Open Data - Digital Economy Accelerator

7th May 2020

Ladies and Gentleman, dear participants,

It is a pleasure to be here today and to be able to welcome you, at the conference on “Open Data as Digital Economy Accelerator” which is organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and the Technology Park Ljubljana.

The goal of today's event is to foster the cooperation between private and public sector in the field of data. Data has been recognised as one of the most important assets not just within the public sector but also regarding the economy and the society as a whole. As recognised by the European Strategy for Data, data-driven applications can benefit citizens and businesses in many ways. With them we can improve health care, create a cleaner environment, safer transport systems, reduce the costs of public services, improve energy efficiency and with that the overall sustainability. In line with that, our common goal today is to discuss how best to encourage and support creation of innovative solutions based on open data in order to help digital economy grow.

At the level of the European Union, a legal framework that advances the opening of public data is the new Directive on Open Data and Public Sector Information.. The directive extends the scope of the rules on the reuse of public sector information beyond public sector bodies with a goal to include also public undertakings in the transport and utilities sectors. It also introduces the concept of high-value datasets which are to be made available free of charge through an application programming interface (API). Finally, it promotes Open Data as the data in its most noble form.

At the Ministry of Public Administration, we perceive the national Open Data portal as the crucial accelerator of the development in this field. The portal serves as a central catalogue of datasets in the country and a one-stop shop for publishing the data itself in open and machine-readable formats. I am pleased to point out that Slovenia is one of the few countries to have records and collections kept by the National Statistical Office, the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and that of the National Assembly on the portal of open data.

But our goal has been more than that; building and strengthening the Open Data Ecosystem gathered and connected around the portal:start-up entrepreneurs, developers, researchers, companies etc. In order to proliferate the idea of open data among business actors, we established the Open Data Hub, in March this year; I am happy to say that this conference is a direct result of this cooperation.

We have been also organisingOpen Data Hackathons . In 2018 our ministry organised the first hackathon in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Slovenian Tourist Organization.. I can proudly say that the project received an award of the European network of Cultural Tourism. Similar event was organised last year in cooperation with the Slovenian Police and the Municipality of Ljubljana Police Department on the topic of traffic safety and mobility. Both events were very successful cases of collaboration between business and the public sector. I have been looking forward to our next Open Data Hackathon which is planned for September and will focus on the challenges of environment and climate change.

A week ago Slovenia took part in first pan-European hackathon EUvsVirus that was held under the auspices of the European Innovation Council in collaboration with the European Commission, member states, organizations, civil society, innovators, partners and investors from across Europe. The hackathon was attended by nearly 21,000 participants around the world. Slovenia exceeded expectations in terms of the number of participants.

The current circumstances connected to COVID-19, have provided a challenge for creating applications that help the general public to understand the pandemic and the public institutions to devise and implement the appropriate measures. In Slovenia, many interesting projects emerged. Corona Virus Media Watch, to mention one, was launched by the UNESCO's International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence which is based in Ljubljana. Another good example is a crowdsourced app Covid-19 Sledilnik, which serves as a source of quality data for other apps.

The many activities we have undertaken in this field have been recognised also by the international organisations. According to the OECD OURData Index Slovenia has been among top countries in the world regarding the open data policy and activities.

Our common goal is for Slovenia to remain an example of bestpractice - with a view to maximizing the use of open data to build applications that will provide good digital service to citizens and businesses.

The purpose of today's event is to discuss not just what we already have, but rather what we could do to be better together.

The power is in collaboration. Together we can achieve more.

I am looking forward to fruitful discussions and I wish you a successful conference!