

Reflections on the Second Annual Czech Open Data Challenge

Submitted on 11 Dec 2014 by Michal Kuban

Last week the winners of the second Open Data Challenge - "Together We Open Data" - were announced.

Although in the Czech Republic there is a general lack of open governmental data, with only a few state institutions publishing their data, the results of the Open Data Challenge significantly show the huge potential that open data has in the Czech Republic.

The competition brought eighteen brand new applications based on open data, which scaled from transport, transparency, public sector to finance (the full list of applications can be [found here](#) although only in CZ). Through this blog post, I'll be giving my own reflections, which I gained during the organisational process.

The Open Data Challenge was organised by our non-governmental organisation, [The Otakar Motejl Fund](#) - one of the leading open data NGOs in the Czech Republic. The goal of the competition was to find the best applications that use (solely or partially) open datasets to contribute to the improvement of digital services for society.



The competition was launched at the beginning of September. During this opening party, representatives from the institutions that opened up their data delivered presentations about their datasets. These institutions included [The Czech Trade Inspection Authority](#), [The Czech Statistical Office](#), [The Institute of Planning and Development of Prague](#), [Czech Telecommunication Office](#), [The city of Děčín](#) and [The Vysočina Region](#).

The aim was to present data from the institutions that is already available, and encourage developers, hackers, and programmers to use this recently published data to create new applications and services. We also invited business partners such as Deloitte, Microsoft, Keebola, Huawei and OpenShift to the event, to connect to each other in order to bolster the open data ecosystem.

The registration process lasted 2 months and by the end of October, we had received 24 submitted applications (more than we expected). All 24 applications showed the level of creativity, inspiration, skills and commitment that opening government data is capable of attracting.

Among the 24 applications, only 9 were created by students (it should also be noted that 18 of the 24 were brand new, and only 6 were upgrades). There was only one public category and special award (The Award of Otakar Motejl Fund) for applications created by students.

Anyway, let's take a look at the 10 finalists.



1st prize - edesky.cz - The application helps to gather information from all municipal dashboards from the selected cities in the Czech Republic. Visitors can simply track changes in their cities and surroundings, i.e. road closures, sale of municipal properties and lands etc.

2nd prize - [Dětská hřiště v Praze](#) (Playgrounds in Prague) - The application shows playgrounds in Prague, and their equipment.

3rd prize - [WC kompas](#) (WC compass) - The service, designed primarily for disabled people, maps the availability of public toilets. Data is re-used from the database of [Vozejkmap.cz](#) who also succeeded last year in the Czech Open Data Competition.

The Award of the Otakar Motejl Fund for the best student application was given to [Justinian.cz](#). The application connects acts, courts decisions, and legal documents. The application is built on an open data infrastructure Opendata.cz.

But not just the winners are of interest here!

In general, six applications used open geographical data. For instance, the application 'Let's Swim EU' contains a European map of open-air water pools, dams and places where you can swim. The data relating to the quality of water were taken from the European Environmental Agenda.

Other applications focused on public services for Prague. The service Praha.io monitors up-to-date situations in Prague, i.e. road closures, traffic reports, lost animals, changes in public transport. Another, [Praha s kočárkem](#) (Prague with a Stroller) visualises the nearest playgrounds, non-smoking restaurants and pharmacies. While [Odpadní Kontejnery](#) (Waste Containers) displays the various types of waste containers in Prague on a certain day.

The transportation system's open data is considered to be the most economic valuable. However, there is no direct access to public transport data in the Czech Republic. The Open Data Challenge proved that even with limited access to public transport data, broad varieties of applications can be created using it. For instance, the 'Cykloplanovač' (Bicycle Route Planning with Route Choice

Preferences) application allows users to plan cycling routes in six cities in the Czech Republic. Another very promising and inspirational application is [Road Safety](#) – this service provides information on where the highest concentration of traffic accidents involving animals (deer, cattle) are located.



[Data.cz](#), an application which collects information about companies, entrepreneurs and their activities, is a great example of the use of economic data. The [‘Politické finance’](#) application (Database of Financing of Political Parties) serves as a great tool for ensuring the transparency of political parties. However, it is not entirely built on open data as you can find [here](#). The application presents the information about the financing of the political parties and their donors.

In conclusion, by inviting Czech institutions (the Czech Statistical Office, the Czech Trade Inspection Authority, and the Institute of Planning and Development of Prague) to get involved and publish their data, we were able to get some attention from private entrepreneurs and business partners, and connect them with authors of the applications.

Having said this, only a few projects actually used data from above presented institutions, and those who did focused particularly on the Czech Statistical Office. We actually expected an increased number of applications to use the data from above mentioned institutions.

This proved that the authors of applications could collect the necessary data, either by extracting it from websites or get it via the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and then publish it themselves. Mainly, they can give added value to its data and make it unique for users.

I wish we would have seen more applications based on the data from the above institutions, especially considering that they are pioneers in the way of opening up governmental data to public. It takes a lot of effort and energy to convince more institutions to give their data to public, so it would be great to see more online services and applications based on this data. Maybe next year.

What would happen if this governmental data was published as open data? What should come next? Should we organise the next Czech Open Data Challenge to focus on these few institutions that are

publishing data, and based on this, add new categories for applications based on the data?