

Open Government Data in Taiwan

In the recent years, the tide of open movement has pushed vigorously from the open source software, open hardware and the recent open data. More and more countries have joined the global initiative of open government data in order to achieve the ultimate goal to promote the democratic governance. National government adopts open data policy to enhance the transparency, participation and collaboration of the citizen into the government operation. Meanwhile, fueled by the knowledge economy and the statistical analysis of the big data technology, open government data could work as the catalyst to individuals, industries and government agencies to transform data into potential knowledge-based services. Up to the end of 2013, there are around 77 countries have adopted the Open Government Data policy. Taiwanese government also declared to take part in the open data revolution. The government had officially launched the open data policy in 2012. In Resolution No. 3322, the Executive Yuan prescribes that open government data could enhance the transparency of the government; improve the quality of life of people; and meet the needs of the industry. Governmental agencies under the authority of the Executive Yuan shall to recognize the importance of the empowerment brought from open government data to the quality of the decision-making process and asked the agencies to implemented the policy from the perspectives of the user's needs and applications, and also the consider to include machine readable format for the data.

The Executive Yuan directed the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission (RDEC) (行政院研究發展考核委員會) to develop related principles and measures to support government agencies of the Executive Yuan to plan, execute and open up their data. At the same time, it also directed the Industrial Development Bureau (IDB), Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) (經濟部工業局) to develop responsive strategies to cope with the industrial development.

Pursuant to the Resolution No. 3322 of the Executive Yuan, RDEC worked through the open government data related laws and regulations, proclaimed the "Open Government Data Operating Principle for Agencies of the Executive Yuan" (行政院及所屬各級機關政府資料開放作業原則) and the "Essential Requirements for Administrative Open Government Data Datasets" (政府資料開放資料集管理要項) in the early 2013. All government agencies of the Executive Yuan have to adopted the following 3 open government data steps: "open up government data for public use", "provide data free of charge subject to certain exemptions", "automated systematic release and exchange data", and work in with 4 open government focus strategies: "release data actively and by the priority in the field of daily necessity", "develop the norm of open government data", "promote the use of Data.gov.tw", and "demonstrate and advocate open government data services". Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) (經濟部工業局) also provided grants (\$9,200 NTD) to the open government data value-added applications and development. The open government data platform (data.gov.tw) was launched in July, 2013, as the official Taiwan government site providing public access and reuse of government data sets from 62 government agencies of the Executive Yuan, including the Ministry of Interior (MOI) (內政部), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) (外交部), Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) (經濟部), Council for Economic Planning and Development (CEPD) (行政院經濟建設發展委員會), Hakka Affairs Council (HAC) (客家委員會), Water Resources Agency, Ministry of Economic Affairs (WRA) (經濟部水利署), and 4 local governments. At the end of 2013, each government agency is required to release at least 55 data sets.

In addition, the rising tide of private-sector (individual or enterprise) also aims to mine the gold in open government data. Act upon the National Information and Communication Initiative (NICI) (行政院國家資訊通信發展推動小組) in the consultation of the open government data policy, Taipei Computer Association (TCA) (台北市電腦同業工會) organized the "Open Data Alliance" (ODA) (Open Data聯盟) as a bridge between the information provide-side (public sectors) and the demand-side (private sectors), to communicate and coordinate the expectations and needs from communities (bottom-up) towards open government data. On Dec. 11, 2013, Taiwan took one more step in the global open data initiative. Open Data Alliance (ODA) and the Open Data Institute (ODI) in UK signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) and announced the alliance established to promote and explore the potential opportunities of open data holds for the public, private and academic sectors. The engagement of ODA and ODI could bring another catalyst for the open movement in Taiwan to take one big step in the international community.

According to a survey from ODA, the biggest challenge so far is the available data sets do not really meet the needs of the industry. And most of the feedback reflects the concerns in licensing, charge, frequency of updates, data formats and data quality. These voices echo the open government data issues encountered in many countries.

There are still some obstacles with the applicable laws and regulations (for example, Charges and Fees Act, Personal Data Protection Act, Accountability & Liability etc.) wait to be solved before both public and private sectors to go onto the next level of open data development.