NL-EITI - Open Data Policy

Approved by the NL-EITI MSG on 21 June 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the policy and rules for the implementation of open data principles by the NL-EITI. For this it uses the following definition from the Open Data Handbook.

> *Open data is data that can be freely used, re-used and shared by anyone – subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and share alike.*

The objective of the EITI in the Netherlands is to provide each member of Dutch society with factual and understandable information about the extractive industry in the Netherlands and the money flows between the extractive industries and the government, in order to contribute to a well-informed debate about the extractive industry value chain in the Netherlands.

This objective reflects the International EITI Standard. The 2019 version of the EITI Standard requires information disclosures to be comprehensible, actively promoted and publicly accessible (see EITI Requirement 7.1). According to EITI Requirement 7.2, countries should also:

> *Agree a clear open data policy on the access, release and re-use of EITI data.*

As well as:

> *Make the data available in an open data format online and publicise its availability.*

Open data format means that data can be made accessible in CSV or Excel format and could contain all tables, charts and figures from the EITI reports. Implementing countries are also encouraged to make disclosed data machine readable and interoperable, which will allow for their re-use and redistribution including intermixing with other datasets for analytic purposes.

Open data is therefore an essential perquisite for conforming to the International EITI Standard, and at the same time it is an important contribution towards the achievement of the objective that the NL-EITI has set for itself. Providing free access to, and the subsequent re-use of, open data will help to empower individuals, the media, civil society and business. Open data enhances the public debate and promotes accountability and good governance. Increased transparency and accountability by using open data is also an objective of the Open Government policy in the Netherlands (see Open Government Action Plan 2020-2022).

2. OPEN DATA PRINCIPLES

The NL-EITI open data principles that will be presented below are based on the Open Data Charter and principles presented by the Sunlight Foundation, which are both important standards for open data. They can be summarised as follows.

- Availability and access: the data must be available as a whole, free of costs and preferably by downloading over the Internet.
- Re-use and redistribution: the data should be provided under terms that permit re-use and redistribution, including the intermixing with other datasets.
- Universal participation: everyone must be able to use, re-use and redistribute; there should be no legal or commercial restrictions.

Based on these standards, the NL-EITI has adapted the following nine open data principles.

1. Completeness

The records published by the NL-EITI should be as complete as possible. They should represent the entire scope of what is documented within the framework of the NL-EITI process.

2. Primacy

The records or datasets released by the NL-EITI should be primary source data and include reference to the original source. This will allow users to verify that information was collected properly and recorded accurately.

3. Timeliness

Records published by the NL-EITI should be available to the public in a timely fashion. Whenever feasible, information collected by the NL-EITI will be released as it is acquired and compiled.

4. Easy access

Records published by the NL-EITI should be as accessible as possible, with accessibility defined as the ease with which information can be obtained. Barriers include a high degree of fragmentation of the different sources, or systems that require entry forms or browser-based technologies such as Flash, cookies or JavaScript.

5. Machine readability

Programmes and machines can cope with certain types of document formats much better that other formats – for example, machines find information that is disseminated in a PDF format very difficult to analyse. Information should therefore be stored in established file formats, such as CSV and XML file formats that can be easily read by machines.

6. Non-discrimination

Non-discrimination refers to who can access the data and how it is accessed. In the broadest sense, non-discriminatory access means that every person has access to the data at all times, without having to identify themselves or having to provide justification of their actions.

7. Use of open standards

This principle refers to the ownership of the formats used. Microsoft Excel, for example, is a fairly common used spreadsheet programme, but it costs money to use it and this may be a hurdle for potential users. The freely available CSV file format offers access to data without the need for a software license.

8. Permanence

Data permanence is defined as a situation where specific information can still be found over a longer period of time. Records published by the NL-EITI should be permanently available in online archives. Instead, information is often updated, changed or removed without any information being given about the changes that were made.

9. Free of charge

All data provided by the NL-EITI should be available free of costs.