

Open Data Trend Report 2015

The government can provide a lot more open data than it currently does. Internationally, more data are being published as open data, such as data on health care provision and on food safety inspections. The Court presents these findings in its report, Open Data Trend Report 2015.

Conclusions

Steady progress

We found that the government and individual ministries had taken steps in the past year to make open data more accessible. Partly in response to our first Open Data Trend Report, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is currently coordinating a government-wide dataset analysis. The analysis will be used in spring 2015 to clarify what data (open and closed) the government actually has and to facilitate decisions on what could be published as open data. By doing so, the Netherlands would be following the good examples set by the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries make open data available through national portals that also provide an insight into what data are still closed. Such an approach is appropriate for an open and transparent government.

Publication of open data still fragmented and open-sided

The amount of open data available on the national open data portal in the Netherlands, however, has not increased significantly in the past year. Moreover, ministries have opted to set up their own portals (sometimes out of necessity). This has created a fragmented landscape on the supply side. The situation may be improved by the forthcoming upgrade of data.overheid.nl. We also found that the open data available through the national portal is one-sided. Virtually all the open data are geo-data and nearly all of them are provided by Rijkswaterstaat, the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management. Barely any data are available yet for the public scrutiny of government finances and government performance ('do data').

Recommendations

Further progress with the development of the Dutch open data policy can be made in the following areas.

1. Set ambitions and milestones in a concrete action plan

Based on the outcome of the government-wide dataset analysis, the ministers should make concrete agreements among themselves and with the House of Representatives on the open publication of specific datasets.

2. Make active publication of open data compulsory

We think an obligation to actively publish open data is both desirable and necessary, especially for data that form part of the national information infrastructure.

3. Develop a national information infrastructure

A concrete action plan should centre on the development of a national information infrastructure, following the UK example. The government should use the government-wide dataset analysis to determine what data have the greatest social relevance and should therefore in any event be open.

4. Use open data in practice, for example in the decentralisation of social services

During the transitional period of the decentralisation of social services, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations should take the lead to develop a common language for both policy expenditures and results. He should also develop the current instruments (the Budget and Accountability Order and third-party information standards).