

32nd SESSION

Open data for better public services

Recommendation 398 (2017)¹

1. The Council of Europe Internet Governance Strategy 2016-2019 underlines the importance of public access to information and data for strengthening democracy and improving governance at all levels.
2. An increasing number of European cities are demonstrating that the release of local authority datasets into the public domain can empower citizens to develop new tools and applications for improving governance and the quality of life in towns and cities and can stimulate a variety of social, cultural, democratic and environmental initiatives.
3. Local authority data also has economic potential. The release of local authority datasets can be useful for local businesses and can serve to stimulate economic innovation and growth.
4. Democracy at local level can be enhanced by open data increasing transparency in the decision-making process and contributing to better accountability of local governments, as well serving as a preventive tool in the fight against corruption by providing data on governmental expenditures and performances.
5. The Congress therefore,
 - a. convinced that open data has the power to transform Europe's cities into more open, democratic, transparent institutions;
 - b. aware that a 'digital divide' remains between those who have access to and are able to use such data and those who do not;
 - c. Bearing in mind:
 - i. Congress Resolution 290 and Recommendation 274 (2009) on E-democracy: opportunities and risks for local authorities;
 - ii. Congress Resolution 389 (2015) on New forms of local governance;
 - iii. the Convention on Access to Official Documents (CETS No. 205);
 - iv. the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);
 - v. The Council of Europe Internet Governance Strategy 2016-2019;
 - d. Calls on the Committee of Ministers to:
 - i. recognise the importance of open data for improving local democracy by increasing transparency, accountability and citizen participation;

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 30 March 2017, 3rd sitting (see Document [CG32\(2017\)15](#), rapporteur: Manuela BORA, Italy (R, SOC))

- ii. provide guidelines to the member States on adopting open data standards and strategies and introducing forms of data licensing such as the Creative Commons licenses;
- iii. address the risk of a digital gap in open data participation caused by a divide between those who have access and benefit from open data initiatives and those who do not;
- e. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers call upon the governments of its member States to:
 - i. create more awareness of the use of open data and highlight the advantages of sharing open data with citizens and civil society and other organisations, by organising public events, conferences and workshops on the use of open data;
 - ii. support local open data initiatives, through the provision of necessary information and government data, and by ensuring that open data initiatives by local authorities are supported through legislative or regulatory frameworks;
 - iii. provide guidelines and formulate policies for the re-use of public sector information and introduce national standards for licensing data sets;
 - iv. sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (CETS No. 205) and the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No.207), if they have not yet done so.