



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Digital Agenda: Turning government data into gold

Brussels, 12 December 2011 – The Commission has launched an Open Data Strategy for Europe, which is expected to deliver a €40 billion boost to the EU's economy each year. Europe's public administrations are sitting on a goldmine of unrealised economic potential: the large volumes of information collected by numerous public authorities and services. Member States such as the [United Kingdom](#) and [France](#) are already demonstrating this value. The strategy to lift performance EU-wide is three-fold: firstly the Commission will lead by example, opening its vaults of information to the public for free through a new data portal. Secondly, a level playing field for open data across the EU will be established. Finally, these new measures are backed by the €100 million which will be granted in 2011-2013 to fund research into improved data-handling technologies.

These actions position the EU as the global leader in the re-use of public sector information. They will boost the thriving industry that turns raw data into the material that hundreds of millions of ICT users depend on, for example smart phone apps, such as maps, real-time traffic and weather information, price comparison tools and more. Other leading beneficiaries will include journalists and academics.

Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes said: *"We are sending a strong signal to administrations today. Your data is worth more if you give it away. So start releasing it now: use this framework to join the other smart leaders who are already gaining from embracing open data. Taxpayers have already paid for this information, the least we can do is give it back to those who want to use it in new ways that help people and create jobs and growth."* [See Mrs Kroes video quote here.](#)

The Commission proposes to update the 2003 Directive on the re-use of public sector information by:

- Making it a general rule that all documents made accessible by public sector bodies can be re-used for any purpose, commercial or non-commercial, unless protected by third party copyright;
- Establishing the principle that public bodies should not be allowed to charge more than costs triggered by the individual request for data (marginal costs); in practice this means most data will be offered for free or virtually for free, unless duly justified.
- Making it compulsory to provide data in commonly-used, machine-readable formats, to ensure data can be effectively re-used.
- Introducing regulatory oversight to enforce these principles;
- Massively expanding the reach of the Directive to include libraries, museums and archives for the first time; the existing 2003 rules will apply to data from such institutions.

In addition, the Commission will make its own data public through a new "data portal", for which the Commission has already agreed the contract. This portal is currently in 'beta version' (development and testing phase) with an expected launch in spring 2012. In time this will serve as a single-access point for re-usable data from all EU institutions, bodies and agencies and national authorities.

Background

Open Data is general information that can be freely used, re-used and redistributed by anyone - either free or at marginal cost.

The Commission's proposal today would operate in full respect of rules on the treatment of personal data.

Studies conducted on behalf of the European Commission show that industry and citizens still face difficulties in finding and re-using public sector information. That is to say, open data is largely undeveloped in Europe.

In the important sector of geographical information, almost 80% of the respondents to Commission surveys say that they are prevented from making full use of information held by public bodies. Reasons include high fees, non-transparent rules and practices regarding re-use, a lack of transparency on what type of data is held and by whom, and exclusive licensing agreements which may have the effect of undermining competition.

In its '[Digital Agenda for Europe](#)' the Commission identified the re-use of public sector information, alongside fast and ultra fast internet access, as key to delivering a Digital Single Market.

[Directive 2003/98/EC on the re-use of public sector information](#) introduced a first set of measures to make it easier for businesses to obtain access and permission to re-use government-held information. It also brought about a process whereby governmental agencies lowered the fees charged for obtaining the information. Today's proposal extends access and widens the coverage of the Directive.

More information:

See [MEMO/11/891](#)

[European Commission Open Data website](#)

[Digital Agenda website](#)

[Neelie Kroes' website](#)

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