

DIRECTIVE 2003/98/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
of 17 November 2003
on the re-use of public sector information

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 95 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission ⁽¹⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee ⁽²⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions ⁽³⁾,

Acting in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 251 of the Treaty ⁽⁴⁾,

Whereas:

- (1) The Treaty provides for the establishment of an internal market and of a system ensuring that competition in the internal market is not distorted. Harmonisation of the rules and practices in the Member States relating to the exploitation of public sector information contributes to the achievement of these objectives.
- (2) The evolution towards an information and knowledge society influences the life of every citizen in the Community, *inter alia*, by enabling them to gain new ways of accessing and acquiring knowledge.
- (3) Digital content plays an important role in this evolution. Content production has given rise to rapid job creation in recent years and continues to do so. Most of these jobs are created in small emerging companies.
- (4) The public sector collects, produces, reproduces and disseminates a wide range of information in many areas of activity, such as social, economic, geographical, weather, tourist, business, patent and educational information.

(5) One of the principal aims of the establishment of an internal market is the creation of conditions conducive to the development of Community-wide services. Public sector information is an important primary material for digital content products and services and will become an even more important content resource with the development of wireless content services. Broad cross-border geographical coverage will also be essential in this context. Wider possibilities of re-using public sector information should *inter alia* allow European companies to exploit its potential and contribute to economic growth and job creation.

(6) There are considerable differences in the rules and practices in the Member States relating to the exploitation of public sector information resources, which constitute barriers to bringing out the full economic potential of this key document resource. Traditional practice in public sector bodies in exploiting public sector information has developed in very disparate ways. That should be taken into account. Minimum harmonisation of national rules and practices on the re-use of public sector documents should therefore be undertaken, in cases where the differences in national regulations and practices or the absence of clarity hinder the smooth functioning of the internal market and the proper development of the information society in the Community.

(7) Moreover, without minimum harmonisation at Community level, legislative activities at national level, which have already been initiated in a number of Member States in order to respond to the technological challenges, might result in even more significant differences. The impact of such legislative differences and uncertainties will become more significant with the further development of the information society, which has already greatly increased cross-border exploitation of information.

(8) A general framework for the conditions governing re-use of public sector documents is needed in order to ensure fair, proportionate and non-discriminatory conditions for the re-use of such information. Public sector bodies collect, produce, reproduce and disseminate documents to fulfil their public tasks. Use of such documents for other reasons constitutes a re-use. Member States' policies can go beyond the minimum standards established in this Directive, thus allowing for more extensive re-use.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 227 E, 24.9.2002, p. 382.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 85, 8.4.2003, p. 25.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 73, 26.3.2003, p. 38.

⁽⁴⁾ Opinion of the European Parliament of 12 February 2003 (not yet published in the Official Journal), Council Common Position of 26 May 2003 (OJ C 159 E, 8.7.2003, p. 1) and Position of the European Parliament of 25 September 2003 (not yet published in the Official Journal), Council Decision of 27 October 2003.

- (9) This Directive does not contain an obligation to allow re-use of documents. The decision whether or not to authorise re-use will remain with the Member States or the public sector body concerned. This Directive should apply to documents that are made accessible for re-use when public sector bodies license, sell, disseminate, exchange or give out information. To avoid cross-subsidies, re-use should include further use of documents within the organisation itself for activities falling outside the scope of its public tasks. Activities falling outside the public task will typically include supply of documents that are produced and charged for exclusively on a commercial basis and in competition with others in the market. The definition of 'document' is not intended to cover computer programmes. The Directive builds on the existing access regimes in the Member States and does not change the national rules for access to documents. It does not apply in cases in which citizens or companies can, under the relevant access regime, only obtain a document if they can prove a particular interest. At Community level, Articles 41 (right to good administration) and 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognise the right of any citizen of the Union and any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State to have access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. Public sector bodies should be encouraged to make available for re-use any documents held by them. Public sector bodies should promote and encourage re-use of documents, including official texts of a legislative and administrative nature in those cases where the public sector body has the right to authorise their re-use.
- (10) The definitions of 'public sector body' and 'body governed by public law' are taken from the public procurement Directives (92/50/EEC⁽¹⁾, 93/36/EEC⁽²⁾ and 93/37/EEC⁽³⁾ and 98/4/EC⁽⁴⁾). Public undertakings are not covered by these definitions.
- (11) This Directive lays down a generic definition of the term 'document', in line with developments in the information society. It covers any representation of acts, facts or information — and any compilation of such acts, facts or information — whatever its medium (written on paper, or stored in electronic form or as a sound, visual or audiovisual recording), held by public sector bodies. A document held by a public sector body is a document where the public sector body has the right to authorise re-use.
- (12) The time limit for replying to requests for re-use should be reasonable and in line with the equivalent time for requests to access the document under the relevant access regimes. Reasonable time limits throughout the Union will stimulate the creation of new aggregated information products and services at pan-European level. Once a request for re-use has been granted, public sector bodies should make the documents available in a time-frame that allows their full economic potential to be exploited. This is particularly important for dynamic content (e.g. traffic data), the economic value of which depends on the immediate availability of the information and of regular updates. Should a licence be used, the timely availability of documents may be a part of the terms of the licence.
- (13) The possibilities for re-use can be improved by limiting the need to digitise paper-based documents or to process digital files to make them mutually compatible. Therefore, public sector bodies should make documents available in any pre-existing format or language, through electronic means where possible and appropriate. Public sector bodies should view requests for extracts from existing documents favourably when to grant such a request would involve only a simple operation. Public sector bodies should not, however, be obliged to provide an extract from a document where this involves disproportionate effort. To facilitate re-use, public sector bodies should make their own documents available in a format which, as far as possible and appropriate, is not dependent on the use of specific software. Where possible and appropriate, public sector bodies should take into account the possibilities for the re-use of documents by and for people with disabilities.
- (14) Where charges are made, the total income should not exceed the total costs of collecting, producing, reproducing and disseminating documents, together with a reasonable return on investment, having due regard to the self-financing requirements of the public sector body concerned, where applicable. Production includes creation and collation, and dissemination may also include user support. Recovery of costs, together with a reasonable return on investment, consistent with applicable accounting principles and the relevant cost calculation method of the public sector body concerned, constitutes an upper limit to the charges, as any excessive prices should be precluded. The upper limit for charges set in this Directive is without prejudice to the right of Member States or public sector bodies to apply lower charges or no charges at all, and Member States should encourage public sector bodies to make documents available at charges that do not exceed the marginal costs for reproducing and disseminating the documents.
- ⁽¹⁾ OJ L 209, 24.7.1992, p. 1. Directive as last amended by Commission Directive 2001/78/EC (OJ L 285, 29.10.2001, p. 1).
- ⁽²⁾ OJ L 199, 9.8.1993, p. 1. Directive as last amended by Commission Directive 2001/78/EC.
- ⁽³⁾ OJ L 199, 9.8.1993, p. 54. Directive as last amended by Commission Directive 2001/78/EC.
- ⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 101, 1.4.1998, p. 1.

- (15) Ensuring that the conditions for re-use of public sector documents are clear and publicly available is a precondition for the development of a Community-wide information market. Therefore all applicable conditions for the re-use of the documents should be made clear to the potential re-users. Member States should encourage the creation of indices accessible on line, where appropriate, of available documents so as to promote and facilitate requests for re-use. Applicants for re-use of documents should be informed of available means of redress relating to decisions or practices affecting them. This will be particularly important for SMEs which may not be familiar with interactions with public sector bodies from other Member States and corresponding means of redress.
- (16) Making public all generally available documents held by the public sector — concerning not only the political process but also the legal and administrative process — is a fundamental instrument for extending the right to knowledge, which is a basic principle of democracy. This objective is applicable to institutions at every level, be it local, national or international.
- (17) In some cases the re-use of documents will take place without a licence being agreed. In other cases a licence will be issued imposing conditions on the re-use by the licensee dealing with issues such as liability, the proper use of documents, guaranteeing non-alteration and the acknowledgement of source. If public sector bodies license documents for re-use, the licence conditions should be fair and transparent. Standard licences that are available online may also play an important role in this respect. Therefore Member States should provide for the availability of standard licences.
- (18) If the competent authority decides to no longer make available certain documents for re-use, or to cease updating these documents, it should make these decisions publicly known, at the earliest opportunity, via electronic means whenever possible.
- (19) Conditions for re-use should be non-discriminatory for comparable categories of re-use. This should, for example, not prevent the exchange of information between public sector bodies free of charge for the exercise of public tasks, whilst other parties are charged for the re-use of the same documents. Neither should it prevent the adoption of a differentiated charging policy for commercial and non-commercial re-use.
- (20) Public sector bodies should respect competition rules when establishing the principles for re-use of documents avoiding as far as possible exclusive agreements between themselves and private partners. However, in order to provide a service of general economic interest, an exclusive right to re-use specific public sector documents may sometimes be necessary. This may be the case if no commercial publisher would publish the information without such an exclusive right.
- (21) This Directive should be implemented and applied in full compliance with the principles relating to the protection of personal data in accordance with Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and of the free movement of such data ⁽¹⁾.
- (22) The intellectual property rights of third parties are not affected by this Directive. For the avoidance of doubt, the term 'intellectual property rights' refers to copyright and related rights only (including *sui generis* forms of protection). This Directive does not apply to documents covered by industrial property rights, such as patents, registered designs and trademarks. The Directive does not affect the existence or ownership of intellectual property rights of public sector bodies, nor does it limit the exercise of these rights in any way beyond the boundaries set by this Directive. The obligations imposed by this Directive should apply only insofar as they are compatible with the provisions of international agreements on the protection of intellectual property rights, in particular the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (the Berne Convention) and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (the TRIPS Agreement). Public sector bodies should, however, exercise their copyright in a way that facilitates re-use.
- (23) Tools that help potential re-users to find documents available for re-use and the conditions for re-use can facilitate considerably the cross-border use of public sector documents. Member States should therefore ensure that practical arrangements are in place that help re-users in their search for documents available for re-use. Assets lists, accessible preferably online, of main documents (documents that are extensively re-used or that have the potential to be extensively re-used), and portal sites that are linked to decentralised assets lists are examples of such practical arrangements.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 281, 23.11.1995, p. 31.

(24) This Directive is without prejudice to Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society ⁽¹⁾ and Directive 96/9/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 1996 on the legal protection of databases ⁽²⁾. It spells out the conditions within which public sector bodies can exercise their intellectual property rights in the internal information market when allowing re-use of documents.

(25) Since the objectives of the proposed action, namely to facilitate the creation of Community-wide information products and services based on public sector documents, to enhance an effective cross-border use of public sector documents by private companies for added-value information products and services and to limit distortions of competition on the Community market, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, in view of the intrinsic Community scope and impact of the said action, be better achieved at Community level, the Community may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Directive does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve those objectives. This Directive should achieve minimum harmonisation, thereby avoiding further disparities between the Member States in dealing with the re-use of public sector documents,

HAVE ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

CHAPTER I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Subject matter and scope

1. This Directive establishes a minimum set of rules governing the re-use and the practical means of facilitating re-use of existing documents held by public sector bodies of the Member States.

2. This Directive shall not apply to:

- (a) documents the supply of which is an activity falling outside the scope of the public task of the public sector bodies concerned as defined by law or by other binding rules in the Member State, or in the absence of such rules as defined in line with common administrative practice in the Member State in question;
- (b) documents for which third parties hold intellectual property rights;

(c) documents which are excluded from access by virtue of the access regimes in the Member States, including on the grounds of:

- the protection of national security (i.e. State security), defence, or public security,
- statistical or commercial confidentiality;

(d) documents held by public service broadcasters and their subsidiaries, and by other bodies or their subsidiaries for the fulfilment of a public service broadcasting remit;

(e) documents held by educational and research establishments, such as schools, universities, archives, libraries and research facilities including, where relevant, organisations established for the transfer of research results;

(f) documents held by cultural establishments, such as museums, libraries, archives, orchestras, operas, ballets and theatres.

3. This Directive builds on and is without prejudice to the existing access regimes in the Member States. This Directive shall not apply in cases in which citizens or companies have to prove a particular interest under the access regime to obtain access to the documents.

4. This Directive leaves intact and in no way affects the level of protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data under the provisions of Community and national law, and in particular does not alter the obligations and rights set out in Directive 95/46/EC.

5. The obligations imposed by this Directive shall apply only insofar as they are compatible with the provisions of international agreements on the protection of intellectual property rights, in particular the Berne Convention and the TRIPS Agreement.

Article 2

Definitions

For the purpose of this Directive the following definitions shall apply:

1. 'public sector body' means the State, regional or local authorities, bodies governed by public law and associations formed by one or several such authorities or one or several such bodies governed by public law;

2. 'body governed by public law' means any body:

- (a) established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character; and
- (b) having legal personality; and
- (c) financed, for the most part by the State, or regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or subject to management supervision by those bodies; or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities or by other bodies governed by public law;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 167, 22.6.2001, p. 10.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 77, 27.3.1996, p. 20.

3. 'document' means:
- (a) any content whatever its medium (written on paper or stored in electronic form or as a sound, visual or audio-visual recording);
 - (b) any part of such content;
4. 're-use' means the use by persons or legal entities of documents held by public sector bodies, for commercial or non-commercial purposes other than the initial purpose within the public task for which the documents were produced. Exchange of documents between public sector bodies purely in pursuit of their public tasks does not constitute re-use;
5. 'personal data' means data as defined in Article 2(a) of Directive 95/46/EC.

Article 3

General principle

Member States shall ensure that, where the re-use of documents held by public sector bodies is allowed, these documents shall be re-usable for commercial or non-commercial purposes in accordance with the conditions set out in Chapters III and IV. Where possible, documents shall be made available through electronic means.

CHAPTER II

REQUESTS FOR RE-USE

Article 4

Requirements applicable to the processing of requests for re-use

1. Public sector bodies shall, through electronic means where possible and appropriate, process requests for re-use and shall make the document available for re-use to the applicant or, if a licence is needed, finalise the licence offer to the applicant within a reasonable time that is consistent with the timeframes laid down for the processing of requests for access to documents.
2. Where no time limits or other rules regulating the timely provision of documents have been established, public sector bodies shall process the request and shall deliver the documents for re-use to the applicant or, if a licence is needed, finalise the licence offer to the applicant within a timeframe of not more than 20 working days after its receipt. This timeframe may be extended by another 20 working days for extensive or complex requests. In such cases the applicant shall be notified within three weeks after the initial request that more time is needed to process it.

3. In the event of a negative decision, the public sector bodies shall communicate the grounds for refusal to the applicant on the basis of the relevant provisions of the access regime in that Member State or of the national provisions adopted pursuant to this Directive, in particular Article 1(2)(a), (b) and (c), or Article 3. Where a negative decision is based on Article 1(2)(b), the public sector body shall include a reference to the natural or legal person who is the rightholder, where known, or alternatively to the licensor from which the public sector body has obtained the relevant material.

4. Any negative decision shall contain a reference to the means of redress in case the applicant wishes to appeal the decision.

5. Public sector bodies covered under Article 1(2)(d), (e) and (f) shall not be required to comply with the requirements of this Article.

CHAPTER III

CONDITIONS FOR RE-USE

Article 5

Available formats

1. Public sector bodies shall make their documents available in any pre-existing format or language, through electronic means where possible and appropriate. This shall not imply an obligation for public sector bodies to create or adapt documents in order to comply with the request, nor shall it imply an obligation to provide extracts from documents where this would involve disproportionate effort, going beyond a simple operation.

2. On the basis of this Directive, public sector bodies cannot be required to continue the production of a certain type of documents with a view to the re-use of such documents by a private or public sector organisation.

Article 6

Principles governing charging

Where charges are made, the total income from supplying and allowing re-use of documents shall not exceed the cost of collection, production, reproduction and dissemination, together with a reasonable return on investment. Charges should be cost-oriented over the appropriate accounting period and calculated in line with the accounting principles applicable to the public sector bodies involved.

*Article 7***Transparency**

Any applicable conditions and standard charges for the re-use of documents held by public sector bodies shall be pre-established and published, through electronic means where possible and appropriate. On request, the public sector body shall indicate the calculation basis for the published charge. The public sector body in question shall also indicate which factors will be taken into account in the calculation of charges for atypical cases. Public sector bodies shall ensure that applicants for re-use of documents are informed of available means of redress relating to decisions or practices affecting them.

*Article 8***Licences**

1. Public sector bodies may allow for re-use of documents without conditions or may impose conditions, where appropriate through a licence, dealing with relevant issues. These conditions shall not unnecessarily restrict possibilities for re-use and shall not be used to restrict competition.

2. In Member States where licences are used, Member States shall ensure that standard licences for the re-use of public sector documents, which can be adapted to meet particular licence applications, are available in digital format and can be processed electronically. Member States shall encourage all public sector bodies to use the standard licences.

*Article 9***Practical arrangements**

Member States shall ensure that practical arrangements are in place that facilitate the search for documents available for re-use, such as assets lists, accessible preferably online, of main documents, and portal sites that are linked to decentralised assets lists.

CHAPTER IV

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND FAIR TRADING*Article 10***Non-discrimination**

1. Any applicable conditions for the re-use of documents shall be non-discriminatory for comparable categories of re-use.

2. If documents are re-used by a public sector body as input for its commercial activities which fall outside the scope of its public tasks, the same charges and other conditions shall apply to the supply of the documents for those activities as apply to other users.

*Article 11***Prohibition of exclusive arrangements**

1. The re-use of documents shall be open to all potential actors in the market, even if one or more market players already exploit added-value products based on these documents. Contracts or other arrangements between the public sector bodies holding the documents and third parties shall not grant exclusive rights.

2. However, where an exclusive right is necessary for the provision of a service in the public interest, the validity of the reason for granting such an exclusive right shall be subject to regular review, and shall, in any event, be reviewed every three years. The exclusive arrangements established after the entry into force of this Directive shall be transparent and made public.

3. Existing exclusive arrangements that do not qualify for the exception under paragraph 2 shall be terminated at the end of the contract or in any case not later than 31 December 2008.

CHAPTER V

FINAL PROVISIONS*Article 12***Implementation**

Member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive by 1 July 2005. They shall forthwith inform the Commission thereof.

When Member States adopt those measures, they shall contain a reference to this Directive or be accompanied by such a reference on the occasion of their official publication. Member States shall determine how such reference is to be made.

*Article 13***Review**

1. The Commission shall carry out a review of the application of this Directive before 1 July 2008 and shall communicate the results of this review, together with any proposals for modifications of the Directive, to the European Parliament and the Council.

2. The review shall in particular address the scope and impact of this Directive, including the extent of the increase in re-use of public sector documents, the effects of the principles applied to charging and the re-use of official texts of a legislative and administrative nature, as well as further possibilities of improving the proper functioning of the internal market and the development of the European content industry.

Article 14

Entry into force

This Directive shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Article 15

Addressees

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels, 17 November 2003.

For the Parliament

P. COX

The President

For the Council

G. ALEMANNIO

The President