

Re-use of Public Sector Information in Spain: The Solid Foundations of a Promising Sector

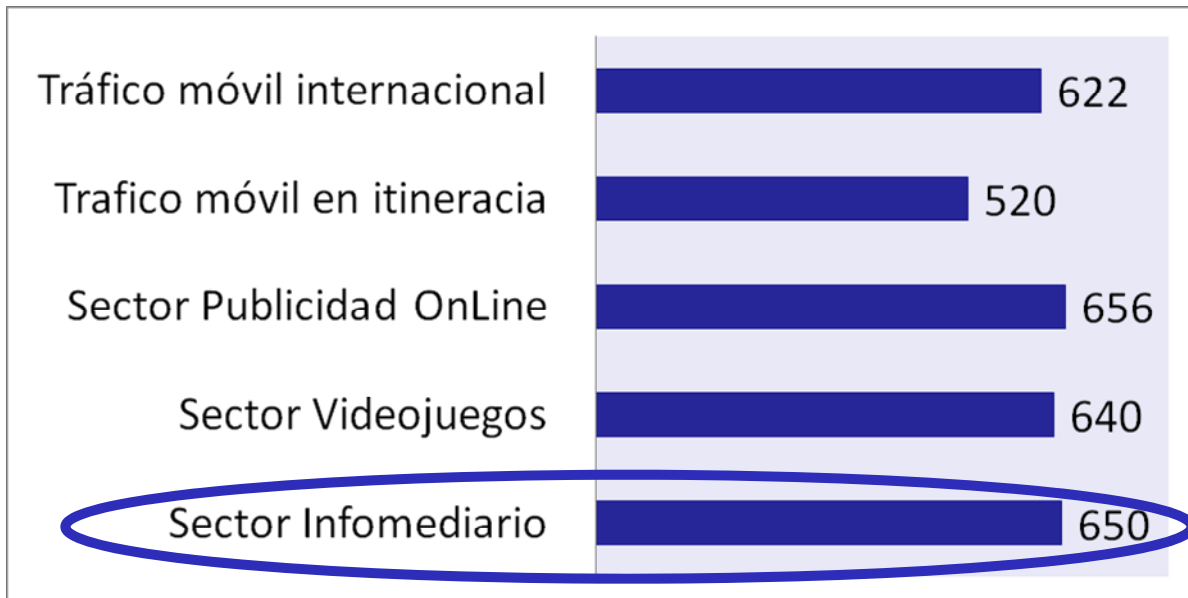
One of the implications of the development of the Internet has been to promote the economic value of information. Information as an immaterial resource that can easily be shared, combined and transformed has given rise to a growing number of products and services, with the subsequent creation of economic activity. It is within this scenario that the States are beginning to become aware of the value of the information they compile, produce, save and disseminate within the framework of the public service that they offer.

In 2003, the approval of **Directive 2003/98/EC**, gave the Member States of the European Union a legal instrument to jointly promote the re-use of public sector information within the single market. Without altering the way of accessing information on the States, a framework was created that facilitated third party use of public information in the same conditions for all those interested in it. Hence the infomediary sector was born, which is the group of enterprises that create and produce services based on public information with profit-making purposes or otherwise.

In 2007, Spain completed the transposition of the European Directive when Law 37/2007, of 16th November, on the re-use of public sector information was passed, and a year later the tool that has been used to complement and accompany its implementation was provided: Aporta Project. The main objective in its early years has been to create and foster a culture for the re-use of public information, laying the groundwork to enable administrative units to make their data and documents available to third parties and promoting the development of the newly founded infomediary sector.

The activity is beginning to reap its rewards. In a pioneering in-depth study in 2011, the Aporta Project has identified that **the re-use of public information in Spain in 2010 represented annual economic activity of 550-650 million euros**. Although this is still only a quarter of the potential identified in the studies carried out by the

European Commission, it is already equivalent to the invoicing volume of the video-games sector (software) or the roaming services of mobile phone operators¹.

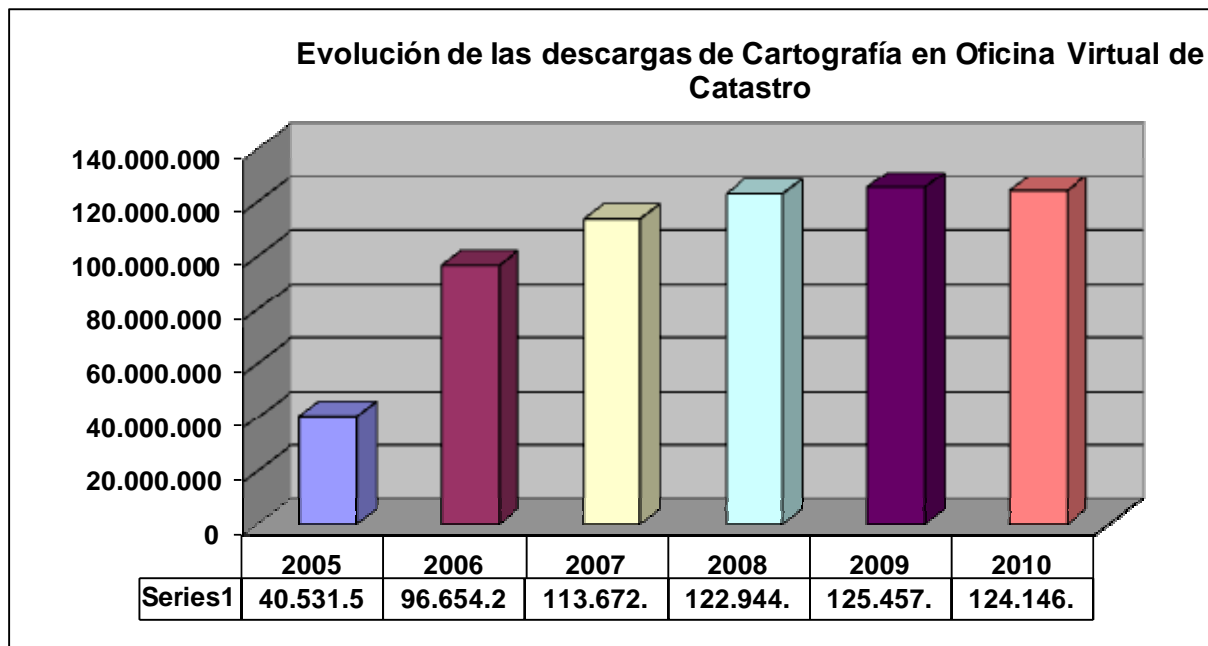


Datos en millones de euros

In addition to the data obtained in the aforementioned study, there are other empirical indications of the growing development of the infomediary sector. The pioneering administrative units offering public information for re-use in favourable conditions have registered a constant increase in the number of downloads from their websites. This tendency has been detected in all of the territorial administrations committed to making public data available. An example of this in the General State Administration is the **General Directorate for Cadastre**, one of the bodies with the longest history in the evolution of downloading reusable data, and according to which, **the download of cartographic data has tripled in five years, rising from 40 million downloads a year to over 125².**

¹ Source: "Characterization Study of the Infomediary Sector", July 2010, Aporta Project and ONTSI.

² Source: General Directorate for Cadastre, Ministry for Economy and Finance



Without leaving the scope of the General State Administration, the National Geographic Institute deals with the growing demand to download geographic information via the Download Centre of the National Geographic Information Centre. 1,138,932 downloads were registered between October 2010 and October 2011, with a total volume of 151,073.83 GBytes.³

More recent initiatives have also experienced the same response to the offer of data in reusable format. Among the Autonomous Communities, for example, “Open Data Euskadi”, which celebrated its first year of activity last September recorded increases in the volume of downloads in October and November 2011 with respect to the same months in 2010 of 257% and 241% respectively.⁴ As for Local Authorities, the open data catalogue, **Open Data Barcelona, which has been in service since 28th March 2011, has registered around 87,000 downloads, which is equivalent to around 350 downloads a day**⁵.

³ Source: National Geographic Institute, Ministry of Public Works, November 2011

⁴ Source: General Administration of the Basque Country, 30th November 2011

⁵ Source: Barcelona City Council, 30th November 2011

The healthy state of the re-use of public sector information in Spain has been acknowledged in studies carried out by international organisations (OECD, European Commission), States (United Kingdom, Holland) and private organisations (McKinsey), in which the Aporta Project along with other regional initiatives have been referred to as good practices. The most recent recognition was at the **6th Ministerial e-Government Conference, held in Poznan⁶**, where OpenData Euskadi appeared in the project exhibition area as a benchmark practice and the Aporta Project participated as one of the three speakers invited to the session on the Re-use of Public Sector Information.

Achievements up to now are tangible, as are the foundations to secure new objectives. **In October, the beta version of the datos.gob.es website went on-line**, which is an evolution of the website concept which focuses on extending the re-use culture, which was the basis of the Aporta Project and is set out on the aporta.es website, to a website in which the availability and easy identification of reusable public information takes centre stage. More importantly, in October, the Council of Ministers approved **Royal Decree 1495/2011, of 24th October, which develops Law 37/2007 for the state public sector**. This new regulation establishes a pioneering legal framework thanks to which enterprises and citizens will know that public data is generally reusable, establishing a general authorisation for its re-use and this data can easily be found via the Public Information Catalogue (datos.gob.es) with clear and simple conditions for the re-use of information, ensuring the sustainability of the availability of public data process.

⁶ See <http://www.egov2011.pl>