

Open data and high-value datasets: step-by-step access guide

Find out how to access open data, including high-value datasets (i.e. data that has the potential to generate important societal and economic benefits when reused).

Public sector bodies produce, collect and pay for vast amounts of data, known as public sector information or government data. Examples include geographical information, statistics, weather data, data from publicly funded research projects and digitised books from libraries. 'Open' public data refers to public sector information that can be readily and widely accessed and reused, ideally under non-restrictive conditions.

For data to be truly open, it needs to be accompanied by a licence that allows the data to be accessed, used and shared for commercial and non-commercial purposes.

The [Open Data Directive \(https://europa.eu/!xQY9kg\)](https://europa.eu/!xQY9kg) sets the legal framework for open data, based on the key principles of transparency and fair competition. Moreover, it introduces the concept of high-value datasets, defined as data that is associated with important benefits for society and the economy when reused. The Commission adopted an [Implementing Regulation \(https://europa.eu/!PhF44v\)](https://europa.eu/!PhF44v) that lays down a list of concrete high-value datasets, within the limits of the six categories defined in the Directive (geospatial, Earth observation and environment, meteorological, statistics, companies and company ownership, and mobility) and the arrangements for their publication by the Member States. These datasets are subject to a more ambitious set of rules (see 'What are my rights?') in order to significantly lower entry barriers to the European data-driven market and increase the volume of datasets reused.

This guide outlines the practical steps to obtaining open data and high-value datasets

How can I access open data and high-value datasets?

The official portal for European data

The most extensive resource for accessing open data is the official portal for European data (data.europa.eu (<https://data.europa.eu/en>)). This portal includes more than 1.8 million datasets from EU institutions and agencies, as well as from Member States.

Datasets can be easily identified using the [Quick search \(https://europa.eu/!W4mvRb\)](https://europa.eu/!W4mvRb) and results can be downloaded in various formats. More advanced searches can be conducted using the [SPARQL \(https://europa.eu/!B9GPpM\)](https://europa.eu/!B9GPpM) query language.

High-value datasets

https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets?is_hvd=true&locale=en&dataScope=countryData&country=fr&page=1) have been accessible on a [dedicated page \(https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets?is_hvd=true&locale=en\)](https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets?is_hvd=true&locale=en) within the European data portal, following the entry into application of the [Implementing act on high-value datasets \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_2023.019.01.0043.01.ENG\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_2023.019.01.0043.01.ENG) in June 2024.

The portal also includes an [Academy \(https://data.europa.eu/en/academy\)](https://data.europa.eu/en/academy), which features a wealth of training material on how to reuse open data, as well as various [research papers and reports \(https://data.europa.eu/en/publications/overview\)](https://data.europa.eu/en/publications/overview), including [use cases \(https://data.europa.eu/en/publications/use-cases\)](https://data.europa.eu/en/publications/use-cases) from both publishers and reusers of open data from across the world.

The extent to which datasets are available via the portal depends on the extent to which they have been made available by public authorities. Moreover, their findability is dependent on the way in which the metadata has been generated. Therefore, it may not be possible to access all open data via the portal. In this case, please refer to step 2 below. If you still cannot access datasets that should be available as open data, check the section ‘What are my rights?’.

National and thematic open data portals

In addition to the official portal for European data, open data – including high-value datasets – may be accessible via national cross-sectoral portals which have been set up centrally to make available data from public authorities across a country, or via national sector-specific portals. For example, some Member States have not made their data on registered businesses available on data.europa.eu. However, this data may be available in national business registers, all of which are interconnected and searchable through the [European e-Justice Portal \(https://europa.eu/!PrGCWY\)](https://europa.eu/!PrGCWY). Other examples of narrowly focused data portals include those that contain data on specific regions or themes, such as transport, environment or health.

Under the [INSPIRE Directive \(https://knowledge-base.inspire.ec.europa.eu/index_en\)](https://knowledge-base.inspire.ec.europa.eu/index_en), Member States as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland use a commonly agreed format to collect a wide range of data concerning the world around us, such as maps, land use or transport networks. The [INSPIRE Geoportal \(https://europa.eu/!wb9RkT\)](https://europa.eu/!wb9RkT) is the pan-European access point to the data provided through national geoportals. The data is also accessible via data.europa.eu.

What are my rights?

Where public sector information falling in scope of the Directive is not proactively published as open data, it should still be made available for reuse, in electronic format where possible, following a **request lodged by a reuser**. Public authorities (except public undertakings, educational establishments, research performing organisations and research funding organisations) are to respond to the request within a reasonable time limit.

Public sector bodies are not under any obligation to provide an extract from a document or to modify the format of the requested information where this involves a disproportionate effort (in terms of the size and operating budget of the public sector body), going beyond a simple operation.

If a request is denied, the public sector body must explain and justify its decision based on EU or national law. The decision must refer to the **means of redress** (including the possibility of review by an impartial review body with the appropriate expertise). If an applicant wishes to challenge the decision (e.g. on the grounds that the data should be made available as open data), the information on how to do this in practice should be provided by the public sector body from which the data was requested. Some Member States have set up a specialised body for the purpose of complaints in the context of reuse, but this is not a requirement under the Directive.

Documents should be made available **free of charge**. However, where public sector bodies carry out a particularly extensive search for the requested information or entail costly modifications to the format of the requested information, they may charge the marginal costs. In exceptional cases, where the public authority is predominantly financed by the revenue from data, they may charge the full costs incurred.

Conditions for reuse should be **non-discriminatory** for comparable categories of reuse. This does not preclude, for example, that the cost of obtaining a dataset for a commercial use is different than for a non-commercial use.

High-value datasets are subject to an additional set of rules. As from 9 June 2024, they must be made available for reuse:

- free of charge;
- under the conditions of the Creative Commons BY 4.0 licence or any equivalent or less restrictive open licence;
- in a recognised open, machine-readable format;
- through application programming interfaces (APIs) and bulk download;
- in their most up-to-date version.

Member States must ensure that the associated metadata clearly identifies high-value datasets as such, in order to make them findable.

How can I access public sector data that cannot be made openly

available?

While this is not open data, the [European Register for Protected Data held by the Public Sector \(https://europa.eu/enPQWx8\)](https://europa.eu/enPQWx8) (ERPD) is hosted on the official portal for European data. Here, you can find information on data that is held by public authorities in the Member States but that cannot be made available under the general open data rules ('protected data'). Chapter II of the [Data Governance Act \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022R0868\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022R0868) provides for the reuse of such data, which could include personal data or commercially confidential data, subject to specific conditions. A wealth of knowledge can be extracted from such data without compromising its protected nature, and the Data Governance Act provides for rules and safeguards to facilitate such reuse whenever it is legally possible to do so.

PDF generated on 01/04/2025 from [Open data and high-value datasets: step-by-step access guide](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/factpages/open-data-and-high-value-datasets-step-step-access-guide)
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