

# Message house

**As an employee of the Dutch government,  
you and your colleagues are responsible for ensuring that  
public sector information is always available and easy to find.**

**The Dutch government aims to be an efficient, reliable and credible partner for citizens, companies and organizations. It is therefore more important than ever that public sector information is always accessible and easy to find.**

- The government aims to be transparent in its activities, so that it can make a better contribution to society. For this reason, a lot of government information is publicly accessible and free to use and distribute.
- Citizens and organizations have the right to access certain public sector information, either because that information is actively disclosed or because it may be released under the terms of the Government Information (Public Access) Act (or *Wob*).
- Certain public sector information is not made public, such as personal data relating to specific individuals, confidential information, personal opinions and information that concerns national security.
- It is important that public sector information is handled properly for the following reasons (among others):
  - the rise in 'fake news';
  - the acceleration and growth of digitization;
  - the Covid-19 pandemic
- Now more than ever, verified facts are increasingly being called into questions, which means that the proper recording of information is essential.
- We need public sector information:
  - to carry out our work effectively;
  - to ensure accountability;
  - to provide legal certainty;
  - to enable research by third parties;
  - to preserve our cultural heritage.
- This information is managed in accordance with the following legislation:
  - The Public Records Act
  - The Government Information (Public Access) Act (*Wob*);
  - The Open Government Act (*Woo*, forthcoming)
  - The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR);
  - The General Data Protection Act;
  - The Reuse of Public Sector Information Act;
  - Temporary decision on Digital Accessibility of Public Sector Information.
- Working with public sector information requires integrity and diligence on the part of public servants

**An essential aspect of your work is therefore handling public sector information properly. All the information that you work with is important for you, for your colleagues and for society – both now and in the future. Store this information properly.**

- Public sector information means all the information that the government itself collects, receives or creates during the course of its work. This includes traditional types of documentation such as official decisions and reports, but it also includes, for example, data stored in databases and communication sent by email or via social media.
- When we talk about handling public sector information, we mean creating, sharing, receiving, storing and destroying documents, files and data as part of carrying out our work. And ensuring that this public sector information is reliable, complete, available and accessible.
- When we talk about handling public sector information properly, we mean: knowing which information needs to be retained and storing this information correctly, so that it can always be found easily.
- The proper handling of public sector information is not an optional extra, but a legal obligation.
- Your organization will help you to handle public sector information properly. But ultimately, you also have a responsibility to ensure that it is done.
- We are aware that information systems do not always function as well as they should. When this happens, try again later.
- And if there is a problem, you need to communicate this to the relevant people within your organisation. Only then can the right support be provided.
- Handling public sector information in a responsible manner requires an effort from everyone, but it will save time in the long run.
- Make sure you know the guidelines that apply in your organization, or ask a colleague for help if you are not sure what to do. Check the intranet for the right procedures in your organization.
- There are rules and deadlines with regard to the retention and destruction of public sector information. Make sure that you are familiar with these.

**Make sure that you know what is expected of you, seek advice where necessary, and remind colleagues about their own responsibilities.**

- Handling information in the right way will mean that the work that you do will be highly valued.
- Handling public sector information properly is an integral part of your work as a public servant.
- Never throw away important information. Name files clearly and follow the guidelines of your organization.
- Public sector information needs to be retained so that decision-making processes can be traced and reconstructed properly. This is a continuous learning process.
- If you are on leave, take a day off or leave your job, your colleagues will need to be able to access your documents.
- Public sector information is owned by the government and may be made public at any time, such as in the event of a freedom of information request (*Wob*).