

# Postponed or unfulfilled promises of Czech ministries?

Submitted on 21 Aug 2013 by Michal Kuban

The public sector data disclosure as open data is a reality all over the world (e.g. in the UK or in the U.S.A.).

The Czech Republic's public sector also discloses certain data; however, numerous requirements for open data, such as an open and machine-readable format, data completeness and clear specifications for the conditions of their use, have not yet been defined.

The public sector publishes limited sources of data, less effectively and not structured, on various sites. It is therefore, difficult to find out what data and where the data are published. That is why, many interesting data are difficult to find for the public and their potential cannot be taken advantage of.

A Catalogue of open data can help resolve these problems. Data will be stored on servers of data administrators who will be authorized to insert links and references in the catalogue and who will be responsible for the correctness of the data in the catalogue. The public administration bodies will be able to create entries in the data catalogue, describing what types of data are disclosed and where such data can be downloaded. The public will be able to search in a unified way the catalogue entries using various criteria in a user-friendly environment. The public (as well as the public administration) will have a single - site survey of open data disclosed by the public sector of the Czech Republic.

This seems simple and clear however not all ministries participate in such initiatives.

Is it time to consider the commitment of Czech ministries with regards to opening up their datasets?

In April 2012 the government of the Czech Republic approved the [Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP). This Action Plan is the result of the September 2011 decision to become a partner in the OGP, and a public debate and consultation in January 2012, followed by a public discussion on determining priorities. The three main areas, which were included in the Action Plan as a result of the public debate, were:

1. The adoption of an Act on Civil Servants, to ensure the de-politicization, professionalization and stabilization of the public administration sector,
2. Streamlining the system allowing free access to information,
3. Improving access to data and information.

By fulfilling these commitments, the Czech Republic could significantly improve the transparency of public administration procedures and simplify access to the information and data held by the public administration. According to the signed OGP agreement, access to data and information should have been achieved in four stage by specific deadlines.

**1) The identification and removal of obstacles**, which includes:

- a) legal openness, i.e. the publication of data under an open license,
- b) technical openness, i.e. the publication of data in a standard machine-readable format;

**Deadline:** November 30th, 2012

**2) The creation of an open data infrastructure in the Czech Republic and the establishment of**

## rules for the public procurement sector

**Deadline:** December 31st, 2012

### 3) Opening up the most important sources of data

- see the chart below

**Deadline:** December 31st, 2012

Data-set	Owner of data-sets
The Commercial Register	<a href="#">Ministry of Justice</a>
The Insolvency Register	<a href="#">Ministry of Justice</a>
The public procurement information system	<a href="#">Ministry of Regional Development</a>
Results of elections	<a href="#">Czech Statistical Office</a>
Financial statistics - national debt	<a href="#">Ministry of Finance</a>
Financial statistics - government financial statistics,	<a href="#">Ministry of Finance</a>
Accounting records and financial data from Central system of state accounting information	<a href="#">Ministry of Finance</a>
The Central Registry of Grants	<a href="#">Ministry of Finance</a>
Register active legislative work - RALPH (departmental tools supporting the transparency of public administration and public involvement)	<a href="#">Ministry of Finance</a>
Online access to data on the financing of political parties	<a href="#">Ministry of Interior</a>

### 4) The creation of a catalog of public administration data

**Deadline:** March, 31st, 2013

What has been done?

All data sets from above mentioned institutions (see chart) should have been opened by the end of 2012. However, it was opened only the [results of Census 2011](#) (also Census of Housing and Apartments) in an Open data format. Czech Republic has failed to fulfil its commitments since Ministry of Interior, Finance, Justice, Transport and Regional Development has not published their sources in machine-readable format till the dates mentioned in the signed Open Government partnership. This unfulfilled of commitments was followed by some Czech NGO's and individuals.

On February 23rd, 2013, [Otakar Motejl Fund](#) urged the government to its commitments in fulfilling. Their online petition site [OtevřenáData.cz](#) have already joined over 700 people, among others also big Czech private company [Seznam.cz](#) or Transparency International. However, this initiative did

not speed up entire process of opening up a data sources. But it helped to raise an awareness of an Open Data policy in the Czech Republic.

A seminar on the topic of access to data and information was held on November, 22nd 2012. (More information [here](#)). However, any specific steps have not been made. [Methodology of Disclosure of the Czech Republic's Public Sector Open Data](#) and [Concept of Catalogization of the Czech Republic's Public Sector Open Data](#) were presented. Theoretically, the Czech public authorities are ready to publish its data within the concept of cataloguing. However, nowadays there is lack of particular manuals and guidelines for every ministry and public institutions on how to open their datasets.

The issue of open data is considered to be also one of the tasks of [The Government Anti-Corruption Strategy For The Years 2013 and 2014](#) , which was approved by Government Resolution of 16 January 2013. n. 39 (Specifically, the task No. 2.2.1. Open data). The guarantor of this task is the Ministry of the Interior. As part of this task were determined **new following sub-tasks and deadlines**:

#### **New deadlines:**

**August 31st, 2013** - Prepare a methodology for disclosure of the Czech Republic's public sector open data

**December 31st, 2013** - Create a catalogue of the Czech Republic public sector open data

**July 31st, 2014** - Prepare legislative conditions for the open licensing of the use of open data.

As the official answer on the information request, based on Freed of Information Act, from the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic says: *"Although the overall fulfilment of the obligation failed, the the commitment of will be kept with deadlines for the completion of particular tasks will be set to correspond with the Government Anti-Corruption Strategy for the year 2013-2014. The main administrator for opening a data at ministries is the Ministry of the Interior."*

In fact, several deadlines have been postponed and thus from the Office of the Government point of view, there is still time to fulfil the task. Although, the Ministry of Interior is in charge of improving access to Open data and information within the approved OGP, the organized coordination from the Ministry of Interior is lacking. Entire governmental agenda, for disclosure of data, linked with information systems is under the supervision of Ministry of Interior which linked the matter of disclosure of data and information to The Government Anti-Corruption Strategy For The Years 2013 and 2014. Admins of information systems of each ministry are responsible for opening up datasets. Shortly, in the practical way, opening up of all data depends on every information departments.

However, the Government of the Czech Republic does not have a strategy for open data, the only strategy which is in place is part of an anti-corruption plan for the 2013-2014. Hence, the core strategy for the development of Open Data in the Czech Republic is lacking as well as the absence of coordination within the bodies of the involved ministries. So far only the Concept and Methodology documents mentioned above are associated with the topic of Open Data. All involved ministries should express its attitudes and comments on the Conception and Methodology. Besides, the situation on the Czech political stage in not doing any better.

The political environment is not steady since the Czech Prime Minister Petr Necas has resigned in an effort to end political turmoil over a corruption inquiry. Afterwards, the new Czech interim government agreed on its resignation after losing a parliamentary confidence vote. However, the government will continue fulfilling the basic functions of the country's administration and it would not make any major decisions on matters that are not pressing. An early election, which might be held in October, would produce a new government.

Now, it depends on the ministries, if they are still willing to fulfill their commitments to the Open Government Partnership. The deadlines have been set, it now depends on the political will to follow these deadlines and for efforts to be made by every ministry and their respective IT department to finish opening up their datasets.