

[Business-to-government data sharing: Questions and answers](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/faqs/business-government-data-sharing-questions-and-answers) **(<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/faqs/business-government-data-sharing-questions-and-answers>)**

The report on business-to-government data sharing focused on how to foster the use of privately held data in the public sector, and issued recommendations to help shape the Commission's policy.

Data (<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/taxonomy/term/69>)

Business-to-government (B2G) data sharing

What is B2G data sharing?

B2G data sharing is a collaboration in which a company or other private organisation makes available its data (or insights) to the public sector (local, regional, national or EU) for a public interest purpose. This collaboration should take place in a secure, privacy-preserving, sustainable and ethical way. Sharing data in this way can bring many benefits. For example, data on traffic flows can give insights into mobility challenges and the economic development of cities. Data from retailers, such as supermarkets, can help official statistical institutes establish a more accurate and comprehensive price index in a more efficient way. And, Data from sensors in cities can provide insights to predict tourist inflows or estimate pollution, and exchanges of data on transportation and cargo can ensure near-frictionless border control.

Why is B2G data sharing important?

B2G data sharing has an enormous potential to help resolve many societal challenges, ranging from climate change through education and urban planning to the production of more accurate official statistics. It can help move to an evidence-driven model for policymaking, leading to better, more cost-efficient, fair and inclusive decisions. Leveraging private sector data also has an important role to play in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and meeting the EU's commitment to become the world's first climate neutral continent by 2050.

Governments already hold huge amounts of data. Why are they interested in privately-held data?

Every day, the private sector produces a wealth of data in order to manufacture all sorts of goods, offer a wide range of services and make sure their businesses run smoothly. Certain types of data, such as behavioural data— mobile phone records, GPS location or social media data— are largely in the hands of the private sector. This data can be crucial in helping to better understand population movements, lifestyle changes, disease patterns and habits. It can also help to resolve societal challenges and to contribute to the general wellbeing of the population. Furthermore, the private sector uses public infrastructures extensively, such as using private vehicles on public roads and railways. The public sector could benefit from private sector data on such public infrastructure use in order to improve public investment planning and management.

Why is B2G data sharing currently not happening on a large scale?

Firstly, the value of data as an asset is not yet fully recognised. Secondly, public bodies frequently lack the know-how to identify valuable datasets and the capacity to process them. And, there are currently not enough incentives for businesses to share data with the public sector for the common good. There are a number of other barriers, including a lack of professionals in the field, differences in legalisation between Member States, trust and security issues, ethical questions and the limited interoperability of datasets, amongst others. As a result, B2G data sharing can be a lengthy, uncertain process.

What can the EU do?

The EU can help stimulate B2G data sharing by creating a common framework to enable the development of fast, responsible and sustainable B2G data sharing. It can also support activities that help overcome the barriers, such as putting in place the technical infrastructure to share data along with ethical guidelines, and raising awareness of the potential of B2G data sharing. The EU could also consider funding opportunities. For example, supporting pilot B2G data-sharing partnerships in sandboxes for specific societal challenges.

What are the priority areas in which the EU should develop B2G data sharing?

Key areas in which B2G data sharing can have a large impact include making health services more efficient and improving diagnosis, reacting faster in emergencies and natural or humanitarian disasters, enabling data access to public research institutes for the development of ethical artificial intelligence services, saving energy for a more sustainable society, improving mobility and creating smarter cities. Citizens— who produce valuable data and are the ultimate beneficiaries of B2G data sharing— should be involved in the choice of societal challenges that should be addressed through B2G data-sharing collaborations.

How does B2G data sharing work in practice?

Huge amounts of data are produced every day by our smart phones and other connected devices. For example through social media, digital transactions, GPS devices and other sensors. This data can reveal information that is critical to understanding patterns of societal behaviour and activities. In turn, these insights allow both the private and public sector to take better decisions. For example, through mobile operator data, urgent evacuation operations can be organised more efficiently and those that remain in the affected area can be better assisted. In certain cases, the public sector has access to the data itself, for example via data-sharing platforms including application programming interfaces. In others, the public sector body does not access the data itself, but can still benefit from insights through performing queries on a database held by the business or a trusted third party.

What's in it for the companies?

Companies can benefit from B2G data-sharing partnerships in various ways. Firstly, the company may benefit itself from the insights created through the data-sharing collaboration. Furthermore, the company's data is not necessarily shared for free but may be against a fair compensation. In addition, contributing to the common good can be part of a company's corporate social responsibility programme, and may be beneficial to its reputation. Other motivations include tax incentives, improved government services or public-recognition programmes to enhance a company's reputation.

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