

Interview AGORIA GEO-ICT Group

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Importance of geo-data

The interest of respondent in FLEXPUB is to have a view of the existing users of geo-data and that the project can be used as a mean to make the possibilities and added-value of use of geo-data more known in administrations and software industries. In general, he finds that there is too little innovation with geo-data, not only at federal level but also at EU level. So real need for sensibilisation to what geo-data is, what it can bring, and the importance of opening the access to quality geo-data. Few people know how important geo-data is. A lot of people just see it as a scientific or EU preoccupation but it is central in everyday life and there should be more uptake.

For the private sector, it is very important to have quality data (to know when the last update was done) and this might require quality labels, which would spare time to re-users who won't have to waste time checking if the data is good. These quality controls could be done by the administrations. So it must be accessible, reliable, complete and up to date = quality data.

Why not a five star rating scale so that the re-users know what the quality of the data is? This requires a "label deliverer" which would assess the data quality. This is important because these are not static information but dynamic information that should have sufficient quality to be used easily and freely accessible to construct real-time applications.

FLEXPUB strategy for geo-data could be relayed in Agoria's memorandum to give suggestions to the following government, through lobbying.

Open data

The responsibility of the data quality lies on the government. If they can't do it alone, then why not use a public procurement call to have the private sector (via PPP) check the quality of data. So principle of Open data and creation of added-value apps by private sector is nice, but in order to do that they need a good quality data basis from the administrations.

In order to do that, the administrations should be made more aware of the value of their data but also of the waste that stems from the lack of sharing of quality data. This waste also stems from the fact that several administrations do the same thing but with their own specificities so waste of resources.

Why not idea that fully open, that everybody can access it for free, but then have to re-share it for free. This is often problematic as they will say that they have invested in the app and created added value so not "fair" to re-share it for free.

Maybe this is where the DTO could intervene, by giving incentives to go towards this type of open-data. He suggests that we (FLEXPUB) could try to influence this, in cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders, including AGORIA. Up to now, it is merely "goodwill" and not sufficient.

This requires more investments of course, but also need for prioritisation of certain geo-data.

FEDICT - DTO

FEDICT was quite a failure and hopes that DTO will do best. He thinks that Alexander De Croo is a dynamic minister and usually succeeds in his initiatives so it should have more chance of success. FEDICT was maybe "too political". De Croo invests a lot of his time on these issues, he knows what the challenges are so if he invests in the DTO, will be better than FEDICT. Failure of FEDICT is that started well 8 years ago (eID, etc) but never really evolved after that. Also wasted two years on the "Gov-cloud" that failed, for political reasons. Now new "G-cloud" initiative stemming from that. Moreover, SMALS and FEDICT had a hard-time working

together so also explains the failure of FEDICT. Respondent is critical about the G-cloud as, according to respondent, this is not a Cloud, but merely an optimisation of data sharing, which we should have done 10 years ago. However not a real "Cloud" as you cannot add more hardware to increase the capacity. According to respondent, better to store everything on a secure cloud and just keep confidential data on self-existing (off-cloud) systems.

Respondent thinks that the concept of DTO is good but he has no visibility on what it will be concretely. Is it just a name change or something more? We have a booming private sector so it should be included much more in order to create a symbiosis around e-service delivery.

ICT awareness and PPP (Public –Private partnership)

Respondent is not satisfied with what happens with ICT in Flanders, not convinced by minister Hoomans. Not enough inclusion of private actors active in the ICT sector. Respondent feels that she does not care enough about ICT, it is clearly not her priority. He thinks that the federal is much more aware about ICT. Also in Wallonia with Marcourt is there good awareness of the importance of ICT. Example of Alexander De Croo that is strongly invested in developing 5G in Belgium to be "ahead of the pack".

AGORIA, in its lobbying, puts the accent on the needs of its members, e.g. the private sector need accessible, reliable, complete and up to date data = quality data.

Belgium is a small country so dividing the standards and solutions in three (VL, BXL, WAL) is inefficient. Ideally, it should be more or less the same throughout the country. For example, European Directives are not precise enough so leaves a lot of margin of transposition, implementation in each Region and creates risks of incompatibility and frustrations for the private sector.

PPP are not used much, even though there are more and more talks about PPP for ICT (De Croo talks about it for example). The public sector is also a huge market for the private sector so important to create partnerships.

E-service delivery issues

Also issue that Belgium is the country in the EU where the fiscal charge is the highest (50%) so we need to improve that for competition reasons and go for the EU average (around 40%), otherwise we are not competitive enough. So we have an expensive public sector and it should be more efficient.

It is necessary to have a Masterplan with a clear 15-20 guidelines of a 4-5 year digitalisation of the public sector plan for the next legislature (with priorities, with suggestions to include the private sector, with best practices, etc.).

Also a lack of competent people within the public sector to implement the portals, data quality, etc. He understands that this might be more complicated in smaller institutions but real necessity to support and educate some people in order to ensure good service quality and good response time to questions.

One of the concerns of the public sector is that they have no visibility on what is re-used and on what the needs of the re-users is. Up to now, they just take input from the industry twice a year but this is not enough. There should be more interaction between the re-users and the producers, it is necessary to dialogue with your "clients". Public sector might be scared to ask because then will feel committed to provide what the re-users have asked. But this would at least allow to identify where the bottlenecks are and the industry could be more aware of the public sector difficulties.

AGORIA will do a study with PwC on drones, and what the bottlenecks are. It is not so complicated but it must be done, which is not done so far. Drones are a new way to collect geo-data and to fill the gaps of satellite data. Also idea that drone data collected by the private sector could be given back, in some way, to the public sector. This is something to think about.

Right now, geo-data often collected for one specific purpose. But should we not think about a framework for data collection in general, which would allow easier sharing and re-use of such data for other purposes (Open data implementation).

Innovation in the public sector

Is it the role of the public sector to be innovative or should it just be flexible in providing the data to an innovative private sector? According to respondent, private sector is driven by profit. This is not the case of public sector and it should have an important role in providing the services that the private sector does not provide to specific groups (the “forgotten” from the general market). According to respondent, they don’t have to create new innovations themselves, but they should use more innovations created by the private sector. This is not the case now, the public sector is years behind. They should also be creative in the implementation of what already exists in the private sector. This is a mind-set issue and this is something where the DTO could play a role. Respondent thinks that this is what Alexander De Croo wants.

The public sector should also do more sensibilisation and advertisement campaigns about the e-services that they offer and what the citizens can do. Up to now, there is very little done for the information of the citizens of what currently exists. Only the experts are aware of what exists.

Also should simplify the e-service delivery. Going through a portal is too complex, the e-services should be offered through apps. It should be as easy and quick as Google maps. Also much more focus should be set on “real-time” applications.

Privacy

Privacy concerns are to be solved by those creating the apps = the re-users. It should be underlined that misuse of data cannot be acceptable. But it is not the role of the public administration to check if the re-user is allowed to process the data. It is often used as an excuse by the administration in order to not share the data. He believes that the sector has done what is necessary to comply with these privacy legislations, that it is sufficiently mature on these issues.