

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 417 (2017)¹ Open data for better public services

1. The rapid and ongoing rise in the quality and quantity of digital data and information managed and generated by local authorities is providing valuable new opportunities for them to improve the quality of local life by sharing the data and releasing them into the public domain. An increasing number of cities are demonstrating that there is huge and untapped potential in this data for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and interest groups when they are released into the public domain in a reusable format.

2. In many sectors, including transport, public health, use of cultural facilities, environment quality and energy use, public authority datasets are beginning to be used by civil society groups, often working in partnership with the local authority, to develop new tools and applications for promoting good governance in towns and cities. The benefits can be improved governance, improved quality of life and cities that are ecological and smart.

3. Open data offer greater transparency and not only provide citizens with the information to understand what their local governments do, but also empower them to contribute to the decision-making process of their local governments. They can lead to more participation in policy making, thereby achieving more intelligent, tailored and responsive policies, and allow for greater political accountability.

4. The reuse of public sector information can also stimulate social and economic growth by enabling third parties to create innovative products and services. According to recent estimates, open data could increase the global gross domestic product (GDP) by more than 1%.

5. In the light of the above, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe:

a. 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);

b. Convinced that open data are and will be a powerful tool for improving local governance, with the power to transform our cities into more open, democratic, transparent spaces;

c. Convinced that the use of open data by cities in the future is necessary in order to keep up with the new generation of computer literate youth;

d. Aware of the challenges that remain in providing access to open data in easy-to-use formats;

e. Conscious of the need to respect privacy and data protection laws and policies.

6. Calls upon local authorities in the Council of Europe member States to:

a. Develop strategies to make the information datasets of local authorities available in machine-readable formats, with a view to their reuse by citizens on computers and mobile devices;

b. Take measures to ensure that the entire population of a city has access to open data and benefits from open data initiatives, dialogues between government and citizens and public facilities delivered by means of open data, and actively participates in these activities;

c. Encourage citizens to make use of open data by publishing information and organising public meetings and programmes to stimulate the use of open data in order to provide added societal value;

d. Create partnerships with civil society groups and other organisations that can help to provide training and capacity building in the reuse of open data and the organisation of open data activities;

e. By means of public events, workshops and consultations, consult citizens and civil society for input on how best to make the data more responsive to their interests and concerns in order to understand which data should be generated and provided;

f. Ensure that data protection and privacy laws and policies are strictly adhered to when data are made available to the public.

7. Commits itself to:

a. Supporting and encouraging local authorities to reuse public information and make datasets available to the public in order to improve their public service delivery, strengthen local democracy and stimulate social, cultural and environmental initiatives;

b. Encouraging cities to go beyond the release of open datasets towards making local data infrastructures more responsive to the interests, needs and concerns of their citizens;

c. Assisting cities to gather feedback from citizens, civil society groups and other stakeholders by organising public events, workshops and consultations in order to understand

the interests of the different user groups and to inform data publication priorities;

8. Asks national associations of local and regional authorities to encourage their national governments to 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).