



A Temperature Check on Open Government

Assessing parliamentarians' attitude towards democratic concepts

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Abstract: This paper describes the attitude of Austrian politicians towards Open Government evaluated through a survey conducted in March 2011. After presenting the concept of Open Government, several streams of study in the Austrian context, the survey undertakes the effort to investigate Austrian parliamentarians' perspectives on Open Government elements. The results indicate that the topic has already reached the political public sphere in Austria, but has not yet played an important role in politicians' daily activities. However, social arguments seem to be a good starting point for advocating Open Government in Austria. Finally, respondents' preferred strategies towards more transparency (in particular regarding the legal framework) and publishing strategies (Open Government Data) are addressed.

Keywords: Open Government, transparency, collaboration, participation, Open Data, legislation

Concepts that emphasise the idea of openness are discussed with view to their potential to strengthen transparency and accountability in the state, as promising ideas for the vitalisation of citizens' interest in politics and as motor for economic and scientific innovation. However, most research on the transformation of governments focuses on a critical evaluation of projects and policies or technology based approaches to innovation. Other investigations emphasise citizen's expectations with view to the acceptance of new tools or project measurements. What is less discussed is how the different elements of new governmental concepts like the Open Government approach are evaluated by citizens, political stakeholders or parliamentarians, although such knowledge would be important to access the public opinion on the concept as well as finding reference points for advocates and activists to influence political stakeholders. Whilst expert knowledge about the potentials and risks of Open Government is important, efforts to redefine governmental principles will only be successful if positively assessed by politicians in charge. Integrating the knowledge of citizens in administrative and political processes is based on a change of values and power shifts. Accessing the level of enthusiasm for new government concepts and the related values can thus be a first step towards understanding policies and political change, with research providing information on the opinion of both citizens and stakeholders. This is particularly important in countries where such initiatives are not yet driven top-down and thus rely on NGOs or bottom-up, interest-driven organizations.

1. Open Government - Conceptualisation and strands of research

1.1. Definition and development

In the narrow sense, Open Government is about improving transparency and thereby accountability in all public affairs [Heckmann 2011]. In the broader sense the concept also comprises participation and collaboration as proposed by the Open Government strategy of Barack Obama in his election campaign and Open Government Directive [Obama 2009, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies 2009]. Beyond publishing governmental information or holding public meeting, the goal is increased citizen participation, involvement, and direction of the governing process itself [Thibeau 2009]. The Obama administration is often seen as the driving force of the Open Government strategy with the three pillars transparency, participation and collaboration. These three pillars have also been taken on as a working definition and structure for this survey, with a particular focus on aspects related to transparency in the paper.

At the forefront of contemporary public debate is the balance between governmental secrecy and open government [Piotrowski et al. 2007]. However, openness and transparency are keywords that have not only been used in the long tradition of discussing freedom of information, but also in movements like Open Source or Open Access. To be historically precise, the usage of the term Open Government was already shown in the late 1950's among experts observing information exchange in the American government [Parks 1957] due to a withholding of governmental information after World War II. Open government principles and the idea of free government information were considered and legal amendments took place leading to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) which came into effect in 1967 [Little et al. 1975]. Despite this long tradition, the Open Government Directive and the re-evolving international discussion mark a specific trend line: For the first time, the principles and strategies were discussed as a holistic government strategy on the highest level. The Obama Open Government strategy has had impact in Europe as well. For instance, the Belgium presidency of EU arranged a conference called "Lift-off towards Open Government"¹ which included a range of topics, but with limited focus on transparency. The Open Government Partnership² is an international initiative initiated along the UNO summit in September 2011. On the global level, 79 countries (a commitment of Austria is so far missing) meet the 4 criteria proposed by the initiative: discovery of main budget data, citizens' access to information and public data, information on the income of politicians and senior officials as well as openness to participation and protection of civil rights. Once a grassroots movement of activists, Open Government now seems to be adopted by some of the world's biggest NGOs and entering the domain of governance policy.

1.2. Open Government in research

Many studies focus on citizen's attitude towards transparency and their evaluation in the context of local government [Piotrowski, et al. 2007]. Several strands of research concentrate on one of the key elements of Open Government, resulting in a plurality of concepts (e.g. eParticipation, eDemocracy). It was criticised that there is no clear meaning of these concepts and that some of

¹<http://www.opengov2010.be/> (accessed January 28th, 2012)

²<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/> (accessed January 28th, 2012)

them remain very vague or contradictory [Fuchs 2009]. Although most Open Government experts or advocates have a better understanding of the elements, little is known about both the understanding and evaluation of these ideas by political representatives throughout the parties or the cultural differences.

Research in the field focuses on analysing the potentials of Open Government as an instrument and the link between people's trust in democracy and transparent institutionalized procedures. These potentials can be divided into two categories: economical and social arguments. With view to international policies, economical arguments in order to create efficiency and innovation are quite dominant. Pollock's "Model of Public Sector Information Provision" and the follow up paper "The Economics of Public Sector Information" make the economic argument for value gained from releasing specific datasets currently under trading funds [Pollock 2008]. O'Reilly [2010] argues that these new strategies will create significant economic value, data being a key enabler of outside information. Economical arguments see Open Government as a corrective to the current economic crisis, proposing that transparent structures and new services will lead to innovation. However, financial arguments are also amongst the main criteria for not fostering Open Government in a state (now referred to as Open Government budget crisis [Greer 2011]). In addition to the global economic crisis and changes evoking new innovation and business models, other transformation forces are bringing the urgency of public sector transformation to the fore: The socio-technological revolution referred to as Web 2.0, social networking and demographic changes (the "net generation") [Tapscott 2009]. From this perspective, social arguments focus on the potential of Open Government instruments to foster civic participation and collaboration. There are many reasons why citizens choose not to engage in politics. A popular explanation is emphasising an expanding gap between politicians and citizens by less support to specific parties and a disengagement from the institutional democracy and the parliament [Coleman 2009]. The sociological approach is looking at the reasons for this by considering changes in the political economic structures or socio-cultural transformations [Dahlgren 2009]. In other words, these changes are based on the evolution of the preconditions of democracy, which can also be economically driven. Thus, economic and social arguments in Open Government will always be interwoven, although the emphasis will differ according to regional and cultural differences or the respective political attitude.

There are several streams of study in Open Government: Open Government case studies, policy recommendations (a "how-to" of Open Government emphasising the potentials and risks) and meta-research (focusing on citizens' and stakeholders' perspective). Often, these are institutionalised in local governance and strategic public management studies with a strong focus on studying innovation as the hub of new efforts to revitalize and strengthen the role of governments within the complexity and new scenarios of today [Ramirez-Alujas 2010]. A difficulty of applying research in this field to practical circumstances is that the potentials are mostly described with reference to international best practice projects and case studies. Consequently, national or cultural differences as well as citizens' and politicians' precise opinions play a secondary role in research. And whilst research is often using the three pillars of Open Government as a framework, a deeper investigation of the notion of these components is missing.

Along the assumption that good governance emphasizes the involvement of stakeholders for achieving goals [Bicking and Wimmer 2011], a better understanding of the evaluation and rating of both the theoretical and practical instruments of Open Government by political stakeholders can

be utilized for national implementation strategies. Doing politics includes conveying a philosophy of governance to citizens and stakeholders, drawing on both economic and social arguments. Thus it is important to investigate how elements of this philosophy are seen by different target groups or policy makers. The survey seeks to draw a first picture of political stakeholders' enthusiasm for and rating of the subject in a national context.

2. The Austrian case: cultural context, legal background and national initiatives

2.1. The socio-political background of openness

Legal and political institutions' conceptualization of terms such as transparency, participation and collaboration relates to different socio-political cultures. It would go beyond the scope of this article to demonstrate them all, however, causalities are visible on the example of the notion transparency, which is related to different levels of openness.³

Whilst the Anglo-American and Scandinavian countries have a longer tradition of this Open Government element, in Austria we need to take a more nuanced understanding into account. In Europe, Nordic countries are well-known for their general openness in political and administrative terms in order to reach consensus, which is referred to by the term "Nordic Openness"⁴. Compared to other European countries, Austria has not such a long-lived principle of transparent governance, in particular with view to the legal preconditions. While Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries traditionally have liberal laws, other European states like Austria have rather restricted information access [Parycek et al. 2010]. The question of transparency and information access is closely linked to the culture of a society. Information cultures play a key role in how important access to information is seen [Maier-Rabler 2002]. The differences in the approach to governmental information become clear by comparing the laws concerning freedom of information among Member States of the European Union. Sweden's "Freedom of the Press Act" of 1766 counts for early legislation on the field [Goetze et al 2009], and other Freedom of Information legislations have followed since then. There has been a worldwide increase in Freedom of Information acts during the last decade, for instance, Germany and the UK got their Freedom of Information acts in 2005. Increased access to information and strengthened transparency are also defined as objectives by 2015 in the Ministerial Declaration of eGovernment of Malmö 2009 [European Union 2009].

In Austria, paragraph 4 of the Austrian Constitution describes the obligation of national, provincial and community agencies as well as all other institutions of public law to disclosure information, as long as it does not underlie the obligation of secrecy. At the moment, the demand for information itself is not constitutionally covered as a subjective right [Parycek et al. 2010]. In addition various legal provisions provide exemptions on information disclosure. Vague wording

³ As authors concentrate on the element transparency and related discussions in this paper, the Austrian context will be discussed broadly from this perspective. For a more detailed analysis of other elements and stages of Open Government, more information on institutionalised and informal participative procedures in the country would be necessary, but clearly go beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴ Mapping Cultures of Public Trust: Open Government and Open Society in Northern Europe and the European Union. Workshop held at the University of Helsinki, 03.-04.06.2010, Helsinki (accessed January 28th, 2012)

of the legal text further gives room for a large margin for interpretation on the side of the authority. Whilst it might be true that we live in an area of unprecedented transparency on the global level, Austria has not yet confessed unrestricted accessibility to information from a legally binding perspective. Whilst some advocates and parties are actively promoting Open Government values and projects, most of these initiatives are yet on the local level and bottom-up driven.

2.2. Initiatives on the national level

Initiatives to foster Open Government in Austria and their first achievements include the following activities. They can be seen as a first attempt to stimulate communication exchange between political stakeholders, researchers and technical experts in the field, and some of them already lead to practical output in the form of citizen services. The association Open3 seeks to foster debate on modern state philosophy and new possibilities of cooperation between citizens and the government since the beginning of 2010. Open3 is an open, non-profit network acting as intermediary between politics, administration, economy and citizens with the aim of enabling knowledge transfer in each field. Applications and data visualization, e.g. a visualization of budgetary data 2011-2014 are a first output of the project. The Austrian network Open Government Data(<http://gov.opendata.at/site/>) seeks to promote Open Data as part of the Open Government philosophy with the aim to provide free data (e.g. micro-census, census, traffic or environmental data), readable by machines and humans to the public and economy. The private initiative is cooperating with the public sector, Federal Agencies and other organisations. Another success of Austrian Open Data advocates was the publishing of the Viennese Open Data portal OGD Wien (<http://data.wien.gv.at/>) in May 2011.

It has to be pointed out that most of these initiatives are, quite contrary to the public image of the implementation process in Australia, America or Great Britain, bottom-up driven, although they are gradually entering the domain of mainstream politics. A first top-down initiative is the Austrian Open Government Strategy of the Federal Chancellery. The aim of this working group is the evaluation of the potential and risks of Open Government in the Austrian context. Another initiative is the Austrian project group eDemocracy and eParticipation (PGEDEM), an interministerial group of external experts that is also working on Open Government topics [Medimorec et al 2010]. Beside these initiatives and projects, the (affiliation deleted) has been conducting several stakeholder workshops on Open Government and Open Data in spring 2011 focusing on the notions of transparency and Open Data implementation strategies.

3. Survey results

3.1. Methodology and research questions

The online survey "Potential and risks of Open Government for Austrian MPs" was conducted in March 2011. Members of the whole National Council (The Chamber of Representatives of the Austrian Parliament) were invited to participate. The survey "Potentials and risks of Open Government for Austrian MPs"⁵ was conducted as cooperation between (affiliation deleted) and (affiliation deleted). The aim of the survey was to provide initial data on the relevance of the topic Open Government, in particular on the notions of transparency, participation and collaboration for

⁵ (reference deleted in original manuscript)

members of the Austrian parliament. Another aim was to provide data for future comparative research and to relate the Austrian situation to the international standards and stakeholders' discourse.

The main research questions were the following:

- Is the topic Open Government already on the everyday political agenda for Austrian MPs?
- How do MPs evaluate Open Government elements like transparency, participation and collaboration? Which potentials and risks do they see in the Austrian context? Which elements do they show most enthusiasm for?
- Which solutions and measurements towards a more open Government do they prefer (e.g. with regards to legislation or data publication)?

The focus on the thematic triad according to the working definition of Open Government applied (transparency, participation and collaboration) was chosen due to two reasons: On one hand, it was expected that participants were be familiar with this concept discussed along the Open Government Directive of the American example as those gained high publicity on a global scale and was already used by Austrian Open Government Data initiatives and discussed in the National Assembly [Dax 2011]. On the other hand, these notions are often seen as the different stages of an open state philosophy, with collaboration symbolising the more advanced level of governance. The three-folded categorisation allows for a more detailed investigation of how stakeholders understand these levels. In the interpretation, authors present an overview of MPs opinions on these elements before focusing on aspects related to transparency and publishing strategies of governmental information. This was partly motivated by the fact that lack of transparency and corruption are currently frequently occurring topics in the Austrian media landscape.

3.2. Questionnaire, target group and response rate

The questionnaire survey was conducted online in March 2011 (from 15th March, 9 a.m. to 31st March 2011, 6 p.m.). All 183 Austrian MPs were invited to participate in the survey via the email address published on the website of the Austrian parliament (www.parlament.gv.at). The turn rate was 22.95% respectively 42 questionnaires (n=42, 2 MPs went for an opt-out option). A session key guaranteed that a person could only fill out the survey once. Due to privacy reasons and the personal security of participants, it is not possible to subsequently personalize the answers. However, researchers are able to track the number of questionnaires filled out by the different parties. All respondents are representatives of the parliament as a whole and of all political parties. Due to the small population of the Austrian MPs and assuming that all MPs have read the invitation to the survey, the target population is identical with the actual population (as opposed to a random sample). Statistical inferences can thus be drawn on the basis of a representative sample).

The questionnaire consisted of 9 questions of an ordinal scale (questions A1-A3, B) or nominal scale (C, D, E, F, G). Section A focused on the general evaluation of the three Open Government elements. The other sections consisted of more detailed questions related to these three categories. The online survey comprised the following questions in detail:

A1 - A3: Open Government consists of three pillars: transparency, participation and collaboration: How important do you consider an implementation in these fields?

- B: What role does the theme Open Government play in your daily political routine?
- C. What chances do you see in the field of transparency, i.e. Open Government Data in Austria?
- D. Which risks do you see in the field of transparency (Open Government Data) in Austria?
- E. How should non-personalised data be published?
- F. On which legal basis should Open Government Data stand in the future?
- G. Are there currently enough direct democratic instruments for participation in Austria?

Questions C and D offered multiple choice options. The raw data of the survey can be downloaded on the website of www.open3.at. Data matrix and raw data can be downloaded for CSV, Excel, SPSS or R and are licensed under Creative Commons "CC BY 3.0".

Due to the positive connotations of the Open Government elements, researchers clearly expected a very positive evaluation of these notions. However, the survey provides a first chance to access the level of enthusiasm towards the different elements of Open Government as well as the relevant strategies in Austria as basis for further qualitative research and comparative studies.

The high chance of a non-response bias (some parties tend to advocate the Open Government concept more than others) can be relativised as representatives of all Austrian parties were participating. The survey results thus stand for the complete national political spectrum. However, interpretation still has to take into account a possible self-selection bias inherent in such surveys, as people responding could be more likely to be familiar with and favourable for Open Government. It is thus estimated that the survey cannot access the opinion of those who were not familiar with the term at all. The relatively high response rate (23%) for a self-administered questionnaire⁶ however indicates that most participants were familiar with the terms across the political parties. Further democratic data like age, gender or experience with ICT has not been taken into account at this stage of research.

3.3. Main results

In the following, authors present the main results of the questionnaire related to the relevance of Open Government elements in the Austrian public sphere, the political work of MPs and their opinion on Open Government and Open Data (in particular legislation and publishing strategies) in Austria. Besides results on the general evaluation of the Open Government terms and as indicated above, authors focus mostly on aspects related to transparency and related strategies, but will relate results to findings about the other elements when relevant.

3.3.1. Open Government in the political public sphere

Results show that, from a stakeholder's perspective, Open Government is slowly becoming part of the broader political public sphere in Austria. It is perceived as an important theme and thus relevant in the Austrian parliament. There was a general high evaluation of all key notions pointing towards a positive attitude towards Open Government (the majority of participants evaluated the three elements as important or very important: 71.43% for the item transparency,

⁶For research on the association of response rates with democratic representativeness of a sample and accuracy of results see Holbrook et al. 2005. By examining the results of 81 national surveys with response rates varying from 5 percent to 54 percent, they found that surveys with much lower response rates were only minimally less accurate.

52.93% for participation, 66.67% for collaboration, additional figures below). However, only few of the survey participants (9.52%) state that the topic has already played a very important role in their working environment (scale value 5). 19.05% state that it has played an important role though (4). The majority of participants (42.86%) voted for the average value (3) (median 3). These results indicate that the concept is already well-known, but not of priority in the political landscape.

| Open Government | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------------|
| <i>B: Influence on daily work</i> | | |
| | Number | Percentage |
| High influence | 4 | 9,52 |
| Influence | 8 | 19,05 |
| Average | 18 | 42,86 |
| Little influence | 5 | 11,9 |
| No influence | 6 | 14,29 |
| No answer | 1 | 2,38 |
| | 42 | 100 |

Figure 1: Influence on daily work

Political stakeholders are, however, more familiar with the topic than NGOs: In a similar survey conducted by Open3, 41% of Austrian NGOs stated that they have not yet heard of Open Government or Open Data before. However, with view to the notion transparency, participants expressed a very clear opinion on the matter: for 42.86%, transparency is very important, for 28.57% important and only 2.38% voted for average. Collaboration received a very positive evaluation as well (38.10% very important (5), 28.57%important (4)), although 14.29% consider this notion as not important (median 4).

More surprisingly, 16.67% state that the topic transparency is irrelevant in Open Government and 7.14% see it as not important. A similar picture can be found with the evaluation of the element participation: Whilst for most parliamentarians this is an important topic (median 4), for 21.41%, the topic is less important (2) or irrelevant (1) (4.76% irrelevant).

| Open Government | | |
|--|--------|------------|
| <i>A2: Importance of "Participation"</i> | | |
| | Number | Percentage |
| Very important | 16 | 38,1 |
| Important | 6 | 14,29 |
| Average | 10 | 23,81 |
| Not important | 7 | 16,66 |
| Irrelevant | 2 | 4,76 |
| No answer | 1 | 2,38 |
| | 42 | 100 |

Figure 2: Importance of Participation

Whilst the general positive evaluation for the elements was expected, the finding that quite a large proportion of MPs evaluated participation as unimportant is striking. Whilst a vote for average could also mean that respondents give the topic about the same importance as many other political topics (it would not automatically mean that they consider it to be meaningless; also, a low evaluation of an item in an Open Government context does not automatically point towards a low evaluation in the broader political field), the relatively high number of votes for unimportance calls for further, qualitative investigation. In particular the notion participation would be expected to be seen as an integral and unquestioned part of modern democracies by politicians, even in times of democratic crisis. This is even more striking considering a possible response bias, as it was estimated that those MPs familiar with (and probably more favourable for) the Open Government concept were more likely to participate.

As for electronic forms of participation, the survey shows a significant relevance of electronic forms of participation: For 73.81% of participants, internet and participation are interwoven and cannot be separated. Nevertheless, 14.29% of them are unsatisfied with the current options for participation online.

3.3.2. Social potential and risks

When asked about the chances and risks of Open Government, it was expected that, due to the emphasis on the financial crisis in the political public discourse in Austria, economic reasons would be stated as the most promising effect. However, results showed a more nuanced picture with social factors as key arguments for Open Government strategies. Only 11.90% see the strengthening of Austria as industrial location as chance in the field of transparency. Significantly more important chances seen were the clarification of social dependencies through visualisation (40.48%), the evaluation of political or administrative results (57.14%) and more understanding and legitimacy of political activities in general (71.43%). Along a similar line, social risks were rated as very high by 72% of participants. The biggest risks chosen were the misinterpretation of information (55% state misinterpretation or deliberate manipulation) or the increase of a digital or social gap (38%).

3.3.3. Cost-free publication

Several principles for publishing official data have been defined by Open data advocates [Open Data Network 2011]. The characteristics of Open Data are continuously developed further (at present, there are 10 principles). Nevertheless, specialists have not yet come to an agreement as to which data publication options should be chosen in a particular context, especially since certain options will cost administrations time and money. Nevertheless, the majority of MPs were clearly voting for cost-free publication (64.29%). Another majority was speaking out for complete data sets (54.76%) to the full extent (vs. 30.95% voting for the publication of only selected administrative and official data). This indicates that half of MPs favour the publication along the defined Open Data Principles, a result that will hopefully contribute to the ongoing discourse on data policies and the “how” of publication in the field.

| Open Government | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|------------|
| <i>E: Publication of data</i> | | |
| | Number | Percentage |
| All data cost-free | 19 | 45,24 |
| Several data cost-free | 8 | 19,05 |
| All data partly cost-free | 4 | 9,52 |
| Several data partly cost-free | 5 | 11,91 |
| No opinion | 4 | 9,52 |
| No answer | 2 | 4,76 |
| | 42 | 100 |

Figure 3: Publication of data

3.3.4. Freedom of information: the legal perspective

Regarding a legal framework on the way towards Open Government and Open Data, 85.72% speak out for a specific legal framework, either as separate law or as part of existing regulations. More surprising is the relatively high vote for a specific Freedom of Information respectively Open Government Data Law (45.24%), as Austria has, in comparison to other countries, no tradition of such a law. Another 40.48% favour the implementation of Open Government laws in existing regulations, and for 11.90% no own legal regulation is needed.

| Open Government | | |
|--|--------|------------|
| <i>F: Legal basis for Open Government Data</i> | | |
| | Number | Percentage |
| Seperate Open Government Data law | 19 | 45,24 |
| Open Government Data as part of existing laws | 17 | 40,48 |
| No legal basis necessary, only widely accepted conventions | 5 | 11,9 |
| No answer | 1 | 2,38 |
| | 42 | 100 |

Figure 4: Legal basis

Results point towards a huge potential for closing the gap of a non-existing law describing a general obligation for publishing information and a modern information law re-regulating the procession of electronic data and information. If Austria seeks to keep pace with European law, legislative amendments will be necessary. Results indicate that Austrian MPs are already open to these changes.

4. Conclusion and outlook

International developments and understandings of state philosophy cannot be transferred seamlessly to cultural circumstances and Open Government advocates need to consider both national and regional differences when seeking to make new governmental concepts publicly

accepted. Whilst Open Government is already widely known and identified as an important field of policymaking by Austrian MPs, it has not yet reached the level of daily discourse or political work. In order to implement Open Government strategies in Austrian politics, MPs and also other political stakeholders presumably need more information, in particular on the various Open Government strategies as basis for decision making. Ideally, this information is provided by independent organisations or the educational sector.

The terms transparency, participation and collaboration are mostly seen as different stages on the way to implementing Open Government principles in the state. However, they can also be put into practice one after the other or separately. For advocating Open Government in Austria, emphasising the notion transparency is a recommended starting point as this was the element MPs showed the most enthusiasm for. A possible topic in this respect is Open Data and its societal implications on a personalized level, e.g. the advantages of Open Data services in citizens' everyday life. A first publishing opportunity is to initially open all data that already exists in machine-readable, structured form as raw data, preferably in a central portal. Advocating strategies should also focus on social aspects of Open Government, as highlighted by the results on social potentials and risks. MPs mostly see Open Government Data as a chance to overcome the democratic deficit towards more citizen-centric politics. A better and increased understanding of political activities was stated as one of the biggest chances in this context. The results also indicate that MPs are already aware of the social risks of Open Government strategies. Social arguments like increasing inequalities amongst population or a possible "Open Data Divide" have to be taken seriously and to be discussed on the national level, as the first Open Data projects are ready to be realised in Austria.

With respect to a separated Freedom of Information law, the investigation of and adaption to international examples is necessary. As Open Government is already on the political agenda of European information policies (eGovernment action plan 2011-2015 [European Commission 2011-2015]; Kroes 2010) the question is not whether Open Government will be implemented in current policies, but how the topic should be legally treated. The current aims on the European level will challenge governments, especially those sticking to obsolete regulations. As the results show, MPs clearly vote for the implementation of a separate Freedom of Information law as against the integration of such a law in existing regulations. Such legislation could be seen as the necessary step towards modernisation enforced by the changing flow of information control [O'Reilly 2010] currently experienced on many levels of society.

More comprehensive and comparative research in different countries is necessary and relating the findings to socio-demographic data (like gender, age, ICT usage, further expertise) would enable researchers to assess further dependencies. A qualitative examination and confirmatory investigation of results, e.g. regarding the reasons for differences in the evaluation of the three Open Government elements, could complete the first findings of this survey.

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