Glossary of Key Terms

2014 OECD Survey on Open Government Data

This Glossary was compiled for the purpose of this Survey and describes how the following terms are used in this exercise:

NB: Ranked in alphabetical order

Application programming interface (API): Interfaces used by information systems to communicate with each other. These interfaces allow automated access to and exchange of data within the limits established by the information system operator.

Apps: Applications specifically designed for mobile devices, e.g. smartphones, tablets.

Central/federal government: According to the System of National Accounts (SNA), “central government” consists of the institutional units making up the central government (including line ministries and affiliated agencies), plus those non-profit institutions that are controlled and mainly financed by central government (cf. OECD, 2011).

Data: A value or set of values representing a specific concept or concepts. Data become “information” when analysed and possibly combined with other data in order to extract meaning, and to provide context.

Datasets (or data sets): Collection of data, usually presented in tabular form.

Digital form (data available in): Data processed by a computer of any type.

Direct data provision: On a one stop shop portal, direct data provision means that data is provided directly on the portal (users are not redirected to other government’s websites).

Geospatial data: Data that consists of or contains information of geographic or spatial nature. For example data held in geographic information systems, topographical information, three-dimensional territorial imagery.

Geospatial tools (or Geographic Information Systems): In a general sense, geospatial tools are information systems that integrate store, edit, analyse, share and display geographic information for decision making. GIS applications allow users to access geo-spatial information and, depending on the GIS and its interfaces, re-use it.

Hackathon: An event that gathers a wide range of people to collaborate on developing a service, a product or a solution to a given challenge. The aim of hackathons is typically to arrive at prototypes or “minimally viable products”. Hackathons are often attended by software and apps developers, user interface designers, data analysts as well as experts in a given area (e.g. a policy domain) and other interested parties.
**Indirect data provision**: On a one stop shop portal, indirect data provision means that data is provided through links which redirect users to the sources of data (e.g., line ministry’s website, regional government website).

**Linked data**: A term coined by Tim Berners-Lee that describes a method of publishing structured data so that it can be interlinked and become more useful. It builds upon standard Web technologies such as HTTP and URLs, but rather than using them to serve web pages for human readers, it extends them to share information in a way that can be read automatically by computers. This enables data from different sources to be connected and queried.

**Machine-Readable (format, file)**: Information or data that is in a structured format that can be processed by a computer without (or with minimal) human intervention and without loss of semantic meaning. Digital formats are not automatically machine-readable too, e.g., text documents in PDF or WORD formats are not machine readable.

**Metadata/User’s guide**: Metadata/User’s guide attribute structuring information to content. They describe the contents of data, e.g., periods covered by the data, as well as information about right holders and conditions for use. Harmonisation of meta-data is important to facilitate access, use and re-use of data.

**Open Data based products and services**: products developed based on the re-use of public data made available as open data.

**Open Innovation**: It refers to a paradigm that assumes that the boundaries between the public administration and its environment have become more permeable; and that governments can and should use external talent and ideas, as well as internal ones, to spot innovative solutions to problems.

**Open Data Inventory**: set of public data made available as open data.

**Open Data Literacy**: the set of skills and capacities needed to use and understand open data.

**Open License**: Open licenses grant permission to access, re-use, and redistribute a work without payment of licence fees.

**Open Science**: Open science commonly refers to efforts to make the outputs of publicly funded research results more widely accessible in digital format to the scientific community, the business sector or society more generally.

**Public sector information (PSI)**: information generated by governments as part of their public task, including weather, map, statistical or legal data, and information held and maintained by governments in galleries, libraries, archives and museums.
**Search function**: A search function that searches a Website/portal offers users a way to find content/data. Users can locate content by searching for specific words or phrases, without needing to understand or navigate through the structure of the Web site/portal.

**Tabular data**: Data presented in rows and columns, as opposed to imagery, documents, XML.