Czech Open Government Partnership Action Plan Comments and Thoughts

Submitted on 06 Apr 2012 by

The Czech government has [agreed on the final Action plan for Czech commitments for the Open Government Partnership](). The final draft has been prepared along with a [pool of NGOs]() and active individuals and has been accepted on the last governmental session on Wednesday, April 4th. This blogpost presents the basic outlines of the Czech action plan along with some comments and thoughts.

The Czech action plan for the upcoming year consists of three principal areas. The first one is the approval of a new Act on Civil Servants, which should ensure a better and more effective public service through the depoliticisation, professionalisation and stabilisation of the public administration sector. Positions in public services should become less prone to be captured by partisan apointees, which is nowadays a common practice. This Act is anticipated in the Czech Constitution, but hasn't been introduced yet.

An Act on Civil Servants is really needed and his absence proves to be a huge problem in many areas of public life. However, this act is already included in the legislative plans of the Czech government for this year. This is why including it into the OGP Action plan is purely formal, as it would be proposed to the parliament regardless of OGP.

The second chapter of the action plan talks about streamlining the system allowing free access to information. The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) has been approved in Czech Republic in 1999 and since then several issues have arised, both from the side of the general public and of the obligated entities. These issues should be solved by the novelization of the act. In fact, the action plan suggests 14 particular changes. The drawback of this part of the action plan is a complete lack of more detailed clarification of problems, which should be solved by these changes. Also explanation how these changes will contribute to the goals of the Open Government Partnership is missing. There is also a threat that the important assets of the FOI Act could be jeopardized in the parliament. Indeed, we have already witnessed several attempts to reduce duties of obligated entities by lawmakers in the past.

The third chapter and in my opinion the most important one concerns open data. This is the first time ever that any of the material by the Czech government mentions open data. It could become a milestone in the approach to public openness. Proposed mainly by the NGOs, this part of the action plan includes commitments to define and establish an appropriate license for open data, to define technical standards and formats for machine-readable data and to launch an open data catalogue.

The action plan anticipates the opening of 10 major datasets, including a business and insolvency register, a database of election results, public debt data or a political donations register. A separate chapter is devoted to the establishment of open data rules for the public procurement sector, as one of the most acute and corruption-prone areas. Open data from this datasets could significantly contribute to a more efficient public control and also create new business opportunities.

Transparency NGOs agreed to participate on implementing open data best practices and solutions, as many of them have already been solved and developed for academical and NGO projects in open data applications. However, many obstacles of general bureaucracy have to be overcome in the near future. Moreover the absence of a strong political backing for OGP and open data in particular could slow down the implementation of some of the action plan commitments. Unlike its neighbour,

Slovakia, where the action plan development process has been backed by then-prime minister Iveta Radicova, Czech government hasn't shown any real "passion" about OGP yet and eventually does not send any delegation to the OGP general meeting in Brasilia. The action plan will be presented only by the Czech ambassador to Brazil.

Further reading:

- [Independent source of information about OGP at Opengov.cz](#)
- [More detailed comments about Czech Action plan for OGP](#) (in Czech)