

INTERGEO 2016 UPDATE

OPEN DATA IS TRENDING – BUT HAS STILL TO LEAVE THE STARTING BLOCKS

ACTIVITIES SURROUNDING OPEN DATA ARE FLOURISHING, FROM THE MUNICIPAL RIGHT UP TO THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL LEVEL, YET WE ARE STILL ONLY PICKING THE LOW-HANGING FRUIT, SAYS DANIEL KATZER. HE LOOKS AT HOW INTERGEO 2016 WILL SHOWCASE DEVELOPMENTS THAT SIGNPOST THE WAY AHEAD

There has been heated and vigorous debate about Open Data for years. While potential users have been calling for open and cost-free access to the latest, high-quality data – and preferably right across Europe – those who possess it have rather dragged their feet in an effort to retain data they consider their own.

Nowadays, there is no doubt that businesses and citizens want to use administrative data from local right up to European level. And things are beginning to happen. For a start, authorities now adhere to certain standards in storing their data in universally transferable formats. They also use metadata to ensure it can be readily found when required. More importantly, a service mentality has emerged along with the conviction that open data resources form the backbone of thriving business models.

Growing infrastructure

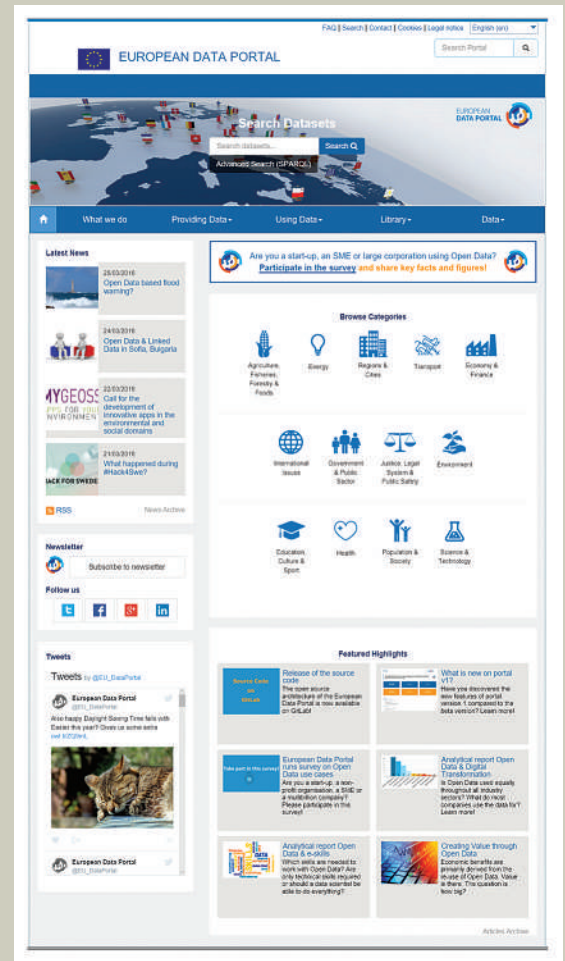
Against this background, Open Data portals are springing up across Europe, including the European Data Portal that went online (www.europeandataportal.eu) in Autumn 2015. Its aim is to gather key datasets from across the continent and make them accessible from a single source.

The result is an enormous open data infrastructure that covers a surprising variety of topics – from a Web Map Service (WMS) that shows livestock holding districts in Spain to an XML file that locates pharmacies in Bremen. "In total, some 400,000 datasets have been incorporated into the European Data Portal since the launch of version 1.0 this February", says Marc Kleemann from con terra GmbH, the company in charge of harvesting data for the portal.

Dr. Wassilios Kazakos from Disy Informationssysteme GmbH in Karlsruhe thoroughly welcomes moves that encourage the discovery of open data and the building of bridges to geodata infrastructures. "The first step has been taken," he says, but is less happy about where the next moves will take us.

Sticking to what's there

In particular, Kazakos criticises the strong focus on existing availability. "People are collecting data that is there for the taking rather than considering what the market actually needs," he remarks. He describes gathering these data sets as "harvesting low-hanging fruit", adding that no regulations are in place to guarantee potential users any particular data quality or topicality.



The European Data Portal harvests the metadata of public sector information available on public data portals across European countries. Information regarding the provision of data and the benefits of re-using data is also included.

For example, while data sets relating to geological formations are hardly likely to go out of date any time soon, the locations of pharmacies in Bremen are subject to frequent change. Thus, if someone wants to launch an app with opening times, emergency cover and, perhaps, any special offers, they need access to data that is carefully organised and constantly updated. Extending and harmonizing such databases at national and European level would also require a Herculean effort.

Next steps

It is quite clear that open data will be pushed forward as part of open government initiatives. Plenty of evidence to this effect will be on show at INTERGEO 2016 in Hamburg by con terra GmbH and Disy Informationssysteme GmbH, who will be showcasing their projects relating to public open data portals.



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