

4th B2G data sharing workshop - A private sector perspective

For years, cities and communities have been raising their voices about the importance of privately held data for their city management; to know where traffic flows are, where tourists come from or what consumer purchasing patterns are in certain parts of town. These data are regularly collected by companies, but for various reasons, are often not shared or not shared in a format useful for policy-making. Research shows that some approaches already exist to tap into such data, but they are often sub-optimal and do not scale up. A series of business-to-government (B2G) workshops are organised to discuss such approaches; the first three workshops have focused on the experiences of cities in accessing data, while today's workshop gave an insight to the perspective of the private sector.



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Welcoming close to 40 participants and moderated by Federica Bordelot from Eurocities, the workshop welcomed AirBnB, Mastercard and Telecom Italia to share their experience on B2G data sharing.

AirBnB, Patrick Robinson, Director of Public Policy EMEA

AirBnB has over 4 million hosts, 800 million all-time guest arrivals and has generated some USD 110 billion in total host earnings. The company is active in almost all countries, dealing with tens of thousands of municipalities. They deal with (i) personal data (subject to GDPR), (ii) aggregate data (for sharing purposes) and (iii) financial data (for reporting and purposes). Their main challenge is the incoherence between applying EU, national, regional and municipal legislation, as to what can and should be shared with cities. They also have the challenge of respecting the obligations of a publicly

traded company, with regard to sharing data that could be relevant for potential investors (commercial sensitivity). In addition, Airbnb claims that cities often have diverging needs for the types, frequency and models of data, which is resource consuming (not scalable). Finally, they claim that a level playing field should be ensured, whereby similar companies would need to share similar data under similar conditions. AirBnB has recently started working with Eurostat to share some data relevant for tourism. The AirBnB Cityportal has recently been created to provide an interface for cities where they can retrieve centralised data related to accommodation. Another similar portal was created for Law Enforcement Agencies.

Mastercard, Rita Okcuoglu, Lead for Europe & MEA @ Global Cities, City Possible Business Development and Partnerships

Mastercard, a Fintech company owns 22,000 banks, has over 2 bn account holders and 44 million merchant locations. Over the past 10 years they have been working more closely with cities they operate in; this has led to the creation of the The City Possible Framework. In this network, they have worked with various cities to co-develop innovative urban solutions; (i) in London, Mastercard is providing GeoInsights as a platform and data license, which allows London to assess the recovery of different shopping districts in the wake of the pandemic; (ii) in Dublin, they provide up-to-date insights on the city's economic performance and on the impact of specific events to help drive policy decisions on the local retail industry; (iii) while in Amsterdam, Mastercard provides data and insights related to economic recovery, crowd management and tourism. In the US, New York has benefitted from aggregated transaction data to have insight into tax revenue implications by industry or geography throughout the city, while data collected in downtown areas of Pennsylvania helped make the case for investment in these areas.

TelecomItalia, Giuseppe Morabito, Marketing product manager

TelecomItalia (TIM) is the largest telecom company in Italy, with over 33% of the market share and some 30 million SIM cards in use, generating billions of data. The JRC has recently published a report on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on mobility and the economy; in Italy, the study relied on telecom data. Another example for data sharing is the Venice Smart Control Room, whereby the data provided by TIM allows the city to improve its mobility and security by creating a 'single-point-of truth' for Venice to help monitoring traffic flows and violations. Other win-win collaborations are currently under development.

The subsequent discussion highlighted some possible ways forward. For sharing data which could be subject to the GDPR, one could e.g. connect the permits of a renting location (provided by the city) to the renting platforms that provide critical data. This could be arranged by introducing Trusted Third Parties that would monitor all appointments that cities make with house owners and will protect (commercial) interests around data from renting platforms. The companies have focused on data made available as a result of legal obligation (data reporting), whereas the concept of voluntary data sharing (see Data Governance Act) was less discussed. It is also unclear how the data sharing agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between cities and companies are drafted; how the conditions are agreed upon.

Companies indicated the need for more clarity on the legislative framework. In one case it was underlined that a company will only share certain business-sensitive data when there is a legal basis to do so; the current regulatory framework is perceived as not providing enough basis to do so even for enforcement of (local) rules and regulations. This brings forward the question of how to make sure

that data which is essential for the public interest, for example for enforcement of rules and regulations, will be shared with governments in the future. More legal clarity should come along with the Data Governance and Data Act.

Interoperability between different datasets used by cities is another challenge to be addressed. Overall, companies are willing to work with governments to share data, but are concerned about their capacity to manage data sharing, and to respond to all requests. Companies first of all look for a method to share data with relative ease, rather than having to agree on terms and conditions, specific requirements for data, different portals or APIs etc., for each particular situation or (local) government. It may require technical but also operational and organisational instruments to make sure that businesses can share the data with ease and that governments receive the data they require.

The 5th and final workshop, scheduled for 07/07/2021, will focus on the conclusions and put forward a number of recommendations.

Please register to participate

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mailto:Cnect-C3@europa.ec.eu

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