Public Administrations and the re-use of public sector information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This second part of the fifth Edition of the Infomediary Sector Report is aimed at analyzing from a qualitative perspective how public administrations collaborate with the infomediary sector, originally as information providers and especially, in this case, as clients of such sector.

The role of public administrations as information providers

Regarding the first role, several elements stand out according to what the infomediary companies themselves have pointed out:

- **Public Administrations** are valued, firstly, for being a **source of original data** and for the possibilities they always provide for the integration of different sources that add value to the data itself. Public administrations also allow free access to data, seeking the improvement of their quality as an added value.
- However, there are still **some difficulties**, such as knowing which users are accessing the data and how useful they would be for these users. Improving the knowledge about these aspects could help to better define what data should be published and made available to the society.
- Finally, it worth to highlight as a **key factor how public data is accessed and treated**, and how administrations are resolving this initial and crucial step to ease a truly re-use of data.

APIs development or the adaptation of their systems for massive file downloads are the basic applications that should be fostered, taking into account that the use of open, standardised and normalised formats is more positive than the use of unstructured data.

The role of public administrations as clients of the infomediary sector

Regarding the second role, clients of the infomediary sector, the starting quantitative data are:

- **47.5% of the infomediary companies have public administrations as clients.**
- Autonomous Regions (81.6%) and local entities (78.9%) were the main target of their activity.
- Sales to public administrations accounted for more than 50% of their total incomes for more than 32% of infomediary companies.
- The main products or services requested by public administrations to infomediary companies are **data consultancy**, **public data processing** and **visualisation tools**.

Public administrations expect to accomplish the following **objectives** thanks to their **relationship with infomediary companies**:
- To improve **publication of the agency own information and data.**
- Development of **internal systems** aimed at breaking the current information silos. Public administrations become more efficient and useful with the identification and use of valuable information, the allocation of resources for its operation and the generation of added value services.
- To **improve the agency's positioning on the Internet**.
- To develop **added value services** by integrating information from other administrations.
- To **generate information and new services** that cannot be provided by private companies.
- To improve **decision-making** process.
- To improve public **transparency**.

- To increase **knowledge and exchange of experiences** between different administrations and between the public and private sectors.
- To promote the **recognition of the POTENTIAL of public data**: data value, its usefulness and the capacity to solve problems as a result of its use.
- To reinforce **internal training** in the use of data.

In the end, this relationship allows fostering the creation of value, opening new data and meeting new needs.

From a practical perspective, **the areas where this relationship would take shape are**:

- **Integration of information** from diverse sources, both own sources and from other administrations, in order to complement the services to be developed.

  Apart from that, participants in the study have identified some difficulties associated with the information management (finding its usefulness, identifying what administration holds competence over the data, and administrative/bureaucratic obstacles when accessing and using the data), as well as related to technical considerations (information updating, process automatisation or the existence of multiple data formats when making them available).
- **Generation of more important and useful services**, either through free software tools (generally more used for data publication or the implementation of systems for information re-use) or proprietary software (essentially aimed at the development of solutions for specific functionalities).

The administrations participating in the study have identified **data storage** as one of the critical elements for the future development of information services, highlighting the current dilemma between physical storage in their own premises and the increasingly important, but so far less used, cloud storage.

In general, what has become clear from the analysis of the opinions of the participating administrations is the need to improve collaboration between the public and private spheres, opening up new channels of communication between both (for instance, by means of joint forums and seminars).

Some possible actions have also been identified to further foster this relationship:
- Improve **administrative processes and the conclusion of agreements** in a more agile way, even thinking about some normative change that would facilitate them.
- Launching **pilot projects** that allow promoting in an orderly manner, with legal support, with a limited use of resources, with a controlled scope and in a faster way new services to analyze their viability and/or usefulness.
- Regarding technological push, the creation of **joint research centres** or the **implementation of technological challenges**, so that infomediary companies can develop solutions based on the data made available to them.

What impact can be produced by the development of this collaboration between infomediary companies and public administrations?

From the point of view of re-using information, the public-private collaboration allows:
- The fulfilment of a **public service vocation**, with data as a way to improve the provision of new and better services.
- **Boosting economic activity**, based on the generation of new products and services, and new associated business models.
- Meeting **society's increased demand for data** from the public administration

The impacts can be considered from three perspectives: the end users' impact, the internal impact on the public administrations and the political impact. In a graphic way we would have:

END USERS' IMPACT	INTERNAL IMPACT	IMPACTO POLÍTICO
• More quality and adequacy to the users' needs in the public services. • Greater knowledge of public activity. • Improvement of the image of the Public Administrations. • Development of new business models.	• Improved management. • Greater accuracy in the execution of public activity. • Improvement of administrative processes. • Cost savings. • Improvement of the public workers' training. • Public data value recognition • Promotion of multi-departmental and multidisciplinary work.	• Improvement of political decision-making process.

Finally, we point out which aspects can limit this collaboration and which recommendations arising from public administrations can improve such collaboration.

From the side of **barriers**, participants in the study have highlighted the **lack of qualified profiles** within public administrations and the infomediary sector, the **fast advance of the technologies** and the **lack of automated data access and processing** between administrations. Regarding the function of public servants, data management usually becomes and additional and non-priority workload. Three other **challenges** are worth to be highlighted: the **necessity to share information** between administrations versus the resistance or the feeling of "data ownership" that some agencies still show; the change of **internal culture** in the public administration, being aware that data re-using involves multidisciplinary and multi-departmental activities; the **identification of new problems or real needs** as the basis for developing new data-based services.

And finally, among the **recommendations** that have been extracted from the interviews with the Administration's representatives highlight the following:

- Increasing **dissemination and awareness activities among public employees** about the value, potential and usefulness of data.
- Increasing **training actions** on data re-using among public employees.
- Promoting the **exchange of data re-using experiences** between administrations.
- Fostering **dialogue** between public administrations and the infomediary sector.
- Encourage **collaboration between public administrations, universities and research centres**.