

# Towards Public, Free and Quality Information, Zaragoza (Spain) May 10th 2013: Guest Post by Marc Garriga

Submitted on 15 May 2013 by ePSIplatform Team

Last Friday the 10th of May 2013 the Zaragoza Town Hall organized a full day event with the following title: “Towards free and qualitative public information. The main objective of this event was to showcase the importance of Opening up data and the evolution that this concept has been having during the recent years.



The event began with a welcoming message from **Ricardo Cavero**, Director of Science and Technology of the Zaragoza Town Hall.

Cavero, confirmed that public information that is free and qualitative is basic and crucial for any action that is carried out by a Public authority. Moreover, the quality of the information is not to be given for granted it implies a significant effort to be made on the technological side and more importantly it calls for an internal transformation in the Public Authorities themselves.

Towards the main part of the event, keynote speaker **Josema Alonso**, renowned for his global expertise in the world of Open Data and Public Sector Information, gave an interesting speech which could be summarized in two parts:

In the first part, he explained what we have lived in the last five years and what Open Data actually refers to. In the second part, he elaborated more on the most recent evolvments in the past year and he gave his opinion on the evolution that he thinks Open Data will experience on an international level.

He was also critical and challenged some common beliefs that exist such as “*Open your data and someone will use it*”, Public Authorities not only have to Open up their data but also they need to promote its re-use. Another belief he challenged was “*Opening up data has no cost*”. He explained

that Opening data indeed does have a cost for public authorities given that they have to assure quality in the data as well its re-use service.

In the final part of this talk, he emphasized that one of the main problems of Opening up data is the lack of indicators that helps us measure the impact that the Opening implies. He also explained that re-use success cases have to be firstly analyzed before applied to other situations, highlighting the case of the Government of Ghana where before opening up their data they had to first digitalize it. The context in this case is very important.

After this talk a round table took place which looked at the barriers and norms that facilitate or prevent the Opening up of public data.

Among other aspects, the new PSI directive from the European Commission was explained in detail. One of the highlights of the event was when a group of pupils presented a project that applies the principles of Open Government (transparency, participation and collaboration) to the primary education environment.

One of the clear objectives that was raised: There is a need to take the data to the educational institutions and teach the students to work with data and to have them grow in a “culture” of data”. The event concluded with a round table titled “Is data the new Petroleum?” referring to the statement of the European Vice President **Neelie Kroes** in the beginning of 2012.

In this discussion, moderated by **Marc Garriga** on behalf of the **ePSIPlatform**, data journalism was explained as well as the censorship introduced from public, private and also civic society initiatives.

Finally, the event closed with an interesting debate with the audience that showcased that data has an ever growing importance; however society is not yet sufficiently conscious of the potential it can offer.