Open data

The European Commission's policies focus on generating value for the economy and society through the reuse of public sector information.

In the EU, the public sector is one of the most data-intensive sectors. Public sector bodies produce, collect and pay for vast amounts of data, known as public sector information (PSI), or government data. Examples include geographical information, statistics, weather data, data from publicly funded researched projects, and digitised books from libraries. ‘Open' public data refers to PSI that can be readily and widely accessed and reused, sometimes under non-restrictive conditions.

The EU open data market is a key building block of the overall EU data economy. According to the study supporting the impact assessment carried out to provide input to the review of the PSI Directive, the total direct economic value of PSI is expected to increase from a baseline of €52 billion in 2018 for the EU27 + UK, to €194 billion in 2030.

Open data policy is linked with open research data policy since both address publicly funded data or their data results from public funding. Therefore, this data should be openly accessible and reuseable.

Allowing public sector data to be reused for other purposes, including commercial ones, can:

- stimulate economic growth and spur innovation: public data has significant potential for re-use in new products and services;
• help address societal challenges with the development of innovative solutions such as in healthcare or in transport;
• enhance evidence-based policymaking and increase efficiency in public administrations;
• become a critical asset for the development of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), which require the processing of vast amounts of high-quality data;
• foster the participation of citizens in political and social life and increase the transparency of government.

In 2003, the European Commission set up a legal framework to allow the reuse of public sector information through the ‘PSI Directive’ (Directive 2003/98/EC), subsequently revised by Directive 2013/37/EU. This Directive is built around two pillars of the internal market: transparency and fair competition. It focuses on the economic aspects of the re-use of information.

The European Commission performed a review of the PSI Directive, on the basis of a public online consultation, fulfilling the periodic review obligation foreseen in the Directive. Building on the results of this consultation, together with an extensive evaluation of the Directive and an impact assessment, the European Commission proposed a revision of the PSI Directive as part of a package of measures aiming to facilitate the creation of a common data space in the EU.

As a result of this process, the new Directive (EU) 2019/1024 on open data and the reuse of PSI was adopted and published on 20 June 2019, and should be implemented by Member States by 16 July 2021.

The new Directive introduces the concept of high-value datasets, defined as data that is associated with important benefits for the society and economy when reused. High-value data sets are subject to a separate set of rules ensuring their availability free of charge, in machine readable formats, provided via application programming interfaces (APIs) and, where relevant, as bulk download.

The thematic scope of high-value datasets is provided in an annex to the Directive. Within these limits, and with the assistance of a Committee composed of representatives of EU countries, the Commission will adopt a list of specific high-value datasets by way of an implementing act, following an impact assessment.

In addition to the Open Data Directive, a number of non-legislative measures support the opening up of public sector information, such as the Public Sector Information expert group (PSI Group).

Since 2015, the European Commission has funded the European data portal through the Connecting Europe Facility. The data portal is a pan-European repository of public sector information open for reuse in the EU. This portal also features a training centre on how to reuse open data and a database of success stories from European and international re-users.

The Commission leads by example, with a solid legal framework for the re-use of its own data and a Communication on open data (COM (2011) 882), complemented by an EU Open Data Portal where re-users can find datasets from the Commission, as well as from the other EU institutions and agencies.

European Data Portal
Communication on open data (COM (2011) 882)
Commission decision on the reuse of Commission documents
Follow the latest progress and learn more about getting involved.
Commission welcomes political agreement to boost data sharing and support European data spaces

The Commission welcomes the political agreement reached between the European Parliament and EU Member States on a European Data Governance
PRESS RELEASE | 16 July 2021
New rules on Open data and reuse of public sector information start to apply

Tomorrow, 17 July 2021, will mark the deadline for Member States to transpose the revised Directive on open data and reuse of public sector information into national law. The updated rules will stimulate the development of innovative solutions such as mobility apps, increase transparency by opening the access to publicly funded research data, and support new technologies, including artificial intelligence.

PRESS RELEASE | 03 June 2021
Commission seeks views on data sharing

The European Commission has launched an open public consultation on the announced Data Act aiming to create a fair data economy by ensuring access to and use of data. The consultation seeks to gather views from citizens, businesses, online platforms, academics, civil society, administrations and all interested parties. It is open until 3 September.

PRESS RELEASE | 23 January 2019
EU negotiators agree on new rules for sharing of public sector data

Negotiators from the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the Commission have reached an agreement on a revised directive that will facilitate the availability and re-use of public sector data.

Browse Open data
Data is everywhere and growing at an unprecedented pace. The Commission has developed a European data strategy to help us unlock its benefits.
Open data portals facilitate access to and reuse of public sector information. They can help encourage cross-border use of reusable data in Europe.

Non-legislative measures to facilitate reuse

The European Commission works to overcome the barriers limiting the reuse of public sector information through non-legislative measures.

Implementation of the Public Sector Information Directive

The Commission has created a detailed list on how different countries have implemented the Public Sector Information (PSI) directive

From the Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive to the Open Data Directive

The reuse of open data can help grow the European economy, develop artificial intelligence and aid work to overcome societal challenges.

See Also

Guidance on private sector data sharing

The Commission is looking to facilitate the sharing of data held by companies to improve public services and guide policy decisions.

Source URL: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/policies/open-data