A number of cities and towns in the state of North Rhine–Westphalia are leading the way in Germany in the area of open data. They have been publishing their data for a number of years. Until now, however, no overview has been available of which information is released as open data by Germany’s communities. A sample data catalogue can shed light on this situation. A prototype for North Rhine–Westphalia is now available.

Sample Data Catalogue: Which open data are Germany’s communities making accessible?

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Carsten Große Starmann

Mario Wiedemann

The number of communities that make their data available as open data is growing – slowly, but surely. North Rhine–Westphalia in particular is home to cities, such as Bonn, Cologne and Moers, which have played the role of first movers in the area of open data.
It will be quite some time, however, before open data is generally available for communities throughout Germany. Of the country’s over 11,000 cities and towns, only about 70 currently publish open data.

Figure 1: Which communities in Germany publish open data?
There are numerous advantages when public administrators make data openly available. It increases transparency for the public and, above all, initiates a process within the administration that breaks down internal data silos and promotes exchange across departments. Open data is a key element in open government. Data is collected on behalf of a community’s citizens, for its citizens and using citizens’ money. As the concept of open government suggests, there are few compelling reasons to keep non-personal data hidden away.

Open data can also generate added value in economic terms. At the local level, however, such benefits are often hindered by the data’s limited availability, meaning there is too little data for companies to develop a business model. Social added value, on the other hand, is already being realized in many places thanks to open data. The OK Labs organized by the Open Knowledge Foundation, for example, are generating new applications benefiting the public. This potential could be further increased if open data were available nationwide.

Sample data catalogue as guide

Which information is published by Germany’s communities as open data? The answer to that question is anything but clear. A good overview would therefore provide communities with a starting point for deciding which data they could release as open data. Above all, a sample data catalogue of this type would provide guidance to those cities and towns that want to begin publishing open data. They could consult the catalogue to quickly find out which information from other communities is available as open data. A sample data catalogue could thus serve as the catalyst for making local-level data more generally available.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Smart Country project joined with GovData, the data portal for open data in Germany, to develop the concept of the sample data catalogue. The first publication of this sort for Germany has now been created by KDZ – Centre for Public Administration Research (Vienna) and is based on experiences gained assembling a sample data catalogue for selected Austrian cities.

A first step in this direction was taken by creating a sample data catalogue for the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia in cooperation with the cities of
Bonn, Düsseldorf, Cologne and Moers and the IT service provider kdvz Rhein-Erft-Rur. As a next step, the experiences gained to date will be used to expand the catalogue to communities throughout Germany. The expanded catalogue will shed light on which of the country’s communities are making which information available as open data.

Where and under which license is the sample data catalogue available?

Among other locations, it can be accessed using the Cockpit für Open Government Data (http://www.ogdcockpit.eu/Musterdatenkatalog_NRW) from KDZ, where it can be searched using filters. The methodology, background and other aspects of the sample data catalogue are discussed at length in the 2/2019 issue of the Analysen & Konzepte (Analyses and Concepts) publication series.

Sample data catalogue to download - different file formats

- Sample data catalogue (Excel, German) Version 1.1
- Sample data catalogue (csv, German) Version 1.1
- Sample data catalogue (json, German)
- Sample data catalogue (rdf, German)
The Bertelsmann Stiftung is open for suggestions on the future use of the sample data catalogue in Germany’s communities – so please feel free to contact us.

PROJECTS

Smart Country