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## **Position Paper submitted for the ‘Using Open Data: policy modeling, citizen empowerment, data journalism’ workshop**

Public bodies retain, maintain and continue to acquire a wealth of information and content. To the degree that this information is in digital form, and given the pervasive nature of ICT technologies, the value of public sector information (PSI) as a resource is constantly increasing. A large potential of exploiting PSI is remaining untapped, waiting for innovative applications to create added-value by reusing the datasets that are offered today in new and exciting ways.

In 2003, the EU adopted the Directive on the re-use of public sector information (PSI Directive)<sup>1</sup>. It has introduced a common legislative framework regulating how public sector bodies should make their information available for re-use. This development led to the emergence of many national and local level open data initiatives. A recent assessment of one of the pioneer official such services at national level, data.gov.uk, reveals a number of shortcomings regarding the appealing and usage of the service by the users. According to the UK National Audit Service report titled “Implementing Transparency”<sup>2</sup>, while the datasets offered by the site exceeded 8000 including some of the biggest datasets of the UK government, the public interest was considerably lower than initially expected:

- Visitors leave from either the home page or the data page on the website
- (More than 80% of) Visitors are not accessing available datasets during their visits

Margaret Hodge, chair of the Commons public accounts committee, said: "The government needs to do much more before we can be satisfied that greater transparency is capable of supporting proper accountability and helping the public to hold local bodies to account in a meaningful way." In other words, by having the public sector open their data vaults does not mean that the public can automatically understand this data, and as a result the improvement

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/policy/psi/rules/eu/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/psi/rules/eu/index_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1012/implementing\\_transparency.aspx](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1012/implementing_transparency.aspx)

of the accountability of public bodies, which was promoted as a major social impact of the public sector information movement, remains more an aspiration than an actual achievement.

While there are not many such reports on national open public data portals, we assume that the appeal to their users follows a similar trend. We argue that the users would be more interested in accessing and re-using the available datasets if a full end-to-end range of tools were also available. Even more so if a single point of online access integrates all the toolset required to deduce substantial insights from a given dataset. Existing open data initiatives such as the national open governmental portals lack of this integration. INTRASOFT International, as a mid- and large-scale IT solutions and services provider, partners with other European institutions and organisations in the ENGAGE project<sup>3</sup>. ENGAGE builds and offers a research community platform that creates / receives / integrates (usually) unstructured-low quality datasets (e.g. PDF with errors) and based on a crowd-sourcing / "social networking" attitude, transforms them to better quality structured datasets or derived datasets that are useful to other users. Tools for data visualisation (in tables, maps and charts), data curation, data linking and provisioning are available to both researchers and citizens at large (including journalists, policy makers, bloggers, data hackers, activists, etc.)

Another shortcoming of existing open data initiatives relates to the cost of opening, publishing and maintaining the datasets. The NAO report indicates that the annual running cost of data.gov.uk raised from 1.2 million UK pounds in 2010-2011 to over 2 million pounds in 2011-2012. Maintenance costs of individual datasets such as the Police Crime map, have annual running costs of more than £150,000. This raises the question of sustainability of such initiatives.

We argue that re-using of PSI that is provided by public bodies should imply a cost that should be returned to the public sector in order to facilitate the sustainability of the public sector open data policies and services. According to a benchmark survey on the economic impact of public sector information conducted by the European Commission in 2006 (MEPSIR<sup>4</sup>) the PSI market at 2006 was estimated to value €27 billion. At 2011 a similar study (Vickery study<sup>5</sup>) raised the overall direct and indirect economic gains at €140bn throughout the EU.

INTRASOFT International is investing in the potential market of re-using open public data for-profit. Our target group is policy makers and the public sector. Our interest lies in cleansing, data-warehousing, transforming, reconciling and extracting meaningful knowledge out of the open public sector datasets.

## **Why we request our presence in this Workshop**

INTRASOFT International seeks to open a dialogue with representatives of the most successful open data and PSI initiatives, on the following issues:

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<sup>3</sup> [www.engage-project.eu](http://www.engage-project.eu)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/policy/psi/actions\\_eu/policy\\_actions/mepsir/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/psi/actions_eu/policy_actions/mepsir/index_en.htm)

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/policy/docs/pdfs/report/psi\\_final\\_version\\_formatted.docx](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/docs/pdfs/report/psi_final_version_formatted.docx)

- Data linking and interoperability
- Business models for PSI re-use
- Towards a common European License for PSI re-use
- Crowdsourcing as a model for PSI infrastructure sustainability

## Who we are

**INTRASOFT International S.A.** is a leading European, ISO 9001-certified company in the area of Information Technology and Communication services provision. It has a broad portfolio of business activities addressing a wide range of international and national public and private organisations. As a subsidiary of INTRACOM IT SERVICES, a member of INTRACOM HOLDINGS Group that employs some 6,200 people in 21 countries around the world, INTRASOFT International was established in October 1996 to better serve public and private sector clients throughout Western Europe with a particular focus in European Union bodies and agencies. Through its continuous investment over the years, INTRASOFT has earned a place among the primary IT services suppliers for EU institutions and bodies (Commission, EU Parliament, European Investment Bank etc.). INTRASOFT possesses a successful track record of delivering very large and complex IT systems, especially for the public sector. INTRASOFT has proven expertise in conceptual system architecture and system design, advanced application development and integration services, information portal management and communication services, and project management.

**Dr. Antonis Ramfos** joined INTRASOFT International in 1997 and is currently the Principal of the Innovation and Solution Development Department. His main responsibilities include R&D strategy formulation, conception and management of R&D projects, (both externally innovation transfer to commercial solutions of the company, and the promotion and commercial exploitation R&D results. Dr. Ramfos has gained considerable experience in managing R&D projects and exploiting R&D results through his participation in ESPRIT, TELEMATICS, ACTS, TEN. Furthermore, Dr. Ramfos is responsible for the R&D work on the commercial solutions of INTRASOFT.

**Dr. Elias Kalapanidas** is the holder of a Diploma in Electrical Engineering (1995) from University of Patras, and of a PhD (2003) from the same University. He has served as project manager and technical manager for FP6 IST and FP7 ICT research projects in the area of networked media, cognitive systems, and electromobility systems. He has a long working experience in Knowledge management, System optimisation, distributed AI, data mining, environmental applications, machine learning, multi-agent and distributed problem solving technologies.