Common European data spaces for agriculture and mobility

On 2 December 2021, following the first call for proposals of the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL), the European Commission held two information workshops on the Agriculture and Mobility data spaces. Both workshops provided participants with an opportunity to learn more about the call, to share ideas on data spaces and network with potential consortium partners.

Following the announcement on 17 November 2021 of the DIGITAL call for proposals on preparatory actions for common European data spaces, the Commission held an information day on the topics of agriculture and mobility. Over 200 participants (from across the EU and in both public and private sectors) discussed issues such as interoperability, data sovereignty, standards, business case development, cross-sector data sharing and sustainability.

Such data spaces will ensure that more data becomes available for use in our economy and society, while keeping companies and individuals who generate data in control. The data spaces are key deliverables of the European strategy for data, which includes a range of horizontal measures and investments to enable the data economy. These include the regulation on European data governance (the Data Governance Act proposed by the Commission in November 2020), and the Data Act (foreseen for 2022) to create trust and fairness in data access and reuse.

DIGITAL will also support an open-source cloud-to-edge middleware infrastructure benefitting all data spaces, and a Data Spaces Support Centre that will ensure interoperability between data spaces by developing an alignment through the European Data Spaces Technical Framework.

A common European agricultural data space

The objective of the agricultural data space is to develop a secure and trusted data space to allow the farming sector to share and access data, improving economic and environmental performance in the field. Production data, supplemented by publicly held data, presents new opportunities for monitoring and optimising the use of natural resources, and contributes to achieving the objectives of the Green Deal and the Common Agricultural Policy.
The information workshop on a common European agricultural data space opened with presentations from the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology (DG CONNECT) and the Directorate-General for Agriculture & Rural Development (DG AGRI) on the EU’s green and digital ambitions as well as the European Data Strategy.

Major European initiatives, associations, and alliances like IDSA, FNSEA, COPA COGECA, CEMA, iSHARE, Fraunhofer ISST, Agdatahub, AIOTI, T-Kartor Geospatial AB, and Universitat de Lleida summarised their positions towards data sharing in the sector. Presenters recalled the IDS Reference Architecture and the need for a common framework for data spaces. They shared their vision of a sustainable and industry quality-matching interoperability structure to connect online platforms through harmonised technologies. While referring to the Design Principles for Data Spaces, they noted the importance of data sovereignty, security, and trustworthiness. One challenge is the creation of digital identity for farms to gain trust and consent. Presenters covered the latest developments of modelling agricultural data that is both sustainable and economic, and takes into account complex agriculture biogeochemical structures. Finally, in a practical assessment of a live data hub, the EU Code of Conduct on agricultural data sharing by contractual agreement and the obstacles to overcome for wider acceptance were raised.

A common European mobility data space

The information workshop on a common European mobility data space, hosted jointly by the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) and the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), aimed to prepare the constituency for the upcoming DIGITAL call, take stock of existing initiatives, and have an open discussion on issues surrounding the mobility data space.

The EU’s vision for the green and digital transformation is for a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector by 2050. This will rely on data availability, accessibility and exchange. However, challenges remain in handling data, the absence of a cross-border market for data, the lack of data collection and sharing obligations and agreements, and notably incompatible tools and systems, often with different standards. The mobility data space – a key deliverable of both the Data Strategy and the Mobility Strategy – is needed to facilitate data access, pooling, and sharing from existing and future transport databases and platforms.

In a first panel on the challenges and opportunities of the European mobility data space, speakers from IDSA, ACEA, Acatech, ERTICO, VTT and iSHARE presented numerous diverse initiatives at local and national level, including use cases and their specific challenges. The importance of business models and the need to address issues arising from B2B and B2G data exchanges, while considering competition between companies and the viability of intermediaries, were key points during the discussion. A challenge is interoperability, not only within and between sectors but also across borders.

In a second panel, existing mobility data sharing ecosystems and initiatives were introduced by speakers from NAPCORE, DTLF and the EU Agency for Railways. In particular, insights were shared on
some of the challenges facing around 30 initiatives in the regulatory sphere, each with their own conditions for data governance, infrastructure or sharing conditions. There is an increasing need to combine data from these different initiatives but also at cross-sector level.

**Calls for proposals on two preparatory actions** for common European data spaces for agriculture (€2 million) and mobility (€1 million) are now open and will close on 22 February 2022. A call for a deployment action (€8 million) will follow in the third quarter of 2022 for the mobility sector. For the agricultural sector, such an action is under consideration for 2023. Presentations from both workshops are available at the above event webpages, and event reports will follow.

**Downloads**

Agriculture data space workshop event report

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