Data in the EU: Commission steps up efforts to increase availability and boost healthcare data sharing

Brussels, 25 April 2018

Today, the European Commission is putting forward a set of measures to increase the availability of data in the EU, building on previous initiatives to boost the free flow of non-personal data in the Digital Single Market.

Data-driven innovation is a key enabler of market growth, job creation, particularly for SMEs and startups, and the development of new technologies. It allows citizens to easily access and manage their health data, and allows public authorities to use data better in research, prevention and health system reforms.

Commission Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** said: *"The Digital Single Market is rapidly taking shape; but without data, we will not make the most of artificial intelligence, high-performance computing and other technological advances. These technologies can help us to improve healthcare and education, transport networks and make energy savings: this is what the smart use of data is all about. Our proposal will free up more public sector data for re-use, including for commercial purposes, driving down the cost of access to data and helping us to create a common data space in the EU that will stimulate our growth."*

Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel added: "***With today's Communication we are pursuing an ambitious plan, the Digital Single Market Strategy, to make sure that we are in the best possible position to help our businesses, provide top-class research, and protect EU citizens. Citizens and businesses will have access to better products and services as more and more data become available for data-driven innovation."*

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis **Andriukaitis** said**:** *"Our proposals make use of the full potential of digital technologies to improve healthcare and medical research. This will lead to easier access to health data, which will lead to better disease prevention and patient-centred care, rapid responses to pandemic threats, and improved treatments."*

Today's proposals build on the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) (GDPR), which will enter into application as of 25 May 2018. **They will ensure:**

- **Better access to and reusability of public sector data:** A revised law on Public Sector Information covers data held by public undertakings in transport and utilities sectors. The new rules limit the exceptions that allow public bodies to charge more than the marginal costs of data dissemination for the reuse of their data. They also facilitate the reusability of open research data resulting from public funding, and oblige Member States to develop open access policies. Finally, the new rules require – where applicable – technical solutions like Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to provide real-time access to data.

- **Scientific data sharing in 2018:** A [new set of recommendations](#) address the policy and technological changes since the last Commission proposal on access to and preservation of scientific information. They offer guidance on implementing open access policies in line with open science objectives, research data and data management, the creation of a [European Open Science Cloud](#), and text and data-mining. They also highlight the importance of incentives, rewards, skills and metrics appropriate for the new era of networked research.

- **Private sector data sharing in business-to-business and business-to-governments contexts:** A new Communication entitled "Towards a common European data space" provides guidance for businesses operating in the EU on the legal and technical principles that should govern data sharing collaboration in the private sector.

- **Securing citizens' healthcare data while fostering European cooperation:** The Commission is today setting out a plan of action that puts citizens first when it comes to data on citizens' health: by securing citizens' access to their health data and introducing the possibility to share their data across borders; by using larger data sets to enable more personalised diagnoses and medical treatment, and better anticipate epidemics; and by promoting appropriate digital tools, allowing public authorities to better use health data for research and for health system reforms.

Today's proposal also covers the interoperability of electronic health records as well as a mechanism for voluntary coordination in sharing data – including [genomic data](#) – for disease prevention and research.

Next steps

The Commission is calling on the European Parliament and the Council to adopt today's proposals for revised rules on Public Sector Information. In addition, the Commission will also set up a high-level round-table to discuss private sector data sharing in the business-to-governmentcontext during the second half of 2018 and the first half of 2019.

Background

The value of the European data economy was €300 billion in 2016. If the right legislative and policy measures are put in place, this value could grow to up to €739 billion by 2020, [4% of the EU's GDP](#).

In the EU, the reuse of data generated by public sector bodies (e.g. legal, traffic, meteorological and financial etc.) for commercial and non-commercial purposes is governed by [Directive 2003/98/EC on the re-use of public sector information](#). In 2012, the Commission adopted a policy package containing a [series of measures to improve access to scientific information](#) in Europe, including the Recommendation on access to and preservation of scientific information that resulted from public funding. Between January and June 2017, the Commission held a [stakeholder dialogue](#) on the [Communication on Building a European data economy](#), finding a strong support for non-regulatory measures to maximise and organise access to and reuse of data in business-to-business contexts. On the digital transformation of [healthcare](#), a [public consultation](#) finishing in October 2017 investigated the need for policy measures promoting digital innovation for better healthcare in Europe.

Today's initiatives complement the [framework for the free flow of non-personal data](#) in the EU presented by the Commission in September 2017 and which still needs to be agreed *by the European Parliament and Member States.*

For More Information

- [Q&A on data](#)

- [Factsheet](#)

- [Q&A on eHealth](#)

- [Communication on data and other useful links](#)

- [eHealth useful links](#)

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