Open data for culture - introductory course for Ministry of Culture representatives

Submitted on 30 Jun 2015 by Valentina Pavel

An introductory course to open data and open culture took place in Romania on 29 June 2015. Organised by the Open Data Coalition, the course attracted participants from the Ministry of Culture and other subordinate institutions.

Nicolaie Constantinescu from Kosson community kicked-off the course, giving a comprehensive presentation on open data, and introducing the participants to concepts such as open data, open licenses and public re-use of information. Moreover, he listed some of the problematic issues regarding the Romanian implementation of the 2013 PSI directive (which have been partially discussed in this post).

Additionally, Dan Matei, Director for the Mobile, Immaterial and Cultural Heritage Department clarified some technical terms in respect of the quality of meta data, underlining the need for accuracy as one of the attributes for quality. He also addressed the issue of how to best organize databases, pointing out the importance of the description section for cultural works and resources. At the same time, he noted that a simple description from a dataset could bare copyright protection.

Next, Andrei Nicoară from the Department for Online Services and Design – the governmental structure in charge of OGP, functioning under the Prime Minister's Office - presented the national open data portal, and familiarized the participants with how to upload data into the portal. To paraphrase his words, publishing datasets on the portal is 'as easy as attaching a file to an email'. His presentation is available here.

The discussion was complemented with information about licenses, specifically regarding the national open data portal which has a specific license. The ROU-OGL 1.0 was derived from the Creative Commons license, however there are several additional terms and conditions for protecting the institution/site from liability. It was reminded that the institutions which are uploading data can opt for publishing the datasets under their specific license since there is no restriction regarding this aspect. Nevertheless, doubts have been expressed whether this is desirable.

Finally, Bianca Floarea from the Open Data Coalition gave a presentation on open culture. She started by describing the important elements of open culture such as the necessity to have open access to the digitized cultural heritage of libraries, archives and museums, and to have the possibility to re-use the metadata (descriptive data). She also introduced the participants to the open data principles for GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) and presented a list of best practices examples, such as Rijksmuseum, British Library, Denmark's National Gallery and the Dutch Institute for Sound and Image (and Open Images project).

More examples are available in the open culture report which presents both the national and European context. At the same time the study includes information about the available European funds for open culture projects.

To conclude, given the increased interest and active participation, an initiative to create a working group to draft a public policy (such as a action point in the National OGP Plan) on open culture has been proposed. The participants also expressed their interest in a future meeting to be held in September, where further detailed discussions will take place on specific case studies relevant to their daily work.