

Neelie Kroes

Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda

Data is the new gold

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Opening Remarks, Press Conference on Open Data Strategy

Brussels, 12th December 2011

Good morning everybody it is a pleasure to be here for such a positive announcement.

Just as oil was likened to black gold, data takes on a new importance and value in the digital age.

Web entrepreneurs assemble and sell content and applications and advertising, based on data. With those efforts they make our lives more convenient and they keep authorities accountable.

They live on data, and increasingly so do the rest of us.

Today, I am proud to present an Open Data package that can drastically increase the possibilities for those web entrepreneurs; the opportunities of businesses, journalists, academics and all citizens, in fact, to generate new and rich content.

Today's package will radically shake-up how the EU institutions and most public authorities in Europe share their data.

Public data, generated by all administrations in Europe will become automatically re-usable. It will feed new applications and services.

It will change the way administrations are working – for the good of the administrations and the people they serve.

This is a victory for those of us who believe that the best way to get value from data is to give it away.

It is also, by the way, a vote of confidence in the people of Europe. We trust you will do good things with this data – data you already paid for.

And it is recognition for the many heroes who have shown us already what is possible through open data.

Heroes like the governments of UK, Denmark and France, to people like Tim Berners-Lee and organisations like the Open Knowledge Foundation.

Today we are taking their ideas and proposing them as the rule rather than the exception.

We are putting the Commission and Europe at the top of the class.

We calculate that public sector information already generates €32 billion of economic activity each year. This package would more than double that - – to around €70 billion.

That is not coffee money. That is, indeed, a badly needed boost to our economy.

The UK, Denmark and France - who last week opened "data.gouv.fr" – are doing excellent work.

When the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority (DECA) lowered fees, the number of users of its information went up by ten thousand percent (10,000%)! This generated four times the tax revenue lost from fees charged for data.

Another example is "openspending.org" one of thousands of examples of how citizens can learn about how their taxes and spent, or how big their national debt is.

Next, I want to mention *WheelMap* – I met the founder of this application last week. He won an accessibility award, and rightly so. It is amazing. *Wheelmap* combines public data, and user-supplied data, to give disabled people a clear idea of the best and worst places for them. It helps build the case for greater accessibility.

All of you too can benefit as journalists, as The Guardian and others have shown through data journalism.

Before I go to questions, I want to remind you of the two strands of today's package:

First, the Commission is opening up its vault starting in 2012

During the first half of 2012 the Commission's own data will be available free, open and easily usable on computers from a single portal. We will be pushing the other agencies and institutions to join us.

We are practicing what we preach. We will dare the Member States to improve on us

Second we are proposing to harmonise the way Member States will make their public data re-usable.

This should make it possible for business to gain the benefits of the Single Market. This is a revolution.

Instead of needing complicated authorisations, you will be automatically allowed to re-use the public data you need.

Instead of high charges for this data, fees will be limited to marginal costs.

This will boost business opportunities very substantially.

We are also proposing to include very valuable cultural material, from libraries, archives and museum.

In these cases, re-use will be optional and not free of charge unless the museum chooses to the free option. This exception will give protection the cultural institutions which have particular commercial vulnerability.

The revised Directive will need approval from the Parliament and Council.

But the real message I want to send to public authorities today is: **don't wait for this package to become law.**

You can give your data away now – and generate revenue and jobs, and even save money from the better information and decisions that will flow.

I also say to private businesses: open their data to generate new services.

In short, ladies and gentlemen, my message today is that data is gold. We have a huge goldmine in public administration. Let's start mining it.

Start releasing your data now. Join the future. Join the growth.