

**MINUTES OF THE
13TH MEETING OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR INFORMATION GROUP
LUXEMBOURG, 24 JUNE 2010**

1. Welcome and introduction by the chairman

The Chairman, Mr Javier Hernández-Ros, Head of Access to Information Unit, welcomed the members of the Public Sector Information (PSI) Group and other participants. He presented the agenda of the 13th PSI Group meeting and invited the participants to give their comments on it. The meeting dealt with recent PSI re-use developments, PSI legislation in the Member States, open data/PSI community perspectives and legal aspects of PSI re-use.

2. The Digital Agenda for Europe and PSI

He then presented the Digital Agenda for Europe, which includes as one of its first key actions, the revision of the Directive 2003/98/EC on the re-use of public sector information (PSI Directive). He updated the participants with recent governmental and non-governmental PSI re-use initiatives/policies in the EU which aim at easy and easier access to government data for re-use, greater accountability and transparency of public bodies and better government services. He said that momentum is undoubtedly growing, but progress is still limited to only a few Member States and the barriers which limit the re-use of PSI still remain. According to a few success stories (e.g. UK's www.data.gov.uk), it can be concluded that the keys to success are a clear political support and leadership, and the cooperation between public and private sectors. He wrapped-up his presentation by presenting the Commission's work programme for 2010 as concerns PSI re-use, with a focus on the revision of the PSI Directive.

PSI re-use developments in the Member States

3. www.data.gov.uk

Mr Jim Wretham presented the UK's web portal www.data.gov.uk where government data is made available for re-use. A starting point of the portal was a strong political support and leadership which was crucial for the success. He said that the UK's new Prime Minister supports this initiative and instructed the government departments to free up more data sets as part of their Transparency Agenda and announced the plans for re-stating the Right to Data legislation. Moreover, a Public Sector Transparency Board will be responsible for open data standards across the public sector and for publishing further data sets on the basis of public demand.

He said that the two most important aspects of the PSI portal are data sets which are interesting to the developers and easy to use licences. He continued by presenting key statistics of the portal: 3461 data sets made available for re-use (16 June 2010), 43 000 visitors of the portal in the last two weeks, 57 "apps" submitted and available in the portal.

He then presented the PSI portal of the UK's national mapping agency www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/opendata. The portal runs along side with the www.data.gov.uk portal and makes mapping data and geographic information available for commercial and non-commercial re-use. He said that mapping data is the single most important PSI.

He wrapped up his presentation by naming three challenges awaiting the UK government as concerns the PSI re-use: making more data sets available for re-use, new interoperable licence and definition of the "public task" in the context of government bodies involved in the production and reuse of PSI.

4. Finnish apps competition and open data guidebook

Mr Antti Eskola presented the "Apps for Finland Competition" www.apps4finland.fi and the Open Data Guidebook.

The competition started on 14 April 2010 and will close on 7 October 2010 when the award ceremony will be organised. The contesters are asked to develop an idea or a functional web application by using at least one open data source provided by a public sector organization. The developers may use any data available and are asked to enter its details into www.opengov.fi so others are able to use it as well. There will be together 15 different awards in 3 categories.

The Finnish Open Government Data Guidebook was commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Transportation and Communications and is part of the Ministry's work developing a national information strategy and efforts to enhance the use of public sector information. It is a free Guidebook on how to open public sector data. It describes ecosystems and presents building blocks for open data policies and principles. The guide presents some proposals for the process of opening the Finnish public sector data resources for re-use free of charge: creating the basic infrastructure for open data, revising the legislation and ensuring national management of the process, making internal practices of the administration support open data, diffusing the benefits of open public sector data, making Finland an international pioneer and enabling the necessary mindset for change. The authors are researchers of social media and eDemocracy.

5. Developments in Denmark

Mr Frederik Siegumfeldt presented a new draft Bill on Public Administration Files, Open Data Innovation Strategy (ODIS) and current ODIS activities.

He firstly presented the new draft bill which establishes the right to access documents kept by administrative authorities but does not apply to data bases. It anticipates

among other things a “Public Access Portal” with access to legislation, administrative provisions, parliamentary bills and the Ombudsman’s statements. It also proposes that public authorities provide information on their web sites about the expenditures and activities of the Ministers.

Secondly he presented the ODIS strategy which was launched in 2009 and is run by the National IT and Telecom Agency (NITA) under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The objectives of the strategy are to stimulate innovation and growth, provide better public service and information, and strengthen transparency, participation and democracy. They are facing important challenges, such as lack of awareness in the public administration, tight budgets, technical issues, etc. NITA raises awareness through activities, exchange of good practices, dialogue, and provides guidelines, tools and advice. They bring together and encourage collaboration between reusers and public sector bodies.

He then continued by presenting the PSI re-use competition and the Danish Open Data Play Conference. He wrapped up his presentation by presenting their future activities which will include identifying and publishing science data, developing and releasing technical tools to help data publishing and re-use, producing guidelines for public authorities, etc.

6. Developments in France

The awareness of the importance of the re-use of PSI is raising in France, with PSI now a subject of many seminars and conferences. Stakeholders are more and more aware of its social and economic potential. The French representatives gave a few examples of businesses based on PSI and referred to several experimental projects being launched to establish what PSI is available and what can be done with it.

The political support for PSI re-use is also growing. A few local authorities have set up web sites where PSI is made available for re-use. At national level a consultative body/advisory board was established to make recommendations about PSI re-use. What is interesting about it is that it will serve both the public and private sector (reusers).

At the moment they are working on the national PSI portal. It is aimed at reusers and their needs. The main idea behind the portal is the interaction with the reusers. They are also working on a standard licence, data catalogues which will be incorporated in the portal in the later phase, etc. The portal should be operational in 2011. Apart from this, standard licences for PSI that can be re-used at no cost are being developed. These licences tend to enhance the legal security and improve the predictability in terms of re-use conditions. Pictograms symbolising the re-use conditions will also be created and will be used on public internet sites and on the PSI portal.

7. Discussion

During the discussion questions regarding the registration into the web sites and licensing were raised. Registering enables monitoring of the progress of the web site (statistic data on web site visits and visitors), while licensing enables PSI holders to legally pursue possible misuse and provides for quality of PSI.

Questions about charging policies were also raised. The opinions varied from supporting the marginal cost policies which some consider would enable wider re-use among many reusers and “reasonable charging” policies which in some eyes are the insurance for the continuous quality of the data sets and their availability for reuse.

PSI legislation in the Member States

8. The Netherlands

Mr Kees Keuzenkamp gave a short state of play on PSI reuse in the Netherlands. He focused on legislation and open data initiatives.

He started his presentation by saying that there is not enough political leadership and support for PSI re-use. There are however many discussions going on regarding the economic and social potential of PSI re-use.

He then continued with presenting the PSI re-use legislation in the Netherlands. They have drafted a new Freedom of Information Act which anticipates restrictions on copyright for government data, easier access to government data and marginal cost pricing. He also presented three legal disputes in connection to PSI re-use.

He ended his presentation by showing some of the data sets made available for re-use. A national PSI re-use portal is in preparation.

9. Sweden

The Swedish representative Mr Gustaf Johnssen gave a presentation on the national PSI re-use legislation.

He said that the Swedish PSI re-use legislation is complex and it combines several different legal instruments. While one set of legislation gives “general” rules on information collection and dissemination, access to information and the right to re-use, the other one brings more “practical” rules on processing of requests, conditions for re-use, non-discrimination and prohibition of exclusive agreements. These “practical” rules will be covered by a new PSI Act as of 1 July 2010.

Perspectives

10. Open-data/PSI community perspectives

Mr Ton Zijlstra gave a presentation on PSI re-use from the perspective of open data enthusiasts/developers.

He started his presentation by saying that there is a sense of urgency among the developers. This community has been waiting for a long time for governments to open up the data sets. Now when the progress has been made the appetites are growing even more.

In general there are two main opinions on how to open government data. One group believes that it has to be done as soon as possible and the other group calls for caution in terms of technical and legal issues.

He emphasised that when deciding about which open data policy, governments need to keep all stakeholders on their minds. The same applies to data sets. All data sets should be made available and it is up to developers to decide which ones are interesting and which are not. He also emphasised that clear PSI re-use legalisation is necessary as well as political support.

He continued that complexity of governments' open data projects/strategies is another concern in the eyes of the developers' community. Communicating with the developers' community and taking into account their needs is in his opinion crucial and would save a lot of time and bring quicker and better results.

While looking for the PSI re-use business models and economic indicators for measuring PSI re-use we should not look only for big market players but also small private stories (he gave as an example Google and Apple companies which started as "garage" companies).

11. Legal aspects of public sector information network – LAPSI

Prof Marco Ricolfi presented the European Thematic Network about the Legal Aspects of Public Sector Information, the so called LAPSI project.

He started his presentation by explaining that LAPSI, as part of the ICT policy support program, is intended to:

- directly contribute to the Digital agenda for Europe strategy of the European Commission;
- build a network of organizations aiming at being the main European point of reference for legal issues related to PSI;
- address areas that due to legal obstacles would not develop, or would develop at a slower pace, if left to the current incentive structures of monopolistic operators.

The main objective of the LAPSI project is to become a European thematic network to discuss the legal issues related to the access and re-use of PSI in Europe. In order to maximize the understanding of the role of legal norms in maintaining and creating barriers to access and re-use, and to seek to minimize or remove such barriers, the LAPSI project will provide a forum for considering the various legal challenges and opportunities related to PSI.

In order to achieve its intended results, the Network started to organize several different activities, which will eventually include thematic seminars, internal conferences, etc.

12. AOB

The chairman, Mr. Javier Hernández-Ros, thanked the participants for their presence and contributions.

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