

Summary report of the public consultation on the European strategy for data

The public consultation on the European strategy for data ran from 19 February to 31 May 2020. This summary report takes stock of the contributions and presents preliminary trends that emerge from them, focusing on quantitative aspects.

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Objective of the online consultation

The objective of the consultation was to collect views/opinions on the European strategy for data and to obtain input for several planned initiatives related to the access to and re-use of data, including notably a legislative framework on common European data spaces and an implementing act on a list of high-value datasets.

The European strategy for data aims to create a single market for data that will boost Europe's global competitiveness and data sovereignty. Common European data spaces will ensure that more data becomes available for use in the economy and society, while keeping companies and individuals who generate the data in control.

The questions in this online consultation covered:

1. General questions on the data strategy (section 1)
2. Specific questions on data governance (section 2.1), including standardisation, secondary use of data, data donation and data intermediaries
3. Specific questions on high-value datasets (section 2.2), and
4. Specific questions on the (self-/co-) regulatory context of cloud computing (section 2.3).

Respondents could contribute to all or some of the sections or questions, and had the possibility to submit position papers. Few respondents replied to all questions, hence the sample size varies between and within sections. For this reason, for each topic, the percentage indicated is always the share of the actual respondents to the specific section or question.

Who replied to the consultation?

The consultation targeted all interested stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including governments, local authorities, commercial and non-commercial organisations, experts, academics and citizens.

In total, 806 contributions were received, of which 338 were on behalf of a company or business organisation / association, 201 from citizens (all EU citizens), 98 on behalf of academic / research institutions, and 57 from public authorities. Consumers' voices were represented by 7 respondents, and 54 respondents were non-governmental organisations (including 2 environmental organisations).

Amongst the 219 companies / business organisations, 43.4% were small and medium-sized enterprises. Overall, 92.2% of the replies came from the EU-27. Very few respondents indicated whether their organisation had a local, regional, national or international scope.

Around 230 position papers were submitted, either in addition to questionnaire answers (210) or as stand-alone contributions (20). These papers are being analysed and will be taken into account together with the statistical analysis of the questionnaire replies in the upcoming full synopsis report of the consultation activities. This summary report focuses on the replies to the online questionnaire.

Preliminary findings

Section 1: General questions on the data strategy

Almost all respondents (97.2%) confirmed the need for an overarching data strategy to enable the digital transformation of society, and 91.5% agreed that 'More data should be available for the common good, for example for improving mobility, delivering personalised medicine, reducing energy consumption and making our society greener.'

In support of the Commission's human-centric approach, 84.6% of respondents considered that it should be made easier for individuals to give access to existing data held on them, in line with the GDPR.

Data literacy is an issue for 83.5% of all respondents, and more than 65.6% of the 488 respondents to the specific question experienced problems in recruiting data professionals during the last 2 years.

Almost 80% of the 512 respondents to the question have encountered difficulties in using data from other companies. These difficulties relate to technical aspects (data interoperability and transfer mechanisms), denied data access, and prohibitive prices or other conditions considered unfair or prohibitive.

A very large share of respondents (87.7%) supported the idea that the EU should make major investments in technologies and infrastructures that enhance data access and use, while giving individuals as well as public and private organisations full control over the data they generate. Around the same proportion of respondents considered that the development of common European data spaces should be supported by the EU in strategic industrial sectors and domains of public interest.

Section 2.1: Specific questions on data governance

Some 772 stakeholders responded to the section on data governance, of which 90% considered that data governance mechanisms are needed to capture the enormous potential of data, in particular for cross-sector data use.

There is a general consensus (91% of the 554 respondents to the question) that standardisation is necessary to improve interoperability and ultimately data re-use across sectors. A very small share of all respondents (1.6%) considered that EU or national government bodies should take no role in standardisation. Of the 772 respondents to the whole section, an important share of the stakeholders thought national government bodies should provide necessary funding to open standards (50%) and for testing (41,9%), and 39,8% considered that they should take an active role in the prioritisation and coordination of standardisation needs, creation and updates.

As regards making a broader range of sensitive data available for R&I purposes for the public interest, more than three quarters of respondents to the question considered that public authorities should do more, especially mentioning the anonymisation of specific data for concrete use-cases, and the clarification of the legal rules.

A large proportion of respondents (69.7% of the 742 respondents to the question) considered that law and technology should enable citizens to make available their data for the public interest (data altruism), without any direct reward (83.3% of those that made a choice between answer 'yes' and answer 'no'). Citizens would be willing to make such data available, especially for health-related research and for aspects relating to the locality they live in (e.g. mobility, environment). More than 60% of all respondents considered that there are no sufficient tools and mechanisms to 'donate' their data. On the mechanisms to support 'data altruism', opinions were quite divided, but respondents tended to favour a European approach to obtaining consent, in compliance with the GDPR.

Almost 60% of respondents to this section considered that emerging novel intermediaries, such as 'data marketplaces' or 'data brokers', are useful enablers to the data economy, while almost 22% don't know or remain neutral to the question.

Section 2.2: Specific questions on high-value datasets

Some 761 stakeholders contributed to the section on high-value datasets, out of which 82.2% considered that the establishment of a list of high-value datasets, to be made available free of charge, without restrictions and via application program interfaces (APIs), is a good way to ensure that public sector data has a positive impact on the EU's economy and society. This figure increases to 90% when considering public authorities only.

Stakeholders considered the availability of datasets under uniform conditions across the entire EU as a relevant or very relevant factor to be taken into account when defining high-value datasets (almost

84% of respondents to the question), as well as the dataset's availability via an application programming interface / API (78%), and the dataset's availability free of charge (75%).

Stakeholders considered other arrangements relevant to improve the re-usability of specific high-value datasets, such as standardised formats of data and metadata (87%), or licensing and other terms applicable to re-use (80%).

The vast majority of respondents supported the idea that an EU programme may provide funding to enhance the availability and re-use of high-value datasets across Europe, especially those to improve the quality (e.g. machine-readability) and interoperability of the data /metadata (87%), and to a lesser extent funding aiming to engage with re-users (70%).

Section 2.3: Specific questions on the (self-/co-) regulatory context of cloud computing

Some 617 stakeholders responded to the section on the self-/co-regulatory context of cloud computing. 54% of these respondents are users, while 20% represent providers. Most responding users use only traditional cloud services (59%), with 40% using both edge and cloud services. A bit more than half of the responding providers (51%) indicated to provide edge services next to cloud services.

61% of the stakeholders answered that the cloud market currently offers the technological solutions that businesses need to grow and innovate. However, 48% of the 444 respondents answered that they have experienced problems in the functioning of the cloud market, and 68% of the 449 respondents perceive risks for the future. The most common problem experienced is vendor lock-in, whereas security concerns are seen as the most prominent risk for the future.

75% of users indicated to have flexibility to procure other cloud services. For the 25% of users having difficulties switching to other cloud services, legal/contractual barriers are the most important reason (29%). Security barriers come second (21%), followed by technical barriers (20%) and economic/cost barriers (17%).

64% of the 377 users responding to the question indicated to be aware of self-regulatory schemes on cloud, mostly on security (32%) and data protection (31%). Users generally believe that market awareness of such schemes could rise with the creation of a uniform way of showing compliance with the different schemes.

59% of the responding users and 64% of the responding providers believe that self-regulation is appropriate to identify best practices to implement EU legislation.

When asked whether it would be beneficial if applicable rules for cloud and edge would be bundled and corresponding information made available by the European Commission, a majority of respondents (66% of the 470 respondents to the question) answered yes, while only a small minority answered no (5%).

Next steps

This online consultation is part of a broader stakeholder consultation process that will contribute to the preparation of several data initiatives. These include a legislative framework on the common European data spaces, expected in 2020, and an implementing act on a list of high-value datasets, expected in 2021.

A full synopsis report for each of these initiatives will provide overall conclusions on these issues, with a qualitative analysis covering their respective online questionnaire replies, as well as the analysis of position papers received from stakeholders and the results of various workshops and public hearings.

Contributions

- Contributions to the consultation are available for download.
- Additional position papers sent in the framework of the online consultation are available for download as a zip file.

Disclaimer: the views presented in this factual summary report are not the views of the European Commission but of the stakeholders that participated in this open public consultation.

See also

Stakeholders Dialogue on Common European Data Spaces

Related topics

Data

Related content

Online consultation – a European Strategy for data

Consultation | 19 February 2020

The Commission would like to hear your views on its European strategy for data.

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