



## **REPORT**

### **Assessing the Opening of Public Government Data in 2013**

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## **Introduction**

This report analyzes the opening of public data in Moldova from June to December 2013 following the previous monitoring [report](#) by the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) published on 3 July 2013 covering the period April 2011 to May 2013. It includes the accessibility and usefulness of the data for civil society and the media when addressing issues of public interest. The report also aims to assess the extent to which ministries and other central administrative authorities opened new datasets on [date.gov.md](#), the portal for public government data, during that period.

The following quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the opening of public government data:

- content analysis of the datasets opened on [date.gov.md](#) in terms of their usefulness and relevance for citizens, including the media and civil society;
- 40 responses to questionnaires for journalists and civil society representatives regarding the accessibility and usefulness of the data;
- analysis of the current national legislation, international standards on disseminating public government data and specialized studies among others.

The report identifies a number of problems in opening public government data and ends with recommendations to address them.

## Chapter 1

### 1.1. Opening public data on date.gov.md

On 29 April 2011, [Directive No. 43](#) of the Government of the Republic of Moldova created the public government data portal [www.date.gov.md](http://www.date.gov.md), "...to ensure the transparency of decision making, citizens' participation in governance and the access of citizens and businesses to public government data."<sup>1</sup> The Electronic Governance Center (EGC) was appointed to coordinate the development and maintenance of the portal.

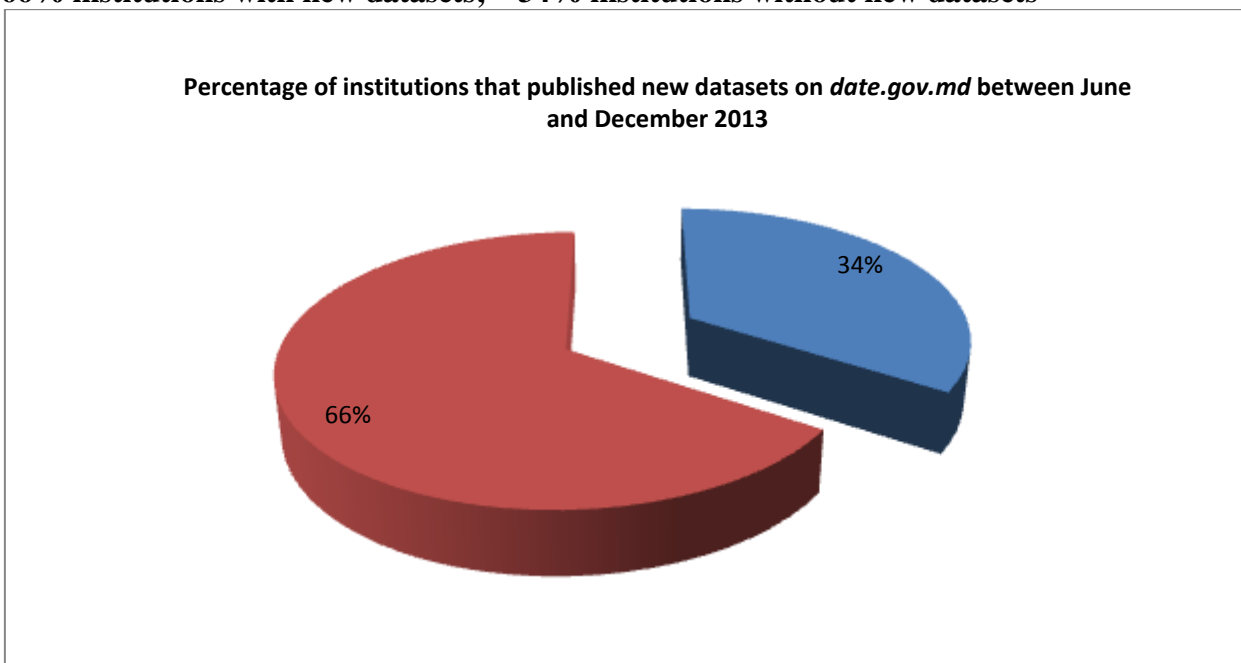
The government required that ministries, central administrative authorities and other public authorities and institutions identify three datasets of interest to citizens and businesses each month, post them on date.gov.md and update the data as they are collected.

On 4 April 2012, Decision No. 195<sup>2</sup> approved the Open Government Action Plan for 2012–2013 which requires, among other things, ensuring the release of public sector information including developing date.gov.md into a single information desk for all public government data. Ministries and other central administrative authorities were required to undertake all measures necessary to completely fulfill the actions set out in the plan within the deadlines specified.

During the reporting period (June–December 2013), the number of ministries and central administrative authorities present on date.gov.md remained unchanged at 41. Over these six months, 14 of the 41 public authorities (34%) opened new datasets (Figure 1.1). In addition, 20 datasets previously opened were periodically updated.

**Figure 1.1**

**66% institutions with new datasets; 34% institutions without new datasets**



Overall during the reporting period, the 14 institutions opened 90 new datasets. The top five participating ministries and central public authorities on date.gov.md were the Licensing Chamber (16 datasets), the State Tax Service (14 datasets), the Ministry of Transport and Road

<sup>1</sup> Directive of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova no. 43 of 29 April 2011.

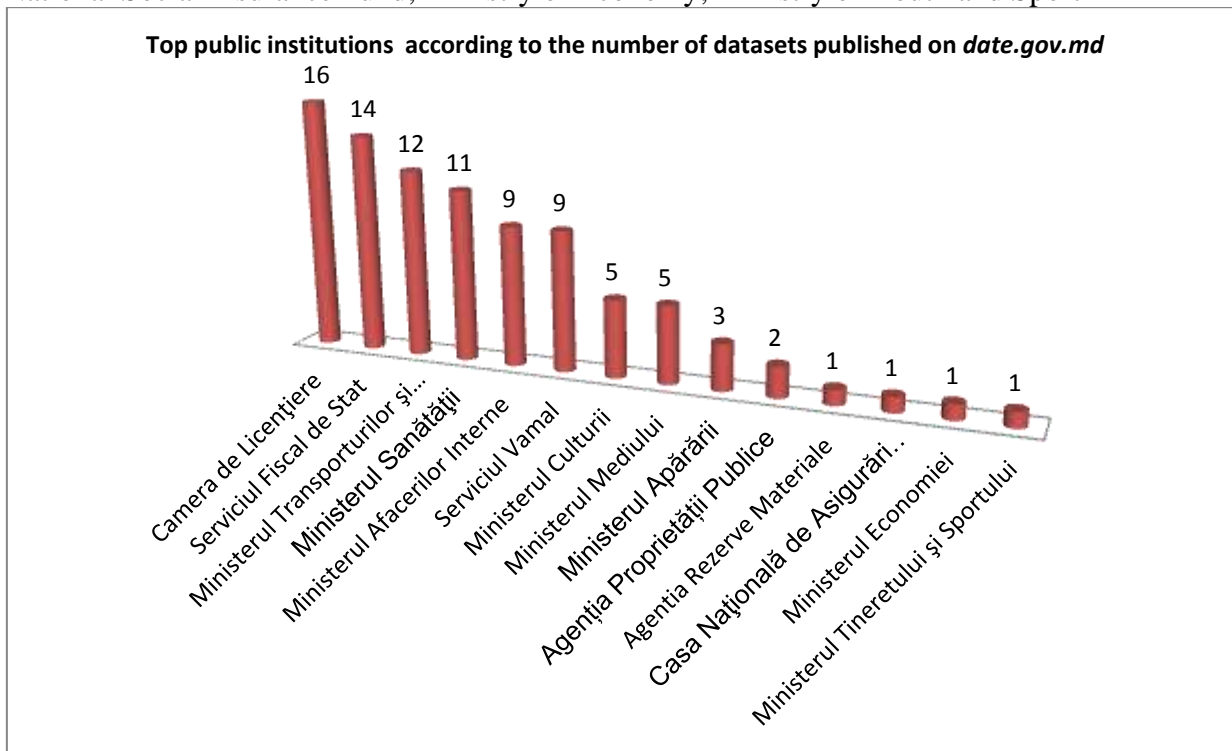
<sup>2</sup> Government Decision no. 195 of 4 April 2012 on Approval of the Open Government Action Plan for 2012–2013.

Infrastructure (12 datasets), the Ministry of Health (11 datasets), and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Customs Service (9 datasets each). The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Environment opened 5 datasets each while the Ministry of Defense and the Public Property Agency opened 3 and 2, respectively. Four authorities opened 1 dataset each (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

**Top public institutions by number of datasets opened on date.gov.md**

Licensing Chamber; State Tax Service; Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Customs Service; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Defense; Public Property Agency; Material Reserves Agency; National Social Insurance Fund; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Youth and Sport



A comparison with the leaders in the first IJC report and the current leaders shows that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Internal Affairs remained in the top five. It is noteworthy that in the previous IJC report the other four current leaders were at the bottom of the list. For example, the Customs Service opened no datasets between April 2011 when date.gov.md was launched and May 2013, but within a short period after the IJC report it published nine. The Licensing Chamber, the current leader, had opened just five datasets before 31 May 2013, over two years after the launch of date.gov.md but during this reporting period it opened 16. The same trend is true for the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure (3 datasets opened from April 2011 to May 2013 and 12 from June to December 2013) and for the State Tax Service (16 opened in April 2011–May 2013 and 14 in June–December 2013).

Four central administrative authorities have not opened any datasets since the launch of date.gov.md in April 2011: the Medicine Agency, the Center for Accreditation for Assessing Product Conformity, the National Public Health Center and the National Blood Transfusion Center. According to the Ministry of Health, the agencies under it post datasets on the Ministry of Health page on date.gov.md. In the future, however, it would be better if datasets produced by the Medicine Agency, for example, were opened on its own page in order to facilitate access as the data opened by ministries on date.gov.md cannot be sorted by institution which complicates information searches.

On 26 December 2012, Parliament adopted Law No. 305 on the Reuse of Public Sector Information (published in the *Official Monitor* on 29 March 2013). The law aims to facilitate the distribution of documents held by public authorities and institutions that were created in the course of their public work and that can subsequently be used for commercial or noncommercial purposes. The law requires all public authorities and institutions to prepare lists of documents for electronic release in a functional format and to appoint a person to create the lists and place the documents on the website of the public authority or institution and on date.gov.md. In addition, since 29 March 2013 the law requires public authorities and institutions to disseminate public data on the portal date.gov.md and on their own web pages.

The law did not greatly stimulate the opening of public information in the second half of 2013. One of the reasons might be the delayed adoption—on 8 November 2013—of Methodological Norms for the Application of Law No. 305. According to the decision, within 90 days after the methodological norms enter into force, central administrative authorities shall produce lists of public documents including datasets that they possess that are intended for release and shall post these documents and data on their own official websites and on date.gov.md. Therefore, before the middle of February 2014, public institutions must decide on the datasets they will offer to the public in the future.

On 17 December 2013, the methodological norms were discussed with central public authorities at a round table organized by the EGC. According to the EGC, the implementation of the norms, “...will generate an extension of the public datasets accessible on date.gov.md and will stimulate the awareness of public institutions about their responsibility in terms of access and use of public information.”<sup>3</sup>

The public institutions that complied with the deadlines for implementing the Open Government Action Plan for 2012–2013, especially item 3.4, should have this list of public documents. The plan requires, among other things, that each public authority produce its own public government data catalog containing aggregated/primary data used by the authority that can be opened on date.gov.md. The catalog was to be published on the websites of public authorities no later than the second quarter of 2012. According to the Open Government Action Plan Implementation Progress Report, catalogs have been produced by 15 institutions. Since the adoption of Law No. 305 and of the methodological norms for its application, the deadline has been extended until February 2014.

In May 2013, the EGC promised to launch the third version of date.gov.md before the end of 2013 which was to operate according to new principles and without the problems that existed at the time. The most important change would concern ways to post datasets by public authorities. Official websites and date.gov.md were to be integrated so when a dataset was opened on an institution’s website, it would be automatically opened on date.gov.md. Today, the portal particip.gov.md operates according to this principle.

The new version of the portal has not yet been launched, and according to the EGC, the deadline has been extended until the second quarter of 2014.

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<sup>3</sup> The EGC press release *Coordinators for Open Data Informed about the Reuse of Public Sector Information*, 17 December 2013.

## 1.2 The functionality of date.gov.md from the point of view of mass media and civil society

The questioning of 40 journalists and civil society representatives during the work on this report aimed to identify how often data from date.gov.md were accessed and how useful they were in producing articles, studies, etc. In addition, the questionnaires intended to find out whether the attitude of journalists and activists towards date.gov.md had changed in the past six months (the first IJC report asked the same questions). Only 27% of respondents said that they accessed the information on the portal every day or once per week. The majority (58%) said that they accessed the portal once a month or less often while 15% had never accessed the datasets on date.gov.md (Figure 1.3). Compared with the first report, there was a decrease from 61% to 58% in the number of respondents who accessed date.gov.md once per month or less frequently, and the number who had never accessed the portal increased by 2% from 3% to 5%.

**Figure 1.3**

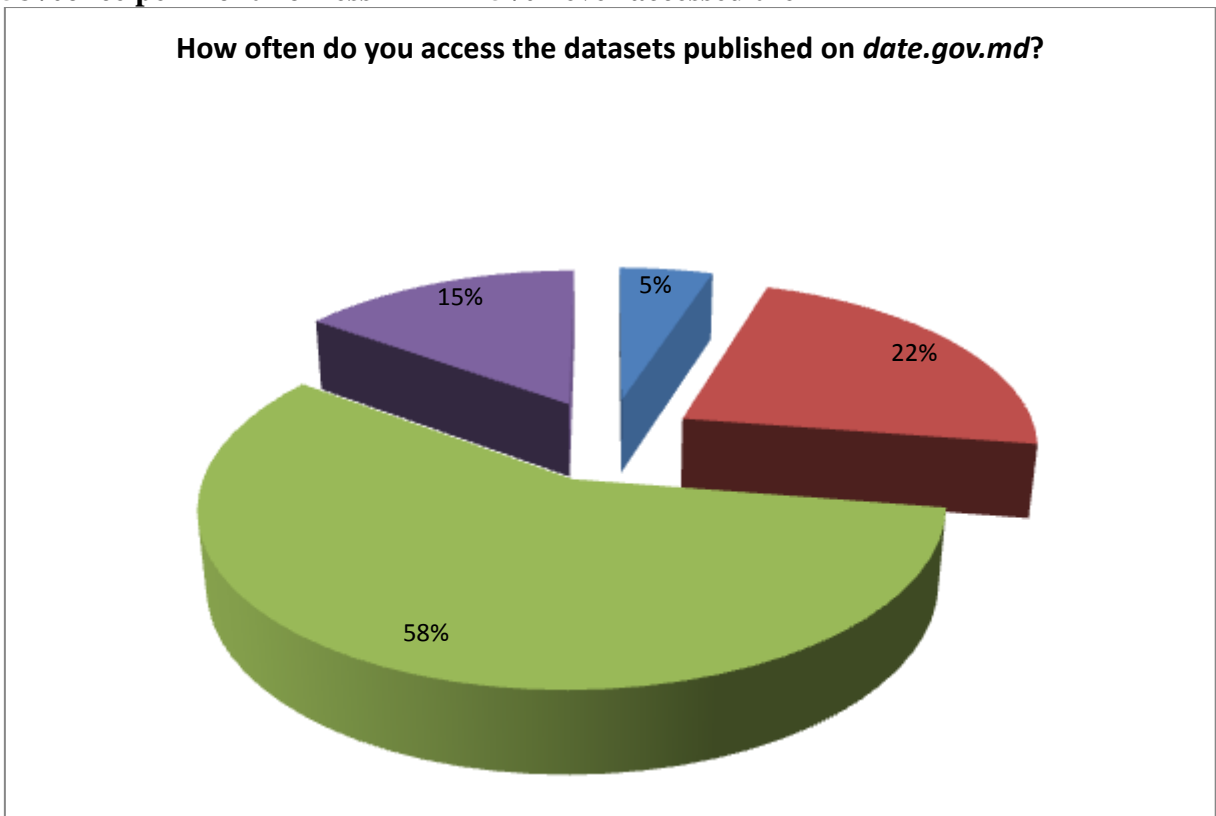
**How often do you access the datasets opened on date.gov.md?**

**5% every day**

**22% once per week**

**58% once per month or less**

**15% never accessed them**



A total of 53% of respondents said that they could not find data on date.gov.md easily (Figure 1.4), but in the first report, 62% (9% more) said that they faced difficulties when accessing datasets.

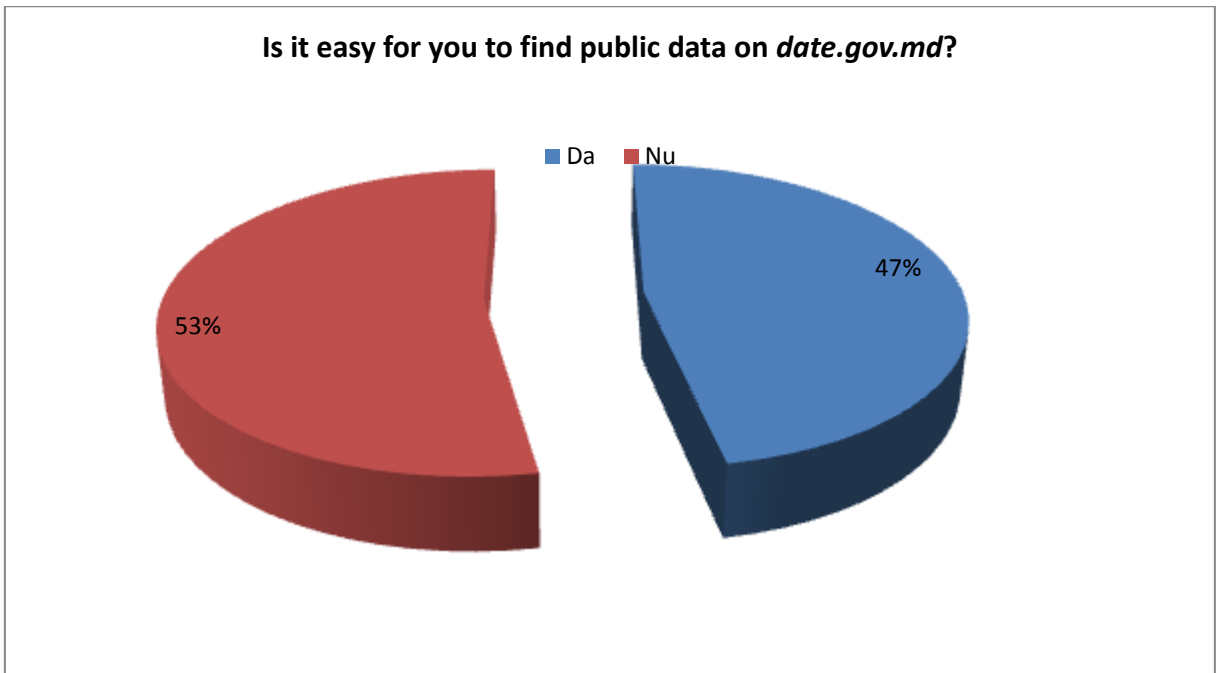
**Figure 1.4**

**Is it easy for you to find data on date.gov.md?**

**47% Yes**

**53% No**

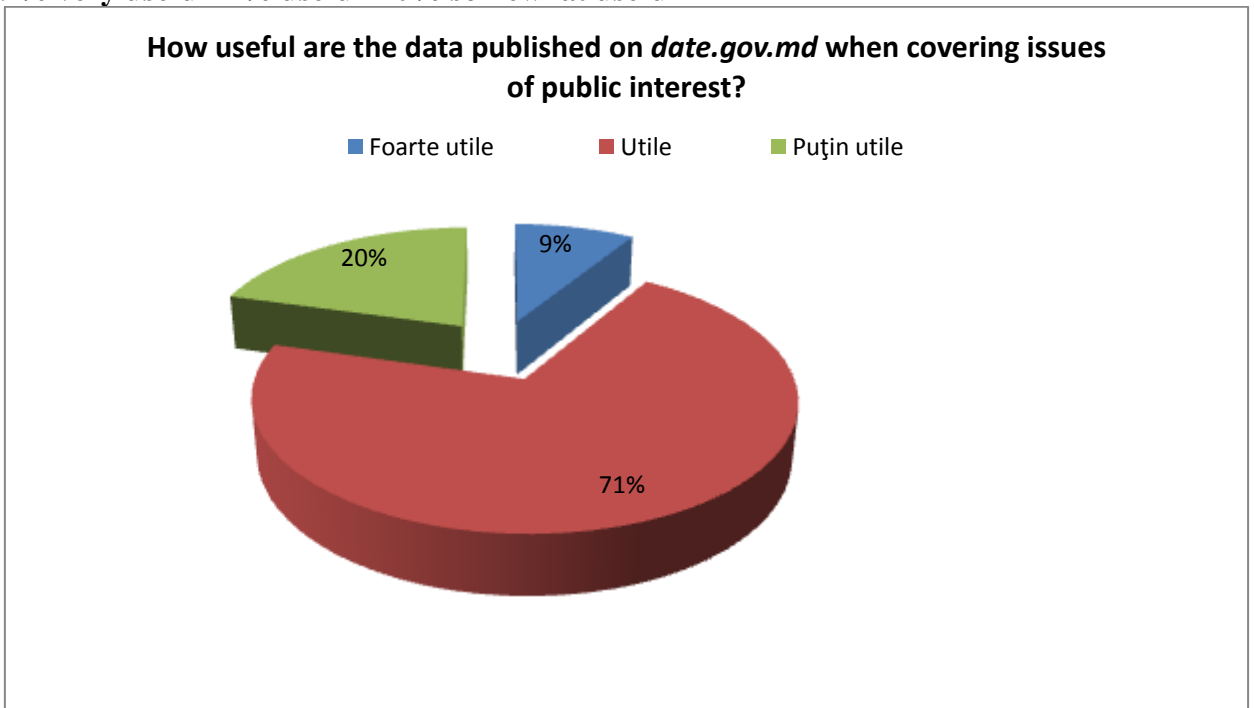




When asked how useful the data on *date.gov.md* are when addressing issues of public interest, 9% of journalists and civil society representatives said they were very useful, 71% said they were useful and 20% said somewhat useful (Figure 1.5). Compared with the previous report, the percentage of those who considered the data useful grew significantly from 47% to 71%, and the number who considered the data of little use decreased from 41% to 20%. In addition, in the current report no journalists considered the datasets useless while in the previous report, 3% of respondents believed they were.

**Figure 1.5**

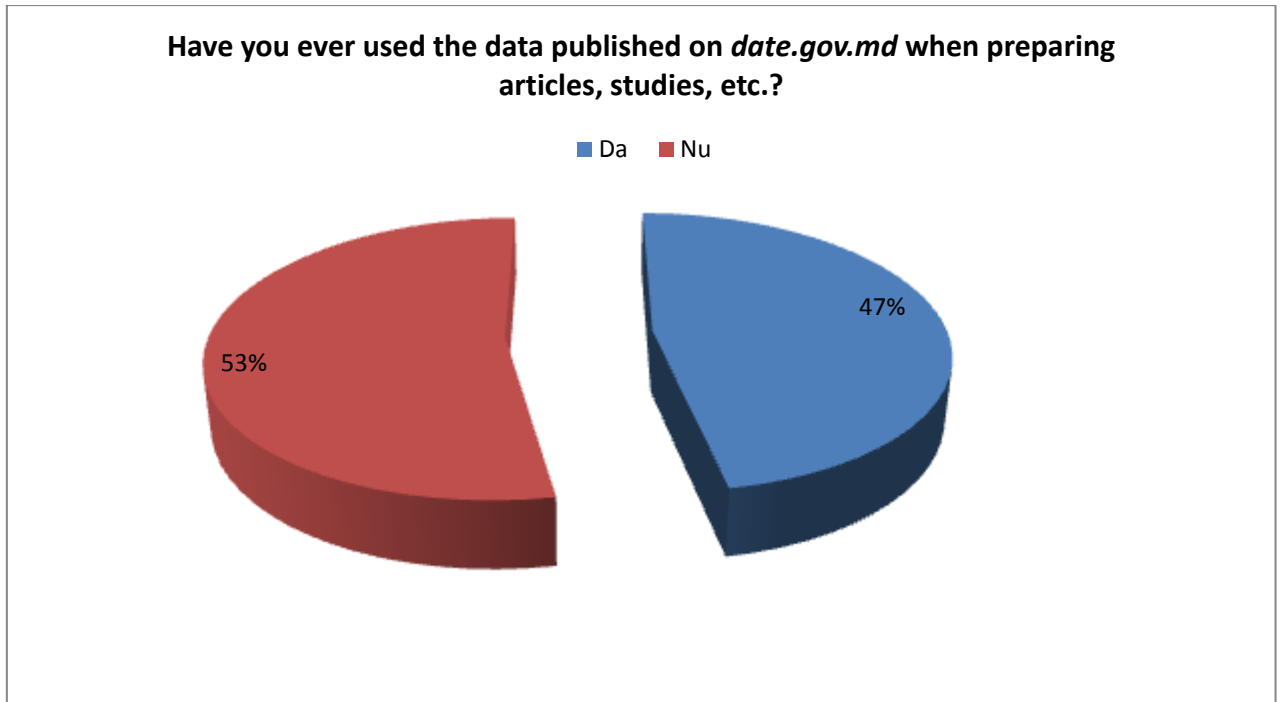
**How useful are the data opened on *date.gov.md* when covering issues of public interest?  
9% very useful 71% useful 20% somewhat useful**



When asked if they had ever used the data to produce articles, studies, etc., 47% said yes (Figure 1.6), an improvement from 28% in the first report.

**Figure 1.6**

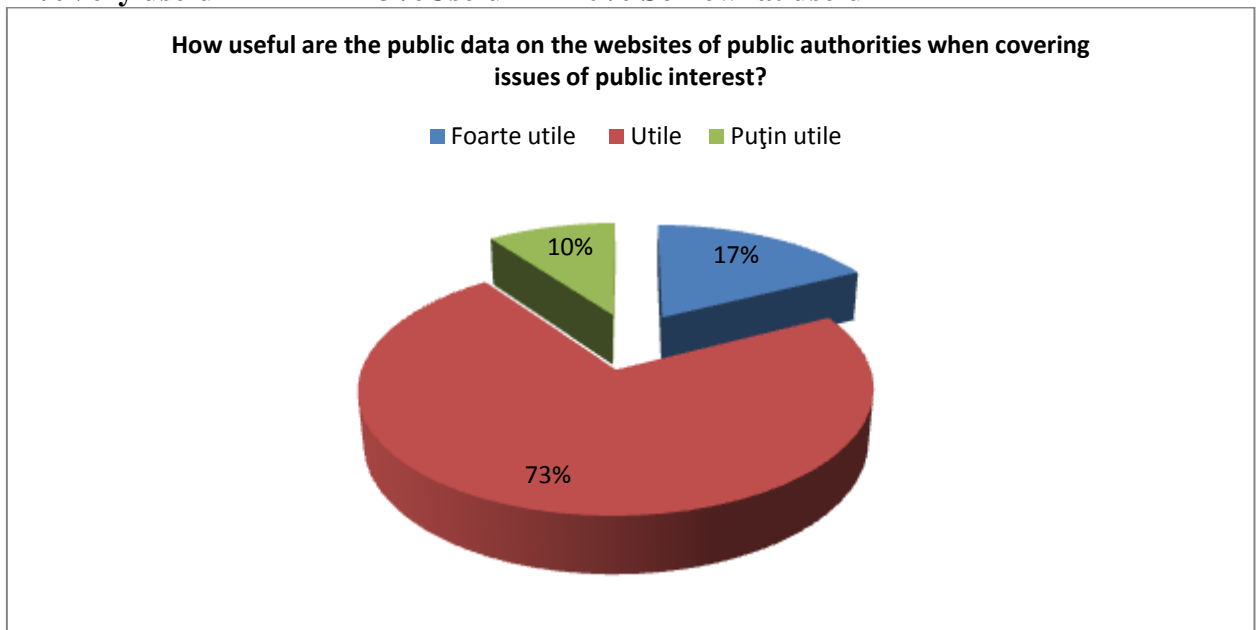
**Have you ever used the data opened on *date.gov.md* when preparing articles, studies, etc.?**  
47% Yes    53% No



Journalists and civil society representatives were also questioned about the usefulness of information on the official websites of public authorities; 90% found it very useful or useful when addressing issues of public interest and only 10% believed it was of little use (Figure 1.7). To compare, 80% of respondents found the data on *date.gov.md* very useful or useful.

**Figure 1.7**

**How useful are the data on the websites of public authorities when covering issues of public interest?**  
17% Very useful    73% Useful    10% Somewhat useful

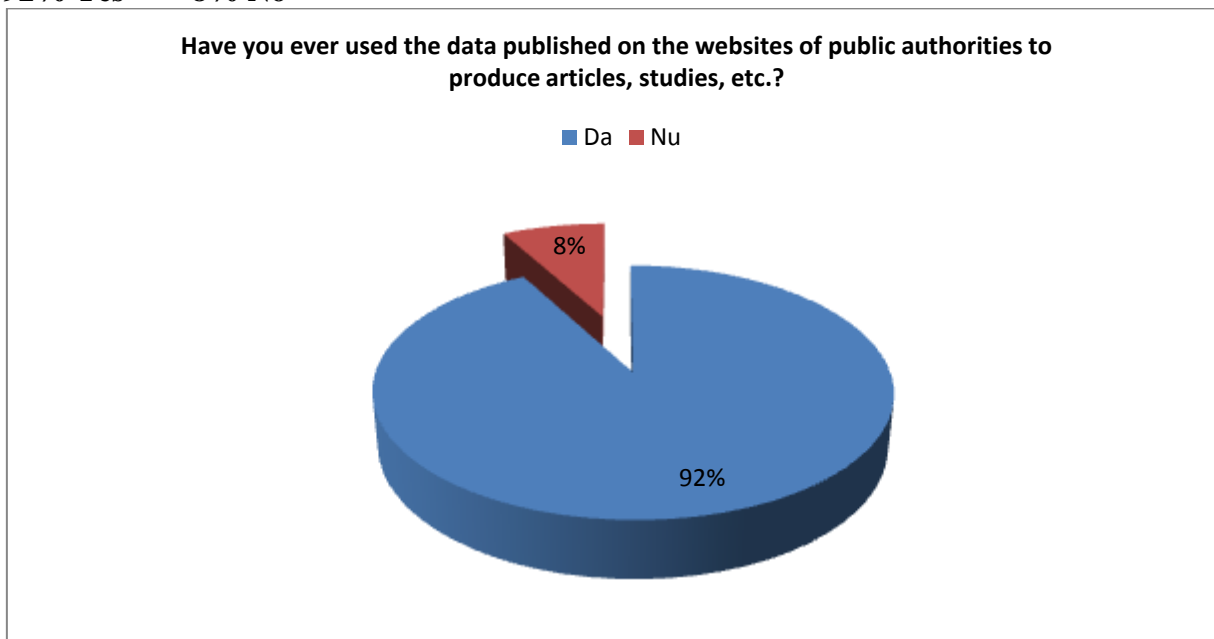


When asked if they had ever used the data opened on official websites to produce articles, studies, etc., 92% of journalists and civil society representatives answered positively (Figure 1.8). In comparison, only 47% of respondents used information from date.gov.md for such purposes.

**Figure 1.8**

**Have you ever used the data opened on the websites of public authorities to produce articles, studies, etc.?**

**92% Yes    8% No**



Date.gov.md is not especially popular among journalists and civil society representatives for the following reasons which were also indicated in the previous IJC report.

- Some ministries and public institutions never disseminate data on date.gov.md or do so only occasionally. The principle of a single information desk is thus not observed and the website becomes useless for those interested in the work of those institutions.
- The inability to sort datasets by activity or by year and the lack of systematic data on previous years require users to visit the website of the relevant ministry and not data.gov.md.
- Some datasets are not complete: they either do not contain all relevant data or the data are not current.
- There is no single format for posting data (some are in Microsoft Office Excel 2003, others in Microsoft Office Excel 2010 or Microsoft Office Word 2003 or 2010) which creates difficulties in access.

To facilitate access, the data opened by ministries and central authorities should be sorted by type and year of information. In addition, if date.gov.md is truly to become the single information desk for public institutions, the institutions should post data in each category systematically for past years and then update them periodically.

## Chapter 2

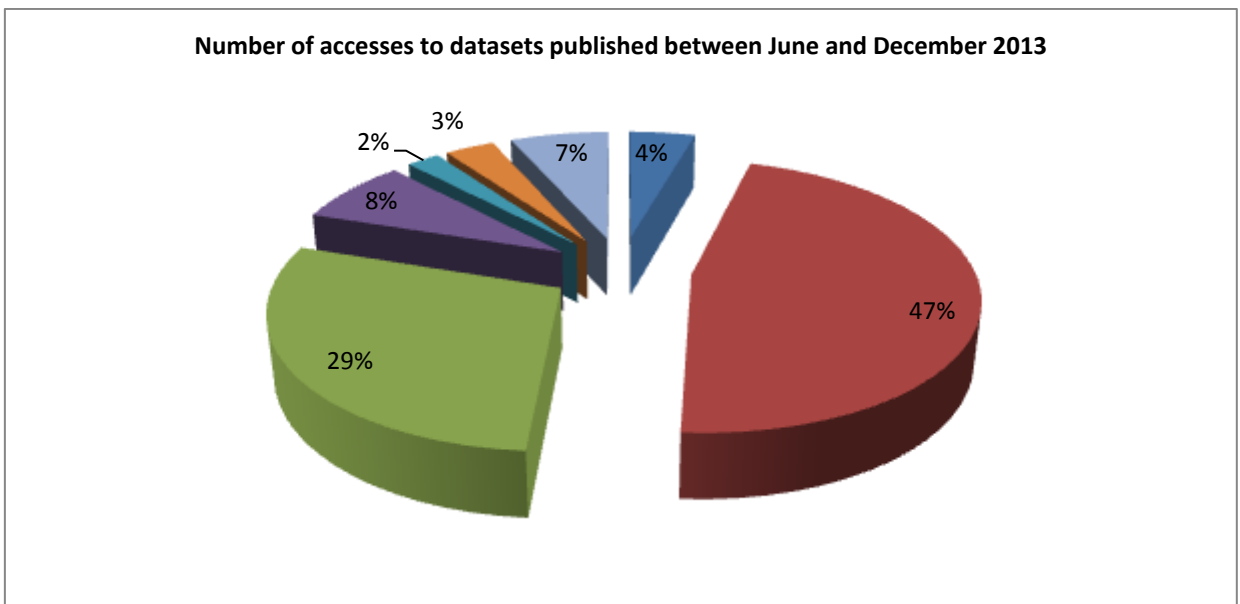
### 2.1 Accessibility and usefulness of the data opened from June to December 2013

During the reporting period, 14 public institutions published 90 new datasets on date.gov.md that were analyzed in terms of the number of times they were accessed to determine public interest. The results indicate that the public was not very interested. Most (47%) were accessed 11 to 50 times, 29% were accessed 51 to 100 times, only 20% were accessed more than 101 times and 4% of the datasets were accessed fewer than 10 times (Figure 2.1). According to the EGC, the average monthly number of single visitors to date.gov.md was about 3,000, and from June to December 2013, the number of times old and new datasets were accessed varied between 6,873 in December and 9,640 in July (Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.1**

**Number of times datasets opened from June to December 2013 were accessed:**

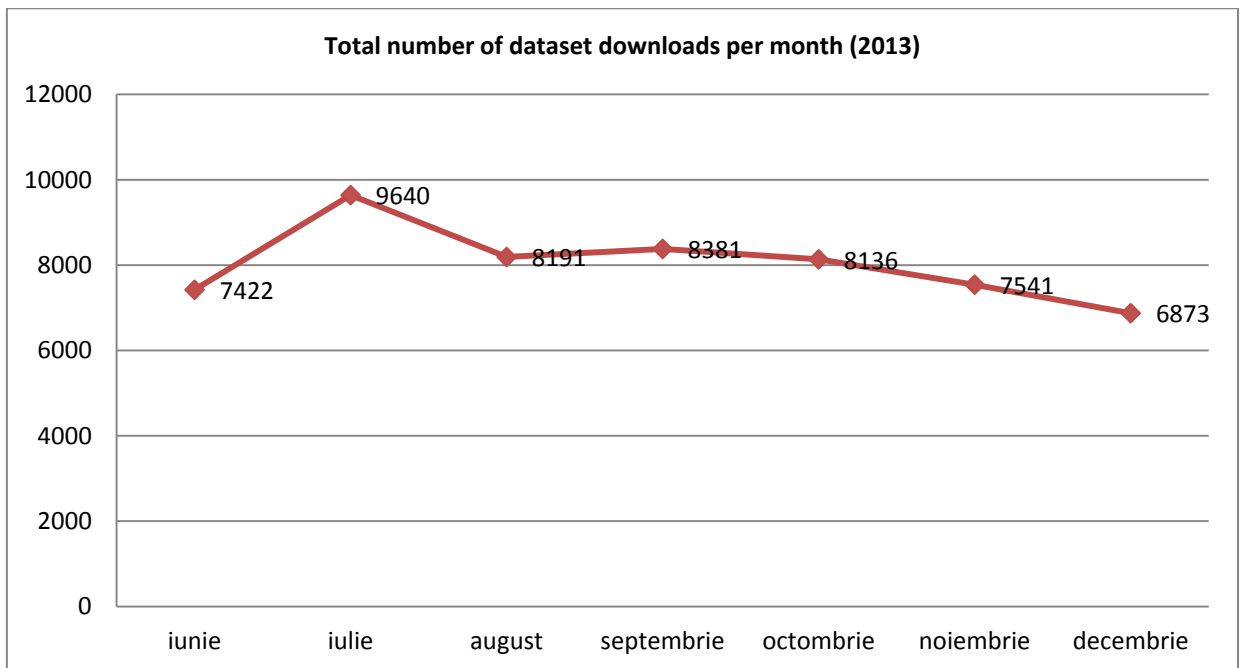
- 4% - 1–10 ;
- 47% - 11–50 ;
- 29% - 51–100 ;
- 8% - 101–150 ;
- 2% - 151–200 ;
- 3%– 300 ;
- 7 % - over 300;



**Figure 2.2**

**Total number of datasets accessed per month from June to December 2013**

**June July August September October November December**



The 10 most accessed datasets in the following table indicate what information was of interest to visitors to date.gov.md. The list includes datasets opened by only 5 of the 14 institutions: the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure and the Customs Service (3 each), the State Tax Service (2), the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (1 dataset). The undisputed leaders are the List of Business Entities Paying VAT opened by the State Tax Service on 17.06.2013 (4,729 times), and the List of Vehicle Technical Inspection Stations Operating in Moldova opened by the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure on 29.08.2013 (2,454 times). The third in the top 10 is the dataset Top 100 Exporters in 2012 opened by the Customs Service on 05.07.2013 (478 times) closely followed by Data on Execution of the Expenditure Estimate for the Road Sector Program Support Project opened by the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure on 19.06.2013 (474 times). Visitors to date.gov.md were also interested in the list of business entities withdrawn as payers of VAT, the top 100 importers in 2012, data about the execution of construction from the road fund, the list of cultural centers and of intellectual properties and the criminal situation in Moldova.

| <b>Top 10 most accessed datasets opened from June to December 2013</b><br><i>(as of 10.01.2014)</i> |   |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>No.</b>  | <b>Dataset</b>  | <b>Number of times accessed</b> |
| 1.  | The List of Business Entities Paying VAT opened by the State Tax Service on 17.06.2013  | 4,729                           |
| 2.  | The List of Vehicle Technical Inspection Stations Operating in Moldova opened by the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure on 29.08.2013                    | 2,454                           |
| 3.  | Top 100 Exporters in 2012 opened by the Customs Service on 05.07.2013   | 478                             |
| 4.  | Data on Execution of the Expenditure Estimate for the Road Sector Program Support Project opened by the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure on 19.06.2013 | 474                             |
| 5.  | The List of Business Entities Withdrawn as Payers of VAT opened by  | 369                             |

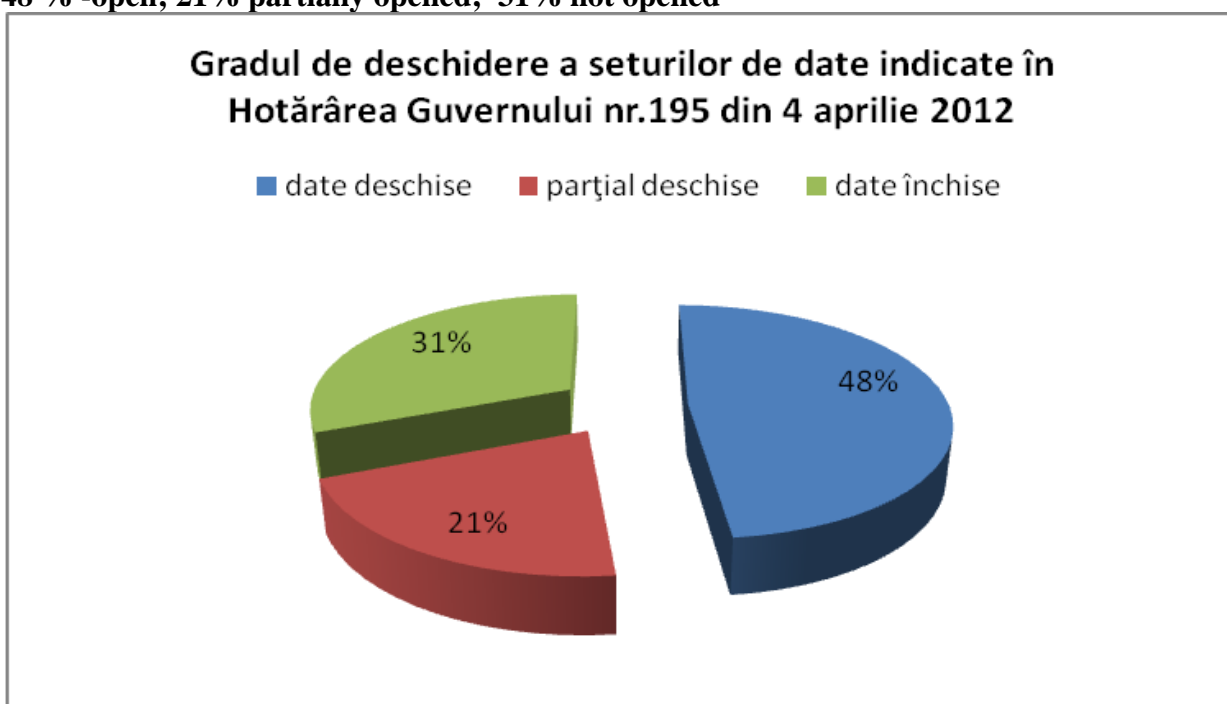
|     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
|     | the State Tax Service on 19.06.2013  |     |
| 6.  | Top 100 Importers in 2012 opened by the Customs Service on 05.07.2013  | 347 |
| 7.  | Data on the Execution of Road Construction, Repairs and Design and Procurement of Equipment from the Road Fund opened by the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure on 29.10.2013 | 269 |
| 8.  | Cultural Centers in the Regions opened by the Ministry of Culture on 05.07.2013  | 235 |
| 9.  | Register of Intellectual Properties opened by the Customs Service on 03.07.2013  | 223 |
| 10. | Criminal Situation in Moldova by Location and Type of Crime opened by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 10.06.2013   | 173 |

## 2.2 The status of datasets that were not opened in 2012 in accordance with Government Decision No. 195 of 4 April 2012

On 4 April 2012, the government approved the Open Government Action Plan for 2012–2013, that contained a list of government data that were to be released in 2012. Ministries and other central authorities were obliged to take all necessary measures for executing the actions specified in the plan fully and within the set deadlines. The list of government data that were to be released in 2012 included 29 datasets held by public institutions. An analysis presented in the previous IJC report concluded that 31% (9 out of 29) of the datasets were not disseminated (Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3**

**Opening of the datasets indicated in Government Decision No. 195 of 4 April 2012**  
**48 % -open; 21% partially opened; 31% not opened**



The nine datasets that were not disseminated were from five ministries.

Ministry of Economy:

- 1) Data on human resource management in public service
- 2) Data on granting subsidies to citizens and businesses
- 3) Disaggregated data on the share of certain sectors of the economy (including volunteering) in the GDP and other important economic indicators
- 4) Statistics on the funding necessary for enterprises

Ministry of Youth and Sport:

- 5) Data on the number of host institutions that meet minimum quality standards for volunteering
- 6) Data on volunteer activities conducted in Moldova

Ministry of Internal Affairs:

- 7) Data on road safety, location of accidents

Ministry of Environment:

- 8) Data on the use of financial sources for ensuring the quality of the environment for 2012

Ministry of Education:

- 9) Data on academic results per educational institution and year of study for 2012

In October 2013, the IJC delivered the report *Assessing the Release of Public Government Data in 2012* to these ministries asking them why the above-mentioned datasets were not disseminated in 2012. By late December 2013, the IJC had received responses from four of the five: the Ministry of Youth and Sport did not reply.

On 13 November 2013, the Ministry of Economy informed the IJC that the four datasets were not opened on [date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md) for the following reasons.

Disaggregated data on the share of certain sectors of the economy (including volunteering) in the GDP and other important economic indicators: “The institution responsible for assessing the GDP and publicizing it is the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), while the Ministry of Economy is only the user of such data and of other macroeconomic indicators. As for volunteering, we shall mention that the NBS calculates the GDP by forms of ownership, type of economic activities and by institutional sectors, but they do not calculate volunteering in the GDP.”

Data on granting subsidies to citizens and businesses and statistics on the funding necessary for enterprises: “The Ministry of Economy does not manage such databases, so they were not opened on [date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md).”

Data on human resource management in public service: “These data are not in the competence of the Ministry of Economy, therefore the institution does not have them.”

The Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the IJC on 15 November 2013 that, “For technical reasons the dataset on road safety and location of accidents for 2012 was delayed. At the moment, all technical difficulties have been overcome, and the dataset has been opened on [date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md).” Indeed, the dataset was opened by the ministry on 11.11.2013.

The Ministry of Environment informed the IJC on 30 October 2013 that the dataset on the use of financial sources for ensuring the quality of the environment, “...has been opened on the website of the Ministry of Environment, [mediu.gov.md](http://mediu.gov.md). Recently, this dataset was also opened on [date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md).” In its reply, the ministry did not indicate the link to the dataset, and attempts to find it on [date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md) have been unsuccessful.

The Ministry of Education informed the IJC on 21 November 2013 that the dataset on academic results per educational institution and year of study for 2012, “...has been placed by the Ministry of Education on [date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md) in two folders: Average Marks for the Baccalaureate Examinations and Average Marks per Subject in Grades 10 to 12.” The portal does contain this information, and its posting is dated 10.04.2011; however, it does not mention the date of the latest update which would help users to understand that it is a new dataset and not one from 2011 or 2010.



## Conclusions

Of the 41 ministries and central authorities present on date.gov.md, only 14 (34%) opened new datasets from June to December 2013. Overall during the reporting period, 90 new datasets were opened, most of them (16) by the Licensing Chamber. In the absence of disciplinary or other penalties, many of the ministries and public institutions simply ignore government directives and decisions to identify datasets of interest for citizens and businesses and to post them monthly on date.gov.md.

The adoption of Law No. 305 did not greatly stimulate the opening of public information in the second half of 2013. One of the reasons was the delayed adoption of the methodological norms for implementing it.

Pressure from civil society can make ministries and public authorities regularly post new datasets on date.gov.md. Following the first IJC report, four institutions that were behind in terms of posting data made an important number of datasets public in the next six months.

Journalists and civil society representatives still do not regularly access datasets opened on date.gov.md. Only 27% of respondents said that they accessed information on the portal every day or once per week. Compared to the first IJC report, fewer journalists and activists had difficulties accessing datasets on date.gov.md, but the number was still high (53%). On the other hand, the percentage who found the data useful grew from 47% to 71% and, accordingly, the number who found the data of little use decreased from 41% to 20%.

Data opened on official government agency websites are used for preparing articles, studies, etc. more often (by 92% of respondents) than those opened on date.gov.md (by 47% of respondents). The reasons for not using date.gov.md are as follow:

- failure to observe the principle of a single information desk by an important number of ministries and central authorities so the portal is useless for those interested in their work;
- limited possibilities to sort data by activity of the institution or by year;
- lack of data for previous years and of updated and full information;
- failure to use a single format for posting data which creates difficulties in accessing them.

The analysis of public interest in the datasets opened between June and December 2013 and their usefulness for the public revealed reduced interest. Most new datasets (47%) were accessed 11 to 50 times, 29% were accessed 51 to 100 times and only 20% of all datasets were accessed more than 101 times.

Six datasets out of the 29 that were to be made public in 2012 according to Government Decision No. 195 had still not been disseminated by the end of December 2013. Some were not opened due to the fact that the institutions do not have them, yet even when this problem is known, the task has not been transferred to the institutions that have the data.

## **Recommendations**

As the situation with posting government data between June and December 2013 has not changed significantly since the previous reporting period, this report reiterates some of the recommendations included in the first IJC report.

Change the principles of operation of date.gov.md to suit the needs of journalists and civil society. Integrating official websites of ministries and public institutions with date.gov.md will solve the problem of central authorities participating in the initiative but not the problem of accessibility and relevance of data for users.

To ensure greater accessibility to the data on date.gov.md, improve the engines for sorting and searching data on the portal. The Electronic Government Center should either organize public discussions online or focus groups with the representatives of mass media and civil society concerning the structure of the new website.

To ensure the relevance and usefulness of public data for mass media and civil society, identify clear criteria for establishing the full range of government data that should be opened by each institution in collaboration with civil society and set well-defined criteria for posting public datasets so they are complete, comprehensive and current.

Public datasets are useless if the public does not know they exist. Develop a government strategy for promoting public data in mass media and among civil society and then implement it using low-cost means such social networks and electronic information bulletins.

Civil society should continue monitoring the opening of government data. To ensure the relevance and usefulness of public data in the short term, it is important to analyze the lists of public documents and datasets that are intended for release that central authorities are to produce by the middle of February 2014. In the long term, it is necessary to monitor the way in which the data on the lists are opened by public institutions.