Open Data for modern local government and smarter cities

Opening up public sector data promises economic and social benefits. But national and EU coordination and support would help to deliver its full potential.

EUROCITIES Secretary-General Paul Bevan said:

"Public sector data is a significant resource in this information age. It can empower citizens, stimulate business and improve liveability in our cities".

European cities are finding that open data is playing an increasingly important role in the transformation to 'smarter', digitally enabled communities. The European Commission has estimated annual economic benefits of up to €40 billion with the opening up and re-use of public sector information. Local authorities are creating open data strategies to increase transparency of city government, stimulate user driven innovation and to provide public services online. Access to public data can stimulate behavioural change and citizens' engagement, e.g. by giving feedback on public services, by direct involvement in policy issues, and by developing innovative services from the data

Paul Bevan added:

"Opening up public sector data can help to rebuild trust in our democracy. But cities cannot do it all alone. A standard European licence model for example would be helpful to align different licencing models in use across the EU."

The costs of opening data can be a barrier to many local authorities, especially in the current economic climate. To open public sector data, cities need to overcome administrative, financial and licensing challenges. The absence of harmonised licensing rules can lead to a lack of clarity over liability and hamper efforts to share datasets from different data-owners.

The EU and national governments can help by establishing a European standard licence model, developing coordinated national strategies and providing funding for open data initiatives. The use of Connecting Europe Facility or Horizon 2020 funds could help fund the development of open data infrastructure and help the development of innovative open data projects at local level. In the context of the Smart Cities and Communities European innovation Partnership there is also a need for industry to open its data and collaborate with public authorities in creating innovative smart city solutions.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- EUROCITIES position paper on Open Data: http://bit.ly/11VlZoS
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