



LATVIA GOES TO OPEN DATA SOCIETY VIA EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECTS

Two most significant Latvian ICT R&D institutions, the Latvian Open Technology Association (LATA) and the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association (LIKTA) wholly endorse the objectives of e-Europe including the Open Data strategy. Latvian ICT professionals agree that society needs data to be able to participate in economic and political processes. LATA's aim is that all public sector information systems developed through the EU Funds 2014-2020 Programming Period must comply with Open Data principles. The Open Knowledge Foundation defines these most succinctly as 'any content, information or data that people are free to use, re-use and redistribute — without any legal, technological or social restriction.'

It is in this spirit that the agenda for the Latvian EU Council Presidency includes an international conference "Open Europe: Open Data for Open Society" organised by LATA in Riga 18-19 February 2015. The event will showcase Latvian partners' participation in several EU funded projects dealing with different aspects of Open Data, for example, SmartOpenData, FOODIE, SDI4Apps and OpenTransportNet.

The Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Latvia (IMCS) is participating in the top-level research project SmartOpenData (full project title: "Linked Open Data for environment protection in Smart Regions") that has the potential to have a substantial future impact in providing opportunities for SMEs. The project will pilot new innovative products and services that can lead to new businesses in the environmental, regional decision-making and policy areas, among others.

IMCS is contributing its expertise in both Semantic Web and spatial data technologies, helping to advance the concepts

of Linked Open Data for spatial applications. Put most simply, Linked Data uses the concepts and technologies of the Web to model the real world. The contribution includes IMCS's Semantic Web technologies and graphical tools for developing models and user-friendly services developed under supervision of Prof. Janis Barzdins since 2008.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration and its Governance Model is specially oriented to establish long-term relationships and alliances between potential stakeholders, and to leverage new synergies in protected areas between policy makers, citizens and companies. There is a special focus on SMEs, for example, through the creation of public-private partnerships.

The SmartOpenData project is focused on how Linked Open Data can be applied generally to spatial data resources and specifically to public open data portals (GEOSS Data-CORE, Copernicus, INSPIRE...) and voluntary data (OpenStreetMap, GEO-WIKI...), and how it can impact on the economic and sustainability progress in European Environment research and Biodiversity Protection.

Technically, SmartOpenData is creating a Linked Open Data infrastructure (including software tools and data) fed by public and freely available data resources. These existing sources are datasets regarding biodiversity, environment protection, research in rural, European protected areas and European National Parks. Nevertheless, in order for the SmartOpenData vision to become a reality, it is necessary to advance the publication of existing environmental data, most of which is owned by public bodies.

The project will take a bottom-up and user-driven approach with a strong initial focus on rural regions, forestry and



environmental protected areas such as National Parks and Smart Regions with the aim to eventually cover wider European areas of interest and have a broader impact by eventually involving any area with relevant data subject to join the open infrastructure, models and governance proposed. The demonstration of impact will be carried out through the implementation of 5 pilots, driven by strategic partners in Spain, Italy, Ireland, Czech Republic and Slovakia and covering different domains: sustainable agroforestry management, water management and drinking water protection, biodiversity and habitats research, monitoring of water quality, sustainable management and utilisation of forest road network, forest site classification etc.

The SmartOpenData consortium is made up by 16 partners as Public bodies (16%), Academic institutions (29%), Industries (14%) or SMEs (41%) from nine European countries (Latvia, Norway, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal and Ireland). The consortium is working closely with research institutions like JRC - Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and international associations like OGC (the Open Geospatial Consortium). The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is a project partner.

Key technology drivers of the SmartOpenData consortium (for further information see www.smartopendata.eu) are:

TRAGSA Group, coordinator of the project, is a state owned company which provides the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Environment and other public bodies with engineering and infrastructure services, consultancy services and management-related technical and administrative support;

IMCS is the biggest ICT R&D institution in Latvia playing the role of an incubator for rearing of leading specialists in Computer Science and Mathematics in Latvia.

Help Service Remote Sensing (HSRS) is a Czech SME that has been for more than 18 years involved in the Czech and European Spatial Data market;

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), hosted by ERCIM, is an international consortium where over 300 member organisations work together to develop Web standards.

