

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 398 (2017)¹ Open data for better public services

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 have 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, which serve to increase transparency in the decision-making process and contribute to better accountability of local governments. They also act as a preventive tool in the fight against corruption by providing data on government expenditure and performance.

5. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe therefore,

a. Convinced that open data have the power to make Europe's cities more open, democratic, transparent;

b. Aware that a "digital divide" remains between those who have access to (and are able to use) such data and those for whom this is not the case;

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 Council of Europe 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;

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 licences;

iii. address the risk of a "digital divide" in open data participation caused by a gap between those who have access to 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, 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 the necessary information and public 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 reuse of public sector information and introduce national standards for licensing datasets;

iv. sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents and the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority, if they have not yet done so.

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