

**OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP
ACTION PLAN
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Introduction

On September 20, 2011, the Slovak Republic acceded to the international Open Government Partnership Initiative (OGP) and joined 50 OGP member countries, which include among others, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Czech Republic, Norway, as well as the USA, Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya and Ghana.

The Government of the Slovak Republic joined the Open Government Partnership and committed to give its citizens a larger role in public administration in support of its policy with emphasis on a change in the culture of politics, on transparency and eradication of corruption which has been implemented since its formation in 2010. The effort to change the paradigm can also be illustrated by the statement made by Slovak Prime Minister, Iveta Radičová: "If the government is to be human, it must be open to citizens." The partner countries made a commitment to submit their National Action Plans that describe the actions to be taken in the field of open government by April 9, 2012. The Action Plans will be presented at the Annual OGP Conference in Brazil on April 16-18, 2012. Major commitments that Slovakia declared for by joining the OGP Initiative are transparency in government and public administration, public participation, and responsibility and openness through new technologies. Slovakia will promote use of new technologies to facilitate innovations and active participation of citizens in public discussions. Slovakia will also take measures to promote access to information regarding actions of the Government and public administration, and will comply with associated principles of accountability.

The Slovak Republic has adopted various measures in the fight against corruption and to enhance transparency. It has adopted an act that conditions the entry of force of contracts made in the public administration sector to their publication in the Central Register of Contracts¹. The European Union declared this anti-corruption programme as exceeding the standards and to be used as a model for other countries. The Slovak Republic considers its membership in the OGP initiative, inaugurated by the President of the United States Barack Obama, as an acknowledgement of its efforts to promote open society and considers this programme the right action to be taken in its efforts to make public policies as transparent as possible. This initiative complies with the efforts of the European Union aiming at becoming a leader in the use of open data. In December 2011, the European Commission launched the Open Data Strategy for Europe to make its data available to the public through a new open portal.

The Action Plan has been developed in consultation with a wide spectrum of organizations involved in the dialogue and given the opportunity of providing their opinions on the content of the document. Participatory creation of public policies is one of the main principles proclaimed and followed by the Action Plan. In addition, the Advisory Board for the OGP Initiative comprising of representatives of the Government, ministries, and the third sector has been established. There has been a broad debate with representatives of non-governmental organizations across regions in Slovakia and comments of respective ministries have been included in the document.

¹ Some public administration bodies, e.g. local government bodies or their contributory institutions are required to publish contracts on their own websites, not on the Central Register of Contracts.

Prime Minister Radičová said "the assessment of institutions of adopted anti-corruption mechanisms during my term in office are considered above standard not only within the Visegrad Group, but also in Europe."

The Open Government Partnership is an important step towards transparency and in a fight against corruption in the Slovak Republic. The Action Plan aims to propose specific actions necessary to maintain the position of Slovakia among the international elite in the field of open governance and fight against corruption.

Following the 12-month implementation cycle of the Action Plan, an evaluation process will take place in order to produce a Report on the Open Government Initiative prepared by independent experts and focused on the evaluation of the Action Plan commitments. The Government will also provide its internal evaluation of the Action Plan.

Open Government Efforts to date in the Slovak Republic

In the course of recent months, the actions of the Government of the Slovak Republic have been focused on the fight against corruption, not only increasing transparency of public authorities and enhancing their effectiveness, but also on intensifying dialogues with representatives of the private and public sector.

The Government of the Slovakia fully addresses the issues mentioned above in its **Government Manifesto** adopted in August 2010 and is committed to enforce a modern, transparent and structured policy. "The Government of Slovakia is aware that an open approach of public institutions towards citizens is the best way to secure public trust in the state and its institutions.² "One of the principles to change the culture of politics is the transparency in the decision-making processes enabling public control including the access to information and the disclosure of information³. "With respect to property owned by the State, public institutions and self-governing bodies, the Government of Slovakia has committed to enforce transparent transactions and tenders (public tenders, auctions).⁴" The public sector has begun to procure contracts in a more transparent way and started to use the public competitions methods more consistently. Act No. 58/2011 amending Act No. 25/2006 on Public Procurement and on Amendment and Supplement to Certain Acts as amended has been adopted. Between June 2010 and June 2011, 73% procurements were awarded in tenders (open and restricted tenders)⁵. At the same time, the amount of contracts awarded in the least open method, negotiated procedure, has dropped from 30 to 20% of the total amount of contracts awarded in the public administration sector. The average

² Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic for 2010-2014, http://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/18_programove-vyhlasenie-2010.pdf

³ The term "access" and "accessibility" is understood not only as an opportunity to gain access to information, but also as accessibility for disabled persons enabling them to use such information directly or through assistance technologies.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Transparency International Slovakia: The Government of the Prime Minister Radičová has successfully restarted combating the corruption

. <http://www.transparency.sk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/TS-Hodnotenie-Radicovej-Rok-Prvy.pdf>

number of tenderers per one tender went up from 1.7 to 2.5 tenderer in the given period ⁶. In 2011, the Public Procurement Act was amended to reduce the limits for below threshold and subliminal contracts, a new provision as to what legal entities may act as contracting authorities was added. Ministries and public companies have started to use electronic auctions more often. The Government also aims to **increase the transparency of public funds**. According to the Government Manifesto, the state budget has to provide all material in a clear form to clearly inform the public on the use of public funds. Act No. 507/2010 on the Property of Municipalities and Act No. 524/2010 on the Provision of Grants have been adopted within the powers of the Government Office of Slovakia. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic has adopted Act No. 544/2010 Coll. on Grants within the powers of the The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic also established an information website www.rozpocet.sk.

One the most significant achievements is the setup of **the Central Register of Contracts**. The Central Register of Contracts (CRC) provides a list of contracts concluded by ministries, state administration bodies, public bodies and their subordinate organizations since 1 January 2011. All such contracts have to be published in the Register and only enter into force the next day following their publication in the CRC (Act No. 546/2010 Coll. amending Act No. 40/1964 Coll., the Civil Code, as amended and Amending and Supplementing Certain Acts).

On 10 August 2011, the Government of Slovakia adopted Resolution No. 517 on **the Anti-Corruption Strategy Plan** in the Slovak Republic. The Strategy Plan describes and defines areas of the most frequent corruption activities and identifies areas that need to be developed further to reflect conditions of individual ministries and institutions in order to define specific tasks and deadlines for their fulfillment. An inter-ministerial working group of experts for fight against corruption has also been set up. Since May 2011, an **anti-corruption telephone line of the Government Office of Slovakia** has been established so that citizens can call to report suspicions or allegations of corruption in any public area. Until February 2012, 744 citizens called the anti-corruption line and reported 136 suspicions of corruption. Thirty one suspicions were forwarded to the Anti-Corruption agency and 71 suspicions were dismissed, as they did not involve corruption. Most suspicions of corruption reported to the anti-corruption line concerned the Police Corps of Slovakia, prosecutors' office, and local government bodies and courts.

In the field of open public policy, **the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic** has prepared a series of legislative proposals in consultation with representatives of non-governmental organizations. The Ministry has thereby addressed the necessity to enhance transparency, open the Ministry more to the public and engage representatives of the civil society in the process of establishing the legislation concerning the Ministry of Justice and in the monitoring of decision-making of courts and self-governing judicial bodies. Non-governmental organizations have been engaged through consultations, interdepartmental consulting procedures, and the establishment of working groups and participation in workshops. The judicial system reform focused on active publication of court rulings, public selection procedures for judges and presidents of courts, and disclosure of information on actions taken by the Judicial Council has been highly praised. The most important legislative actions in this area include the adoption of Act No. 495/2010 amending Act No. 185/2002 on the Judicial Council of the Slovak Republic and on Amendment and Supplement to Certain Acts as

⁶ Ibid.

amended, Act No. 33/2011 amending Act No. 385/2000 on Judges and Assessors and on Amendment and Supplement to Certain Acts together with Act No. 467/2011. Within the judicial system reform, the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic has also thoroughly reworked the evaluation system of judges with the possibility of terminating a term of office of a judge when a judge receives three negative evaluations. In addition, a possibility of comparing the performance of individual judges in Slovakia has been introduced through annual statistical reports of judges published on an annual basis. Comparable system changes have been also introduced in the prosecutor's office (public selection procedures, disclosure and declassification of decisions made by the prosecutor's office).

In the area of **tightening up the rules for awarding governmental grants**, the National Council of Slovakia adopted for example Act No. 524/2010 on the Provision of Grants under the powers of the Government Office of Slovakia which lays down the purpose, requirements, scope, and the method and control of the grant provisions. This Act also governs the eligibility of applicants, procedure for submitting applications, and the method for the provision of grants and management control. The adoption of Act No. 116/2011 which amends Act No. 528/2008 on the Aid and Support provided by the European Community Funds as amended, has facilitated higher transparency of the allocation of European Union funds.

In **the field of education**, an amendment to the Act on Universities (Act No. 6/2011 Coll. amending Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Universities and on Amendment and Supplement to Certain Acts as amended) has been adopted, which lays down the obligation to publish theses on the Internet to lower the degree of plagiarism and to promote the use of these works to be put into practice. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic has also published unemployment rates of university graduates.

In the field of social affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, as the governing authority of the Operational Programme for Employment and Social Inclusion, has adopted a set of measures that convinced the European Commission to amend the EC audit rank of Slovakia from 3 to 2 in December 2011. These actions include, for example, disclosing information about supported projects, enhancing transparency in the evaluation of projects or publishing common rules for beneficiaries to ensure an unbiased approach towards all beneficiaries.

The OGP Action Plan of the Slovak Republic proposes actions for the period of 2012 and 2013. The Action Plan primarily addresses the state administration bodies and not local government bodies. Therefore, no tasks arise for the latter in this respect; however, their voluntary participation in the OGP is welcome. With reference to the internal and external evaluation of the Action Plan, a new Action Plan will be created for the period following the implementation period.

Commitments Proposed for 2012–2013

A. OPEN INFORMATION

Active disclosure of information and data at the disposal of public authorities and public institutions to the general public gradually becomes the standard method of communication between governments and citizens and is the key element of our commitment within the OGP Initiative. There is a global trend in governments disclosing high quality data to the maximum possible degree without attempting to evaluate the usefulness of the data for the citizens. Experience from other countries disclosing information and data confirms that open data stimulate activity and creativity of companies, non-governmental organizations, and citizens who start developing applications and innovative services based on the data. Such an approach reduces the amount of requirements placed on state and public administration in the provision of many services. For example, it decreases the number of applications within the disclosure of information pursuant to Act No. 211/2000 on Free Access to Information, as well as the number of requirements related to the e-government and services employing new technologies. It suffices for the public administration to provide high quality information (with the exception of confidential statistical data obtained in accordance with Act No. 540/2001 on the State Statistics as amended), the private sector, and non-governmental organizations and citizens develop user-friendly concepts and applications. Foreign experience also shows that public administration bodies become some of the most frequent users of the published data and newly developed applications. They get easy access to high quality data of other ministries through a comprehensive data catalogue.

A 1. Open Data Portal – data.gov.sk

The setup of the Central Register of Contracts (CRC) has been the first and foremost step of information disclosure in Slovakia. The CRC enables citizens to monitor the allocation of state funds. This is the highest ranked action among experts, personalities, and non-governmental organizations.

Following and building on the Central Register of Contracts and the planned Central Register of Projects funded from repayable and non-repayable financial assistance from public funds (Resolution No. 689/2011 of the Government of the Slovak Republic), the Open Data Portal "data.gov.sk" aims to provide data to the public. Yet it goes beyond the CRC intention by creating a specific portal for collecting data at the disposal of the public administration bodies in Slovakia. The data will be provided in a standardized form to enable further processing, either automated or through development of applications to be used directly by citizens. The major difference is that the Open Data Portal is not a standard website providing various data. It is a catalogue of available public administration data that will be accessible on the portal and enabled for further computer processing. This means that the portal will provide information regarding the location of data required by citizens, business persons or the public administration for further processing. It is a unique and innovative portal, which has not to this date been implemented in Slovakia, but provides better access to data at the disposal of public administration bodies.

Objectives of the Open Data Portal - data.gov.sk:

- publish remotely accessible data available for machine processing using open standards and public licences.
- publish metadata (i.e. data description, description of individual "columns in the table" or boxes in an application form), remotely accessible and available for machine processing using open standards and public licences.

Basic characteristics of the portal:

- provide data and access to data in compliance with open and technologically neutral standards using public licences enabling further use of data.
- enable searching for documents - browsing, full text or filter search, searching by metadata.
- provide links to documents and sources including the system for metadata correction and amendment (crowd sourcing).
- data and databases published on the portal will be available to the public and usable solely for information and analysis purposes only, not for legal acts.

For the successful operation of the Open Data Portal, the following has to be ensured:

- develop common technical standards, binding rules and internal regulations for the public administration and organizations disclosing data that describe recommended practices for data disclosure, data structure in which new data is processed, as well as procedures for processing feedback received from users.
- elaborate on a plan for progressive data and metadata disclosure at individual ministries (including the definitions of minimal scope of data to be disclosed annually).

The provided data will also be evaluated by the public regarding its quality and usability. This evaluation will be performed on the Open Data Portal, for which individual datasets provided by public administration bodies will be assessed.

After the setup of the Open Data Portal, pilot datasets of the ministries that have such data available will be published. The Central Register of Contracts will be one of the first datasets published on the portal. The setup and launch of the Central Register of Contracts (CRC) on 1 January 2011 has been one of the major achievements in the field of open governance. Still, its functioning and operation can be further improved. The improvements in the CRC will mostly affect the implementation of comments and requirements provided by public users at meetings with the Government Office, as well as on the Portal.

Within the pilot project of data disclosure, selected ministries will prepare datasets that provide data in key areas relating to services delivered to citizens and transparent use of public funds.

The Government Office will, in cooperation with other ministries, develop common standards and a plan for progressive disclosure of existing data and metadata for the public administration bodies and will publish the data on the data.gov.sk. Individual ministries will provide datasets as scheduled in tasks, in accordance with, applicable technical and content specifications and guidelines for data disclosure. The published data will also be governed by Decree No. 312/2010 Coll. on the Standards for the IS because open data standards also need to have a common binding form.

1. Develop and launch the Open Data Portal

Responsible: Government Office of the Slovak Republic

Deadline: April 2012

2. Publish pilot datasets on the Open Data Portal in compliance with the approved OGP Action Plan of the Slovak Republic

Responsible: Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

Deadline: May 2012

The pilot datasets include the Commercial Bulletin administered by the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic, the Operational Programme for Employment and Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, the Central Register of Contracts, and the Central Register of Projects administered by the Government Office of the Slovak Republic.

3. Develop a list of all datasets, including technical specifications and a plan of their progressive publication on the Open Data Portal.

Responsible: Individual Ministries, Authority of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre, Statistical Office, and the Public Procurement Office

Deadline: June 2012

4. Develop technical and content specifications for public administration data and metadata for the Open Data Portal and guidelines for data publication and further use based on the public licence.

Responsible: Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: September 2012

5. Further develop the Central Register of Contracts reflecting the needs of public users.

Responsible: Government Office of the Slovak Republic.

Deadline: continuously

6. Publish at least 2 datasets from each Ministry during the period of 12 months on the Open Data Portal based on the proposed plan for data publication.

Responsible: Individual Ministries, Government Office of the Slovak Republic, and the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: June 2013

A 2. Web application for the EU Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other ministry grant schemes

The Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant mechanisms constitute significant resources of public finances used by local government bodies, business persons, and non-governmental organizations. Therefore, it is important that citizens obtain as much information as possible about these mechanisms⁷. A specific website and application will be set up for this purpose in order to provide citizens with information about the use of the financial mechanisms listed above and results achieved by the use of these mechanisms, about the impact on regions having the highest unemployment rate, but also about opportunities for citizens to participate in on-going projects or to obtain financial assistance. As the Slovak Government seeks to promote transparent and open operation of public resources, interactive and transparent provision of information about the allocation of Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant mechanisms is considered a matter of prime importance. This action builds on Resolution No. 689/2011 of the Government of the Slovak Republic establishing the Register of Projects funded from the repayable and non-repayable financial assistance from public funds. The reach of the web application is broader than the reach of the planned Register of Projects, because it will also provide additional Ministry grant schemes that are not provided in the Register of Projects. The State administration bodies are required to provide the same amount of information for this web application as for the Register of Projects.

Objectives of the web application:

⁷ The website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR is an example of systematically published information about the Structural Funds: www.esf.gov.sk.

- provide information in the scope defined for the purposes of ITMS about all programs implementing the Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes implemented in the context of the Slovak Republic in one place.
- provide up-to-date information about all opportunities associated with the allocation of Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes provided in the context of the Slovak Republic for different target groups (citizens, beneficiaries, candidates for public procurement, public institutions, etc.);
- enable public control of the effectiveness and transparency in the use of public resources from the Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes used in the context of the Slovak Republic.

Basic characteristics of the web application⁸:

- provide comprehensive and easy-to-find information from all programs and Ministries implementing the financial mechanisms listed above (the Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes), and the search options meeting the needs and interests of the users.
- provide interactive information about the amount, purpose, and other relevant data of provided grants on the map of Slovakia.
- enable the distinction between approved projects, submitted project applications, projects currently implemented, and already implemented projects.
- provide links to documents and sources, to include the system for metadata correction and amendment (crowd sourcing).

The web application builds on the existing websites like www.nsrr.sk or the ITMS system, from which the application will partially collect information, but its reach is broader. Firstly, the objective of the web application is to cover all grant mechanisms listed above (the Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes used in the context of the Slovak Republic). Unlike the ITMS, this web application is intended for the general public use and its objectives and characteristics are more interactive than those defined for "www.nsrr.sk". The objective of the web application is to cover not only completed projects, but also projects currently being implemented in the case where systems of a particular Ministry also include such information about projects in progress (e.g. the ITMS). The web application will use access to required data through the Open Data Portal.

7. Publish data regarding the allocation of Structural Funds in the scope defined for the ITMS on the Open Data Portal.

⁸ Experience from running the "recovery.gov" website may be used in setting up the web application that is similarly oriented.

Responsible: Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic

Deadline: November 2012

8. Publish data regarding the allocation of EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes on the Open Data Portal in the scope defined by the Central Register of Projects.

Responsible: Individual Ministries, Government Office of the Slovak Republic, and the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: December 2012

9. Prepare a tender for the public procurement of the web application for the allocation of Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for Development of the Social Society in cooperation with Government Office of the Slovak Republic.

Deadline: September 2012

10. Launch a portal on the current allocation of Structural Funds, EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Swiss Financial Mechanism and other Ministry grant schemes.

Responsible: Government Office of the Slovak Republic

Deadline: June 2013

B. GOVERNMENT OPEN TO DIALOGUE

This section of the Action Plan is based on the conviction shared among OGP members that the public administration is of high quality only when current key issues and challenges are being tackled in cooperation and with participation of the public. We are also convinced that high quality public policies⁹ are shaped through dialogue with stakeholders and with participation of citizens. The Slovak Government is therefore ready to implement new mechanisms and principles for regular and multilevel communication with the public and for discussion with the civil society. We plan to make the dialogue with stakeholders and citizens a necessary part of the development of particular policies, especially those that may have a significant impact on the life of our citizens. This Action Plan introduces several specific instruments to ensure regular and high quality dialogue in the development and implementation of legislative or executive government measures.

B 1. Dialogue on Public Policies

Public policies of a State can be developed in different ways. Any public authority, politicians, active citizens, and/or stakeholders may act as initiators of the policy. In some cases, it is advisable to include all the parties listed above. Such development models are practiced abroad, yet they have been seldom used in Slovakia and yielded different results.¹⁰

In the framework of the Action Plan, we will test four specific public policies (strategies), using different models and tools for common discussion between representatives of stakeholders¹¹, experts, and citizens. The four pilot projects concerning dialogue about public policies are:

- *Dialogue on Strategy for the Social Services Provision* - Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.
- *Dialogue on National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation for 2012-2020* - Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic.
- *Dialogue on Nationwide Strategy to Protect and Promote Human Rights* - Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Department of Human Rights and Equality of Treatment.
- *Development of rules for the public participation in the legislative process by law* - Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic.

⁹ The term public policy is understood as, for example, legislative intent, intended reforms, concepts, strategies and programs, i.e. all conceptual and strategic materials with a long-term impact on public policy stakeholders and citizens.

¹⁰ Projects involving participation of stakeholders and/or the public in the development of public policies include, for example, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development projects (2001), development of regional concepts for social and economic integration of Roma communities for 2007-2013 in regions of Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice, or implementation of the National Convention on the EU between 2004-2006.

¹¹ Different models for the involvement of stakeholders and the public in the development of public policies are defined e.g. in J. Gastil & P. Levine (Eds.) (2005), *The deliberative democracy handbook: Strategies for effective civic engagement in the twenty-first century*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, or in the OECD publication (2001), *Citizens as partners: Information, consultation, and public participation in policy-making*.

Since a new concept is being introduced in the development of public policy, sufficiently expert level in the process design and/or implementation has to be ensured, either through external sources or via foreign partners. Within the Action Plan implementation process, we plan to test different models or the involvement of stakeholders and the public in order to generalize the recommended procedures that define rules for the involvement of the public in the development of selected policies as part of administrative procedures. As a part of this innovative concept, public administration employees and representatives of non-governmental organizations will receive training on the benefits and procedures involving the civil society and stakeholders in dialogue in the development and implementation of key national policies, development of strategy documents, and evaluation of government policies.

The creation of conditions for the public participation in the legislative process is one of the areas for the involvement of the public in the process of finding answers to key problems of the society. This objective can be accomplished by strengthening the participation of the public in the legislative process by enacting rules for taking into consideration any comments that may be raised by the public regarding draft bills or other materials of non-legislative nature during the review stage or in general public discussion whether at the level of the Government and the National Council of the Slovak Republic or at the level of local government bodies.

This solution may induce improvements in several areas in terms of the attitude of the public towards the development of legal regulations. Transparency in establishing legal regulations is one of the fundamental prerequisites in the legislation process. Involvement of the public in the process of drawing up rules of law through a legal act may strengthen the legitimacy of decisions of public authorities, the efficiency of the legal regulations, as well as the social acceptance of a particular rule of law after its approval. The bill brings in a positive feature of the so-called notification principle. Every draft of the bill must be published by its sponsor, ranging from the government to a municipality, before it is addressed by the approving authority. This principle significantly strengthens the principle of legal assurance of citizens. The Bill on the participation of the public in the legislative process may ultimately help adopt legislation of a higher quality. The Bill on the participation of the public in the legislative process will be drawn up using the participatory methods, i.e. with the participation of representatives of the civil society.

11. Proposal for three processes "Dialogue on Strategy: using the participatory methods and training of involved public administration staff and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, and Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities.

Deadline: August 2012

12. Apply the proposed participatory methods on three public policies.

Responsible: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, and National Minorities in cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: September 2013

13. Draw up the Bill on the participation of the public in the legislative process

Responsible: Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic

Deadline: June 2013

14. Create rules for public involvement in the development of selected policies and submit them to the Government of the Slovak Republic for approval. This document will also contain proposals for processes, training courses, and outcomes associated with the participatory development of public policies.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: November 2013

B 2. Collective Electronic Petition

Pursuant to our regulatory system, the National Council of the Slovak Republic is required to deal with a petition signed by more than 100,000 people. The Slovak Government wishes to respond to citizens' suggestions more quickly and efficiently. It will use new technologies to facilitate communication with citizens and to simplify ways for signing a common petition. The Slovak Government will design a pilot project that enables electronic collection of signatures and will thereby publically commit to deal with any application that manages to collect electronically 15,000 signatures within a period of 30 days. The Slovak Government commits to provide signatories with a response to any application concerning questions within the powers of the executive branch of the government within a period of 30 days and to adopt appropriate actions according to the nature of the application within a period of 60 days from the application submission end date. If citizens' initiatives require legislative actions, the Slovak Government commits to deal with such initiatives within a period of 6 months from the initiative submission end date. Should the institute of electronic collective petition prove successful, Act No. 85/1990 on the Rights of Petition as amended may require amendments to enable more effective use of electronic petitions by citizens of Slovakia.

15. Prepare and launch collective electronic petitions.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society in cooperation with the Government Office of the Slovak Republic

Deadline: December 2012

16. Draw up an amendment and supplement to the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of materials for meetings of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

Responsible: Government Office of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: December 2012

C. TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT

One of the fundamental prerequisites for open governance is the accountability of public administration representatives for decisions made for the benefit of citizens. The document by which the Slovak Government acceded to the OGP stipulates that public administration should have guidelines, regulations, and mechanisms governing the accountability of government representatives for their actions, their responses to criticism or requirements placed on them, and the responsibility for failures with respect to laws or such guidelines and mechanisms. The Action Plan provides several methods for the Slovak Government to monitor its own actions to ensure more open governance and enable the submission of requirements and new initiatives within the open governance in the future. Another important aspect lies in the support of citizens who directly report corruption within the administration of public funds and in the enforcement of collective interests of various financial groups.

C 1. Working Group for the Implementation of the Action Plan

The Government of the Slovak Republic shall set up a Working Group for the Implementation of the Action Plan which shall monitor and coordinate fulfillment of particular areas in the field of open governance. The Working Group shall be comprised of representatives of all Ministries and Government Offices of the Slovak Republic, Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS), Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, and the SK-8 Association will each appoint one representative.

17. Draw up statutes and appoint the Working Group for the Implementation of the OGP Action Plan in the Slovak Republic.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: May 2012

C 2. Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Transparency and Open Governance

The Government of the Slovak Republic supports permanent dialogue with the civil society on topics such as transparency and open governance. Therefore, it has decided to set up a Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Transparency and Open Governance, which would comprise of members of the Chamber of Non-Governmental and Non-Profit Organizations of the Committee of the Non-Governmental and Non-Profit, Working Group members, representatives of selected watchdog organizations in Slovakia, and other personalities with experience in the field of enhancing transparency and openness.

18. Create statutes of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Transparency and Open Governance and submit it to the Government of the Slovak Republic for approval.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: February 2012

C 3. Openness Barometer

The Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic shall regularly evaluate the openness and transparency of executive bodies of the government. It will also assess data provided for the Open Data Portal by individual Ministries and other public administration bodies. The Council of the Government will contact Slovak and foreign organizations dealing with related issues. For this purpose, it will develop and approve evaluation criteria, specify particular parameters to be monitored in the given period and call attention to any achievements and shortcomings in their fulfillment on a regular basis. The evaluation criteria will also take into account foreign experience in the field of transparency.

19. Develop criteria and parameters to be evaluated by the Council.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: July 2012

20. Carry out the first evaluation of the Openness Barometer.

Responsible: Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Transparency and Open Governance

Deadline: October 2012

C 4. Corruption Whistleblowers

To eliminate corruption, circumvention of laws or ineffective actions of public institutions, the Government of the Slovak Republic will adopt effective legislative measures to support people from inside public and private institutions who have knowledge of and want to give notice of such actions. The State shall provide efficient protection and assistance to such people, because the information they provide may prevent non-transparent allocation of public funds.

The proposed draft bill should create legal prerequisites for enhanced protection of the people giving notice of any illegal action as mentioned above, in particular in the field of work relations. For this purpose, the draft bill should govern in particular legal relations to ensure protection, designate the party qualified to judge the legitimacy of protection and methods for its provision, including rights and obligations of parties involved in the protection provision, and/or rewards for potential savings in public funds.

With reference to the new legislation amendment, people giving notices should either be discharged from the duty not to disclose, or this duty restricted. In addition, there are issues of providing legal assistance or psychological advice and extending terms for shortening the verdict.

21. Draw up a draft bill on the protection of corruption whistleblowers and submit it for review stage among Ministries.

Responsible: Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: June 2012

C 5. Next Steps

Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society in cooperation with the Working Group for the Implementation of the Action Plan and Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Transparency and Open Governance will evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan. Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society will develop an Action Plan for open governance for the next period following consultation and discussion with relevant participants, including representatives of the local governments and civil society. This Action Plan must be discussed and approved by the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Transparency and Open Governance and the Committee of Non-Governmental and Non-Profit of Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality.

22. Develop the Action Plan for open governance for the next period and submit it to the Government of the Slovak Republic for approval.

Responsible: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society.

Deadline: June 2013