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GEodata Openness Initiative for Development and Economic Advancement in Romania

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Interviews on open geodata

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ABSTRACT:		
<p>The main purpose of the “Interviews on open geodata” report is to present and attempt to interpret the results of the open geodata survey realized by the GEOIDEA.RO team and disseminated within the geodata Romanian private sector. However, to offer context for the survey and its interpretation, the report also highlights some outlines related to open data in the business environment internationally.</p> <p>With regard to the international context, the report points out significant events, projects and recent studies that focus on comprehending and quantifying the impact of the open public geodata on economies.</p>		
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Purpose of the document*

The main objective of the GEOIDEA.RO project is to improve the scientific basis for open geodata model adoption in Romania. It is our belief that publishing governmental geodata in Romania over the Internet, under an open license and in a reusable format can strengthen citizen engagement and yield new innovative businesses, bringing substantial social and economic gains.

The main purpose of the “Interviews on open geodata” report is to present and attempt to interpret the results of the open geodata survey realized by the GEOIDEA.RO team and disseminated within the geodata Romanian private sector. However, to offer context for the survey and its interpretation, the report also highlights some outlines related to open data in the business environment.

1.2 *Abbreviations*

ICT PSP	The Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme
INSPIRE	Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community
OGP	Open Government Partnership
PSI	Public Sector Information
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium

2. OUTLINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT ON OPEN GEODATA IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

The impact of the open data movement with respect to the financial point of view is manifold. One could focus on the perspective of the private sector, or on the business model of the national agencies and institutions and their financial sustainability, or furthermore, on a broader perspective on the national economy.

“Open Data is the new oil” is a well-known and invoked quote by ex-commissioner for the European Digital Agenda, Ms. Neelie Kroes¹. The phrase was part of the From Crisis of Trust to Open Governing speech held in March, 2012 in Bratislava with the occasion of the presentation of the Action Plan of the Slovak Republic in favour of Open Democracy: “That's why I say that data is the new oil for the digital age. How many other ways could stimulate a market worth 70 billion euros a year, without spending big budgets? Not many, I'd say.”² The syntagm of *new oil* has circled the globe and has expanded even further. As Michael Bauer³, Data Wrangler with the Open Knowledge at the time, pointed out, open data represents more than “just oil” due to its unlimited renewal capacity.⁴

As it has been highlighted in the GEOIDEA.RO report on “Open Geodata Existing Strategies”, one of the main two reasons for the open data movement development is the financial innovation through building a new business model based on open data. As a predicted consequence, countries that have adopted and implemented the open data principles in various public services and administrations have been quick to launch market analysis, studies and research projects in analysing and quantifying effects in the business environment. The same applies for regional initiatives, such as the one in the European Union, which commissioned several studies in the attempt to understand the financial impact at regional scale. However, the matter has proven increasingly difficult to undertake, and in the last 5 years, the open data community has actively been involved in organising and participating at a considerable amount of organized conferences, events, *meetups*⁵ that are meant to include people involved in the private sector, in order to capture their requirements, ideas, opinions and such.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2010-2014/kroes/ Last accessed June 2015

² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-149_en.htm Last accessed June 2015

³ <https://okfn.org/search/?q=bauer> Last accessed June 2015

⁴ <http://www.epsiplatform.eu/content/epsi-platform-interviews-michael-bauer> Last accessed June 2015

⁵ A meetup represents an informal meeting of a group based on a common interest. The term is derived from the social online networking portal that facilitates the offline meetings: meetup.com

In European context, a significant collaborative project lead by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has been initiated in 2014, Share-PSI 2.0. The project is co-funded by the European Commission under the ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP)⁶ as part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, with the main objective to develop, consolidate and maintain an European network for exchange of experience and ideas around implementing open data policies in the public sector. Through their activities, the project is aiming to identify what works and what doesn't work as the public sector across Europe implements open data policies in the context of the revised PSI Directive. Within the project's activities, there are recurring themes such as: the impact of relative studies and indices, the importance of gathering user feedback, the publishers' desire to know who is using their data and for what, and that the demand from citizens is not for data but for services that may be built on that data. Romania is an active partner through the implication of the West University of Timișoara⁷ that organised the third share-psi 2.0 workshop, Open data priorities and engagement – identifying data sets for publications in March 2015. The Timișoara workshop comprised a series of facilitated discussions with only a small number of presentation-based sessions. The GEOIDEA.RO team participated at the event by proposing to facilitate a discussion session named *Free our Maps* dedicated to the importance of releasing public geodata over the Internet, under an open license and in a reusable format. In order for the session to be accepted as a study case, the team prepared a paper that the organizers analysed. After being accepted, the paper was published on the workshop website⁸. The discussions and conclusions resulted in a best practice worksheet were published on the workshop's webpage⁹.

In December 2014, Share-PSI 2.0 organized the Encouraging Open Data usage by commercial developers. Relevant discussions were held and a full report, along with papers and slides are available online¹⁰.

On the quest of identifying the effects of the open data initiative on the financial environment, five business models applicable to open data have been identified:

1. Suppliers (ex: DWStatist¹¹ is a private company in Germany with a number of approximate 2600 employees who gather, collect, process, present and analyse statistical open public data, thus building a profitable service)

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/cip/ict-ppsp/index_en.htm Last accessed June 2015

⁷ www.uvt.ro/ Last accessed June 2015

⁸ <http://www.w3.org/2013/Share-PSI/workshop/Timisoara/agenda> Last accessed June 2015

⁹ http://www.w3.org/2013/Share-PSI/wiki/Best_Practices/Free_our_maps Last accessed June 2015

¹⁰ <http://www.w3.org/2013/share-psi/workshop/lisbon/report> Last accessed June 2015

2. Aggregators (ex: Data Publica¹² is a French start-up that provides data services such as : data on demand, data as a service, data augmentation, customized dashboards and a unique and free public data directory rich of more than 15 800 datasets from public and private editors)
3. Developers (ex: Periscope¹³ is a “a socially-conscious data visualization firm that helps companies and organizations promote information transparency and public awareness.”)
4. Enrichers (ex: Waze¹⁴ is a start-up developed in Israel, funded by early-stage American venture capital firm Bluerun Ventures. The company acquired by Google in 2013¹⁵, offers a free service allows car drivers to navigate to their desired address using real time traffic updates by other users of the service.)
5. Enablers (ex: OpenDataSoft¹⁶ is a French company founded in 2011 that develops a turnkey SaaS platform designed for smart and easy transformation of all types of data into innovative services (APIs, data visualizations, real-time monitoring).

Related to the roles that governments can have related to open data, studies reveal:

1. Suppliers
2. Leader
3. Catalyst
4. User

There is a crucial aspect that the private sector must understand and comply with when considering open public data. *Freely available data* does not mean *free to use data*. Incorporating open data into services and products requires cleaning, processing, combining data sets in order to add value and thus, create a new profitable product. On the other hand, public administrations need to understand and comply with certain realities from the private sector. Opening up public data will not automatically mean that it will rapidly be transformed into an added value product from the market. Not all data is relevant at a certain moment in time. Context is important as well.

¹¹ <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Homepage.html> Last accessed June 2015

¹² <http://www.data-publica.com/> Last accessed June 2015

¹³ <http://www.periscopic.com/do-good> Last accessed June 2015

¹⁴ <https://www.waze.com/> Last accessed June 2015

¹⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/jun/11/google-buys-waze-maps-billion> Last accessed June 2015

¹⁶ <https://www.opendatasoft.com/> Last accessed June 2015

Furthermore, there are more requirements related to open data in order for the public sector to take it into consideration (Deloitte study, 2012):

- Data availability
- Known degree of completeness and accuracy
- Consistency (spatial and temporal)
- Sufficiently up to date for use case
- Known source of production/collection
- Sufficiently fine-grained
- Confidence in future supply and update

Related to what datasets are important for the business sector, Marc de Vries in his presentation at the Share-PSI 2.0 workshop Encouraging Open Data usage by commercial developers, highlighted: “Governments already know which the valuable datasets to be published are. They charge for them!”

The recent report of Andrew Stott (Stott, 2014) identifies data that is most important for economic growth. According to Mr. Stott, one of the most relevant type of data is the geospatial data. As an example, he gives the Ordnance Survey report of a £100 billion a year of economic activity for a production cost of around £100 million a year. Alongside, the report gives other examples of valuable datasets, such as: weather data, road & transport data, and official registries such as company registries. Important to mention is that the report highlights one essential characteristics of geospatial data – that it gives the possibility of referencing all other datasets with some type of location information. This conclusion has also been reached by the GEOIDEA.RO team at the Share-PSI 2.0 discussion session Free our Maps, and moving forward proposing a close collaboration with the INSPIRE community.

A new turn has been identified in an attempt to close the gap between private and public sector in the last year, namely creating partnerships and joint collaborative programs. A pertinent example is the partnership between Waze and 10 public agencies¹⁷: Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Barcelona (Spain and the Government of Catalonia), Jakarta (Indonesia), Tel Aviv (Israel), San Jose (Costa Rica), Boston (USA), State of Florida (USA), State of Utah (USA), Los Angeles County (USA), The New York Police Department (NYPD) (USA). Within the Connected Citizen Program, Waze will build tools to open a two-way communication between the company and the local governments of these cities. Waze will send governments its real-time data and governments will channel official information from road sensors, planned construction, marathons, or other relevant data that the city has prior knowledge.

¹⁷ <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/waze-launches-connected-citizens-program-debuts-inaugural-w10-277867931.html> Last accessed June 2015

3. INTERVIEWS ON OPEN GEODATA. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey was dedicated to all Romanian companies, not only those that have shown interest in the open data initiative over time, as we wanted to capture as much of the private sector's opinion as possible. Despite the GEOIDEA.RO team's efforts in disseminating the survey, we have received a limited number of answers. The responsive companies have as main activity domain software development/IT, with different various, such as engineering, cartography, land survey or forestry, with some out of the range, such as law firms and background screening businesses. Part of the survey was completed on paper at the OGP Club meeting OGP and Business Environment¹⁸.

Regarding the respondents, we have selected contact persons from management or development teams.

The survey was written in Romanian, but for the purpose of this report we have translated all questions and included them in annex 1.

The survey was composed of 16 questions, out of which 4 with an informative character. We would like to mention that we imposed no constrain for our responders, may it be related to turnover or number of employees, or any other quantifiers. As a consequence, the dimensions of the private companies, employees-wise, varied from 1 to 3500.

The remaining questions were divided into two main segments. The first was intended to test the level of awareness within companies related to the concept of open data, including legislative aspects, and the second segment was dedicated to the usage of (open) public data within the company. Within the survey, we have also made modest attempts to financially quantify effects of (open) public data.

With regard to the first segment of the survey, analysing the graph (Figure1), it is obvious that there is a high level of awareness related to the concept of open data, with a percentage of more than 89% of positive answers. However, it must be stated that the question is not conclusive for depth of understanding; it merely probes the familiarity of the responded with the concept. This observation is relevant for the entire survey. As the questions turn focus on aspects separated by regional extent, the level of knowledge decreases. The graph shows a larger knowledge and thus, interest, in what happens at European level, whether it regards legislation or more hands-on evidence of the open data initiative such as the official open public data portals (data.gov.uk). As a conclusion regarding the level of awareness related to the first segment of the survey, we can state that even though, a high percentage of the respondents are familiar with the open data concept, it seems they are mostly aware of the initiative at the European level. We can discuss that this is a consequence of the

¹⁸ <http://ogp.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/rezumat-Club-30-sept-2014.pdf> Last accessed June 2015

late birth of the open data initiative in Romania. Even though, Romania signed the Open Government Partnership in 2012, as it has been shown in the Existing Open Data strategies report, Romania did not respect its first year commitments. Furthermore, as discussed in report on Contradictory, Overlapping or Inefficient Geodata Related Legislation, it is the OGP engagement and not PSI legislation that significantly moved forward the initiative in Romania. Therefore, the country’s initiative becomes relevant with 2013. The efforts to raise awareness related to the work Romania is investing in the open data movement are considerable and the results become more and more relevant. As discussed in report for barriers and drivers for Open Data policy in Romania, there are numerous events organised by the civil society (Coaliția pentru Date Deschise¹⁹) and by public authorities. Relevant to mention is the OGP Club²⁰. This is an informal group organised by the Department for Online Services and Design (DSOD) in February 2014 to develop and maintain the communication with the civil society, private sector, and academic sector by organising thematic meetings and discussions. In 2014, the OGP Club came together 10 times, with various topics, such as: Open Access, Open Contracting, Online Communication in Administration, OGP and the business sector and so on. All minutes are available online²¹.

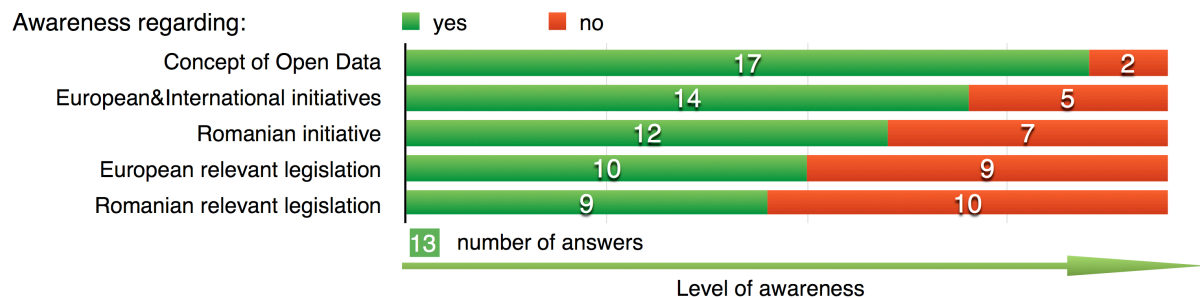


Figure. 1 Chart of the survey responses on the first segment

The second segment of the survey addressed the matter of usage and, cautiously, matters related to financial aspects (Figure2). We have introduced 2 more types of answers: “I don’t know” and “I don’t want to answer”. Form a first analysis of the graph, one can see that there is reluctance in disclosing information related to financial aspects of the company. With regard to public data usage, a percentage of over 89% offered a positive answer. However, the percentage that considers a future

¹⁹ <http://www.fundatia.ro/coali%C8%9Bia-pentru-date-deschise> Last accessed June 2015.

²⁰ <http://ogp.gov.ro/club-ogp/> Last accessed June 2015.

²¹ <http://ogp.gov.ro/club-ogp/arihiva/> Last accessed June 2015.

use of open public data is lower, of almost 79%. As a general conclusion on the second segment of the survey, we can state that even though the usage of public data is high, the interest in using open public data is high and the conviction that publishing government geodata in Romania over the Internet, under an open license and in a reusable format would be an advantage, the financial strings that come attached have not been thoroughly analysed within the responding companies or the people completing the survey in the name of the company.

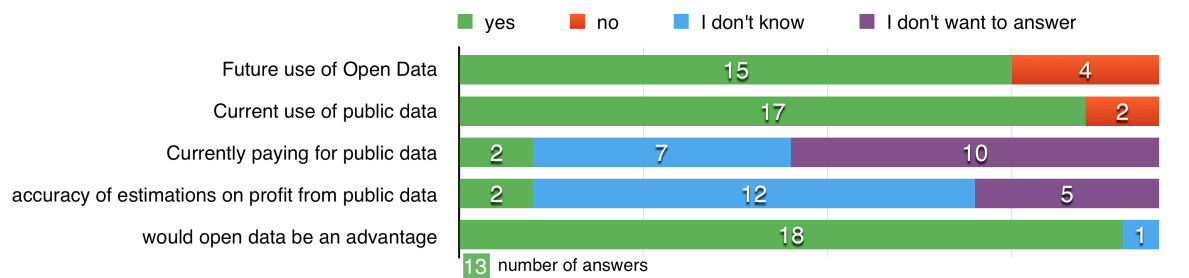


Figure. 2 Chart of the survey responses on the second segment

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5. ANNEX OPEN DATA SURVEY FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The survey was designed for Romanian companies or for companies that have business on the Romanian territory. As a consequence, the questions have been drafted in the Romanian language. We present in the current annex the original questions and their translation.

Romanian original questions	English translation
1 Numele companiei	Name of company
2 Domeniul principal de activitate	Main activity domain
3 Numărul aproximativ de angajați ai companiei	Approximate number of employees
4 Persona de contact/ date de contact	Contact person credentials
5 Sunteți familiarizat cu conceptul de date publice deschise / open data/public sector information?	Are you familiarized with the concept of open data/public sector information?
6 Sunteți familiarizat cu activitățile la nivel european și internațional de deschidere a datelor publice, de exemplu portalele guvernamentale al Statelor Unite data.gov. sau cel al Marii Britanii data.gov.uk?	Are you familiarized with European and international initiatives of releasing public data as open data, such as the open data portals of United States data.gov or the UK open data portal, data.gov.uk ?
7 Sunteți familiarizat cu portalul datelor publice deschise al Guvernului României, data.gov.ro?	Are you familiarized with the open data portal of the Romanian Government, data.gov.ro ?
8 Sunteți familiarizat cu legislația privind datele publice deschise în Uniune Europeană?	Are you familiarized with the European Union legislation regarding open data ?
9 Dar în România?	What about the legislation in Romania?
10 Au existat în cadrul companiei dumneavoastră discuții referitoare la dezvoltarea unor servicii/produse pe baza datelor deschise?	Are you aware of discussions within your company related to developing new products/services based on open data?
11 Utilizați în cadrul companiei dumneavoastră date publice?	Does your company use public data in its operations?
12 Cunoașteți procentul din cifra de afaceri a companiei dumneavoastră investit anual în achiziționarea de date publice?	Do you know the percentage of the turnover that your company annually invests in acquiring public data?
13 Indicați procentul din cifra de afaceri a companiei dumneavoastră investit anual în achiziționarea de date publice	Please indicate the percentage of the turnover that your company annually invests in acquiring public data
14 Profitul obținut din utilizarea datelor publice este cel de regulă prevăzut?	Does the profit obtained from using public data is the one foreseen?
15 Considerați că distribuirea datelor publice într-un format accesabil și ușor reutilizabil în mod automat, via Internet, sub o licență liberă ar reprezenta un avantaj pentru compania dumneavoastră?	Do you consider that publishing government geodata in Romania over the Internet, under an open license and in a reusable format would be an advantage for your company?

16 Acceptați să primiți informații privind rezultatele proiectului Geoidea.ro ? (3 e-mailuri maxim pe an)

Would you like to receive information related to the GEOIDEA.RO development (maximum 3 email per year)