator/SinexFormat/sinex.html

The SINEX format is used by all four space-geodetic techniques to provide their products. In addition, the combined terrestrial reference frame (ITRF) is also provided in SINEX format. To ensure that all technique-specific needs are covered by the SINEX format, representatives from each Technique Service are members of the SINEX Working Group. Additionally, representatives of the IERS ITRF Combination Centers, the IERS Working Group on Co-location and Site Survey, and the IERS Convention Center are involved in the working group. The IERS Analysis Coordinator is an ex-officio member of the working group in order to cover the needs of the combined IERS products.

During the year 2017 there was no special meeting of the working group. All discussions on possible format revisions and additions have been done mainly in conjunction with the Unified Analysis Workshop, and partly via email or personal communication.

Unified Analysis Workshop

The Unified Analysis Workshop (UAW) 2017 (see Chapter 4) had a dedicated session on Standards, Conventions and Formats. The most important topic related to the SINEX format was the handling of 9-character station names in SINEX files as the IGS switched already to longer names for RINEX files. In the case of the SINEX format, a 1-to-1 adoption of the 9-character station names would exceed the 80-character line actually used in SINEX. The UAW finally recommended to first prepare example descriptions for the two suggested methods before deciding which kind of format change should be done for SINEX:

- Use an extra block in the SINEX file for file-internal referencing (long stations name versus the 4-character abbreviation). But these abbreviations might not be used unambiguously outside SINEX anymore.
- Extend the 4-character station name actually used in the SINEX file to 9 (or even 12) characters. This would mean that the restriction to 80 characters per line in SINEX is abandoned.

A final decision was not taken until the end of 2017.

Daniela Thaller on behalf of the SINEX WG