

Czech Open Data Forum launches the Open Data Manifesto

Submitted on 07 Jan 2016 by Michal Kuban

At the beginning of December the [Open Data Forum](#) launched its [Open Data Manifesto](#), which is a call for all state institutions, entrepreneurs, start-ups, representatives from academia, individuals and the entire open data community to sign on to the manifesto.

The manifesto defines four key requirements that would significantly improve the current state of open data in the Czech Republic.

FÓRUM PRO OTEVŘENÁ DATA

The Open Data Forum, the main driving force behind the manifesto, is a platform comprised of the Otakar Motejl Fund (non-governmental organisation), Charles University in Prague and the University of Economics, Prague (VŠE).

The aim of the manifesto is defined in the following four pillars:

I. We aim to have open data into Czech legislation by the end 2016.

The members of the Open Data Forum have significantly contributed to the preparation of new open data legislation that is about to be signed by president by 2016. The new act will be delivered by Czech Minister of the Interior to the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic by the beginning of 2016.

II. We want a new legal adjustment of open data legislation to be drafted that supports a highly functioning and unified open data publication standard. It is necessary that data publishers as well as data users will understand the term “open data” in the same way.

III. We want that the publication of open data to be more than the formal fulfilment of a civil servant’s duties. We know which data sets are the most in demand and we help institutions with the selection of data, which has social and economical benefits that is to be published.

IV. We want data publishers and data users to work in collaboration with each other. There is a high demand for public sector data and there are many state institutions that have started to perceive publishing its information as a part of its mission.

The first signatories come from individuals and open data supporters, but also state institutions, such as the Czech Telecommunication Office. The numbers of signatories shows that Czech society is broadly supportive of the open data agenda; in particular the opening up of government data and giving citizens greater access to quality local data. It calls for greater data sharing between government departments, state institutions and regional institutions for data re-use and research purposes, as well as its use for businesses.

This open data initiative reflects a long-term public demand for more public sector information and the need for an open data policy in the Czech Republic. Why manifesto?

At the beginning of the next year, new legislation that deals with the implementation of open data and the PSI directive will be part of the Czech legislation. Therefore, public institutions will have to publish requested data as open data. However, the most in-demand data sets (such as the business

register, state budgets, government and public spending, public contracts, geo data) will be have to published based on the decree of the Czech Government. We are committed to work with civil servants and policy-makers to make sure that we can collaborate on the proper fulfilments of the open data commitments and prepared legislation could be mislead from being effective. Therefore we want to point out that 2016 will be fundamental for the state of open data and we want to bring together all of the stakeholders to accomplished the above mentioned commitments.

The European Commission, along with Capgemini Consulting, recently published its study “[Open Data Maturity in Europe 2015](#)”. In this study the Czech Republic belongs to the category of Beginners which is the first phase following Followers and TrendSetters. The category of Beginners means that the initial steps have been made, but that the country still struggles with the basics such as availability and accessibility. Portal functionalities remain limited and there is limited coverage in terms of data sets.

The Open Data Manifesto is not the reaction to this study, but it reflects basically the current status of Open Data.

The Czech Republic in its Open Data policy has to overcome several barriers, which are reflected in the Open data Manifesto. Firstly, an Open Data Strategy is needed. The Czech Republic belongs to the 55% of the EU28 + that does not have a standalone Open Data policy. But at least has certain strategic document of the eGovernment where Open Data is mentioned. This standalone strategy should state that all data need open licenses, and stimulate the creation of an Open Data Policy that is totally omitted in the Czech Republic. Only a few Czech institutions recently started to publish Open Data and implemented their own Open Data policy within their own institutions.

This Open Data policy should emphasize the importance of a legal background enabling the release of Open Data and address aspects such as privacy. The manifesto perceived the legal implementation of Open Data into the Czech legal system as a cornerstone. Thanks to this manifesto the Open Data Forum will aim at the organising the public consultations on the selection of obligatory datasets. It is sufficient to raise awareness of the current situation to help cooperate and involve the entire group of stakeholders to achieve the most desired outcome.

The strategy should also focus on stimulating the release of more data sets. However, such a five-year plan is definitely lacking. Therefore, the act of prioritizing and selection of the most demanded datasets that should be opened is also missing.

For instance, this could be done by taking stock of the data currently available at national level and engaging with re-users of the data could do this.

To sum up, it is necessary to say that year 2015 was really successful. The National Open Data Catalogue was launched. [The set of standards and guidelines for publication and cataloguing of open data](#) were finished. 27 applications were submitted to the Czech Open Data Challenge. [The ministerial application Supervisor from the Ministry of Finance won](#). Other Czech institutions started to open up its data. The legislation is being prepared. [The biggest hackathon in the history of the Czech Republic Praguehacks](#) brought 13 applications and projects that raise awareness about the open data and public sector information among IT developers, entrepreneurs, hackers and coders.

Now the next crucial step will be the implementation of Open Data into Czech legislation and prioritizing main datasets that should be mandatorily published by the Decree of the Czech Government. The last will be the opening up of more frequent dialogue between data publishers (state institutions) and data users, the communication between two sides may be as crucial as the entire open data legislation.