
State of Play: PSI Re-use in Spain Aporta Project

Abstract

Information generated by Public Administrations and public sector bodies is a key resource for the knowledge society, given its quality and variety.

Most of the public sector information is reusable and can be used to generate new value-added products and services. In addition, the re-use of public sector information enables citizens to enhance their knowledge of public institutions' activities, making them more transparent and accessible.

The Spanish Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Commerce and the Ministry of the Presidency carry out the Aporta Project, an initiative designed to foster re-use of public sector information in Spain.

Key words

Public Sector Information, PSI Law 37/2007, Aporta Project

About the Author:

The Aporta Project is an initiative by the [Spanish Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Commerce](#) and the [Ministry of the Presidency](#) with the main objectives to raise awareness of the economic and social potential of public sector information re-use and improve transparency of the Public Administration in Spain.

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Introduction

Nowadays, information is essential within the so called knowledge society. New Information and Communication Technologies, especially Internet, have modelled access to information and have opened valuable ways to reuse it. Newly formed companies with minimal funds are developing business models based on information services and products, like, for instance, services as Global Position Systems (GPS) in our cars, personalized weather forecasts and online tourist management.

Although these services are quite recent, most of them have influenced our lifestyle. The origin of many of these services is information that has been either generated or collected by public sector bodies. These data is reused by different private companies in order to create new value-added data and services.

For that reason, efficient re-use of information must be accomplished, aiming to make the most of its potential and develop new products, services and markets, and also achieving economic growth and new jobs in the European digital content industry.

In addition, the re-use of public sector information offers to citizens the chance to improve their level of information and knowledge on public institutions' activities, making this more transparent and accessible.

Spanish legislation on re-use

Spain, following the Directive 2003/98/EC, with the idea of creating a framework that encourages re-use, has established a minimum set of rules for a fair, proportional and non-discriminatory framework for re-use.

The 37/2007 Law¹ on re-use of PSI (PSI Law) allows each public organization to decide whether it authorizes or denies the re-use of its information, whilst, at the same time, it underlines the social and economic value of PSI. The PSI law implements the Directive in all of the country providing a minimum of standards across Spain, which may be developed at the different governmental layers.

The Law establishes an ample definition of public sector information which covers not only traditional documents but also data sets². It defines the types of conditions under which re-use can be authorized and it sets the rules applicable to charging. Both process and conditions for re-use have to be established in a transparent and open manner³. For example, the Law foresees, inter alia, the possibility of making PSI freely available under no restrictions. Moreover, the Law establishes that public administrations should make re-use easier by creating lists and indexes accessible online, with the aim to facilitate the identification of public information resources.

The Law specially encourages the re-use of public digital contents promoting the use of electronic means, inter alia, for the processing of requests for re-use.

¹ See Spanish version of PSI Law available here
http://www.aporta.es/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=28c02272-f4a6-4090-b375-d10b87299e92&groupId=10128

² See Article 3, paragraph 2 of the PSI Law

³ See Article 4, paragraph 3 of the PSI Law

In Spain, other laws are also important in promoting the re-use of public digital content. The 56/2007 Law for the Promotion of the Information Society⁴ encourages public sector bodies to make all its digital content available to the citizens with no technological restrictions. For its part, the 11/2007 Law for e-Citizen Electronic Access⁵ establishes that citizens have the right to access electronic public services, which implies that public administrations have to implement new electronic interaction tools to guarantee this right. Finally, the Spanish National Interoperability Framework (Royal Decree 4/2010)⁶ aims among its objectives to establish the information format standards.

In the framework set out by these laws, some best practices have been developed by a number of Spanish public bodies, such as the [National Cadastre](http://www.catastro.meh.es/) (<http://www.catastro.meh.es/>) or the [National Geographic Institute](http://www.ign.es/) (<http://www.ign.es/>).

Spanish policy on re-use

Beside the legal framework and the different initiatives of a few public bodies, the Spanish government identified in 2008 the need to support re-use of public sector information through different awareness activities. According to this goal, the Aporta Project was launched within the framework of the Avanza Plan. The “Plan Avanza” is within the framework of the strategy designed by the Government to follow the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, which is one of the main points of the 2010 Ingenio Program defined in order to promote R+D+I. It is focused on achieving appropriate use of the ICT with the purpose of promoting a successful economic model based on competitiveness and productivity increases and improving the citizen's quality of life, as well as working to social and regional equality.

Aporta's main objective is to show the potential of re-use in Spain and help Administrations, users and businessmen at national, regional and local levels to recognize the real importance of this resource and, indeed, to develop ideas of high socioeconomic returns.

From the beginning, Aporta has focused its efforts on explaining the process and the advantages of re-using through different activities.

The Aporta website (www.aporta.es), with more than 30.000 visits in the last year, is conceived as a meeting point for the public sector, businesses and citizens interested in re-use. The site offers information and news on PSI and provides options for communication and participation channels for all the members of the Spanish PSI community. All the materials posted on the website are re-usable and in different formats, including open source files in order to enable re-use. Proyecto Aporta's [blog](#) contains over 70 posts created in a very short time, and the [news link](#), is connected to 200 entries from European and international sources.

The Aporta Guidebook⁷ on Re-use of Public Sector Information is a handbook that explains the legal framework and all the issues of relevance for Public Administrations and re-users. It provides further guidance on the legal framework and the options available to public bodies when opening their information to re-use.

⁴ See Spanish version available here

http://www.aporta.es/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=6eeebf8e-4f2c-4090-aa7e-814e2b29066c&groupId=10128

⁵ See Spanish version available here

http://www.aporta.es/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=19d517c2-3ebc-4d3a-a3ed-40a3c5b47e44&groupId=10128

⁶ http://www.csae.map.es/csi/pg5e41_ingles.html

⁷ http://www.aporta.es/web/guest/guia_reutilizacion

Encouraging PSI re-use means also to explain the re-use process to the different actors involved. Therefore, Aporta has organized different training lectures⁸ (during 2009 and has made available through its website all the training materials).

The Aporta events⁹ raise awareness of the potential of PSI re-use.

The Madrid PSI Meeting 2010: “Realising the Value of Public Sector Information” jointly hosted by the Aporta Project and ePSIplatform¹⁰ on the 9th June was a success. It attracted 180 participants from 12 countries representing experience and fresh perspectives from throughout the European open data community.

The focus was on learning more about the value of PSI (Public Sector Information) when it is opened up for re-use. It was a one day forum to stimulate dialogue, discussion and debate starting at the European policy level moving on to innovative business models and then measuring the economic value of PSI re-use and examining the social value of PSI for citizens.

The meeting video and other multimedia materials, including interviews and photographs, can be found at http://www.aporta.es/web/guest/descargas_psimeeting2010.

In addition, during the fifth meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) to be held in Vilnius (Lithuania) from 14th to 17th September 2010, the Aporta project in co-ordination with ePSIplatform will run the workshop named “Public sector information online: democratic, social and economic potentials”, aimed to be an open discussion on policy options regarding the opening of public sector information for re-use for commercial and non commercial purposes, with special reference to its democratic, social and economic potential.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation, the IT for Change organisation, the Australian auPSI information platform, the KM Africa Information platform and the Information Society Development Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, European PSI Alliance and Asia Pacific Intellectual Capital Centre are bodies involved in this workshop.

Aporta Project has also launched a catalogue of freely accessible online public information, belonging to the Spanish National Government¹¹. It provides a single access point to the various government websites that offer public information resources.

Finally, Aporta Project is engaged to encourage private-public partnership and supports different meetings held by Spanish re-use industry, as reflected by Aporta participation in the conference held by [ASEDIE](#) Association on May 5th 2010. This conference gathered Public Administrations and private companies to discuss reuse conditions within the Spanish public sector.

Aporta is also committed to support social initiatives in the field of re-use. In Spain, in recent years, a new culture of re-use is growing increasingly stronger and has led to the birth and consolidation of civil society platforms that are tapping the social value potential of public sector. Citizens' initiatives, whose aim is to promote the culture of openness and re-use of public sector information, play an essential role in raising the awareness of citizens, private sector and public administrations.

⁸ http://www.aporta.es/web/guest/formacion_aporta)

⁹ <http://www.aporta.es/web/guest/catalogo-de-informacion-publica>

¹⁰ <http://www.epsiplatform.eu/>

¹¹ <http://www.aporta.es/web/guest/catalogo-de-informacion-publica>

Apart from the Aporta Project, other initiatives are currently under development in Regional and Local Governments. Among these initiatives, the most advanced has been set up by the Basque Regional Government. “Open Data Euskadi” aims to provide access to the public information generated by the Basque Government and has already published in reusable format tourist, geographical and weather information among others.¹² In addition, the Government of the Principality of Asturias has created a portal that provides access to different sets of public data¹³.

At the request of the Spanish Government, specifically the State Secretariat for Telecommunications and the Information Society (SSTIS), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), conducted a Peer Review of Plan Avanza (“the Plan”), the country’s strategy for the advancement of the Information Society. The Report (152 pages) was jointly presented by the Spanish Secretary of State for Telecommunications and Information Society Francisco Ros and the Director for Public Administration and Development, OECD Territorial, Rolf Alter¹⁴. Overall, the report is very positive and in particular points to the successful work by the Spanish Government and Spanish regions in terms of the public sector information re-use framework including noting the efforts of the Aporta Project, for example the following excerpt.

“Box 4.4 ICTs for increasing public sector transparency

Although policies aimed at promoting the **reutilisation of public data** are relatively nascent in Spain, important first steps have been made under the auspices of the national Information Society strategy Plan Avanza 2 (2010-2015). The most prominent example is a project launched in early 2009, Aporta, a user-friendly repository and search engine similar to that of the United States’ data.gov. Aporta (literally meaning to “contribute” or “share” in Spanish) has a budget of EUR 1 million, allocated to the construction and maintenance of an online portal (www.aporta.es)¹⁵. Government organisations can upload data and share with citizens, businesses and other public sector organisations. The project also seeks to stimulate take-up of this tool, by funding informative and capacity-building sessions for citizens, SMEs and civil servants.

Aporta demonstrates Spain’s intentions to follow the trend of other EU countries to encourage **open government**, with the goals of fostering public sector co-operation and innovation; increasing transparency and interoperability; and generating new opportunities for social and commercial gain. Spurred by the EU law 2003/98/CE, national legislation followed in Spain with law 37/2007 of the 16th of November, which also governs the conditions under which data can be shared and used. Indeed, Plan Avanza 2 includes open government as one of its strategic objectives, though specific initiatives beyond Aporta are in early stages development.

Spain’s 17 autonomous communities are also following suit. Pais Vasco for instance is one of the first regional governments to launch its own website <http://opendata.euskadi.net/w79-home/es/>. Thus far, some of the solutions developed from re-use of public data have included wikis and geographic information systems that compile tourism and cultural information of interest, as well as customisable widgets.”¹⁶

¹² <http://opendata.euskadi.net/>

¹³ <http://risp.asturias.es/>

¹⁴ <http://www.planavanza.es/Noticias/Paginas/PresentacionInformeOCDEPlanAvanza.aspx>

¹⁵ <http://www.proyectoaporta.es/web/guest/index>

¹⁶ Report: OECD Information Society Reviews Good Governance for Digital Policies: How to Get the Most Out of ICT - The Case of Spain’s Plan Avanza <http://www.planavanza.es/InformacionGeneral/EvaluacionSeguimiento/Paginas/EstudiodelPlanAvanzaporlaOCDE2.aspx>

Spanish EU Presidency promoting re-use of public sector information

Information Society policies are at a critical development stage. The European Union is designing new plans in this area that include measures committed to fostering re-use of public sector information. For instance, encourage re-use is one of the policy objectives for eGovernment in the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which sets the priorities of the European Union in this area for the period 2010-2015. This same objective is recognized in the recently adopted European Digital Agenda that designs Europe's information society policies until 2015.

The [Spanish Presidency](#) of the European Union was also committed to the improvement of the Information Society and was aware that re-use policies are an important tool to achieve this goal.

In this sense, the Spanish Presidency, in collaboration with the European Commission and [ECLAC](#) (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), organized in La Granja de San Ildefonso (Segovia, Spain) during the 15th and 16th March the V European Union (EU) - Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Ministerial Forum on the Information Society, entitled "Digital Content for a Digital Society". As its main objective, the forum served to facilitate the exchange of experiences, perspectives and objectives of Information Society public policies on both sides of the Atlantic. The conclusions of the meeting were adopted by the Ministers and heads of delegations as the "[Declaration of La Granja](#)". This Declaration emphasizes the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in driving productivity and economic growth, the management of scarce resources and the creation of stable employment and recognizes the urgent need to reduce the digital divide and to help developing countries to fully benefit from ICT.

In particular, the Declaration also mentions the need for governments and governmental entities to stimulate openness and access to public data, in order to promote its re-use and to enable the creation of new services for citizens and businesses. The text also encourages public authorities to make reusable information available to citizens and businesses in an easily accessible form.

Within the Spanish Presidency, another important document that has been adopted in this field is the Granada Declaration for the Digital Agenda. The Informal Meeting of the European Union's Ministers for Telecommunications and Information Society, held between the 18th and 20th of April, 2010 in the city of Andalusia, represents the Information Society highpoint for the Spanish Presidency. The Declaration is one of the milestones of the new Digital Strategy and will contribute to the consolidation of Europe's technological leadership within this strategic sector, whose effects must reach citizens, businesses and public services. The Granada Ministerial Declaration includes the core necessary elements to obtain a veritable innovating, sustainable and inclusive digital society and economy.

In particular, the Declaration states that governments should “promote the re-use of public sector information and thus potentially very important new user-driven service innovations that increase the efficiency of government and lead to a measurable reduction in administrative burdens on citizens and businesses as well as contribute to a low-carbon economy.”

Conclusion

Over the past year, public sector information (PSI) re-use has been gaining momentum. Information and Communication Technologies, headed by the Internet, have changed access to public sector information and data and have opened new ways for its re-use, providing more opportunities for small-sized companies which develop new products and services.

Fully engaging the public sector on this issue remains a challenge. It is highly recommended to continue to work on policies that make the process of re-use as simple as possible and it is also important that the legal framework promotes re-use of PSI. In order to develop the market of re-use, several important issues such as the type of information that can be re-used, the process of how this information is delivered to the public, the conditions under which this information is provided or the prices this data is subject to should be and need to be addressed.

In Spain public sector information re-use is increasing each day and there is a broad potential for the development during the following years. The Spanish Government, through the Aporta Project, realizes the benefits of increasing re-use and will continue working on this field.

Related News and Blog Topics by the Aporta Project and ePSI platform

Aporta Project

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