Independent Reporting Mechanism SLOVAKIA: Progress Report 2012–13

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: SLOVAKIA

Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) Progress Report 2012–2013

Slovakia's action plan is a legally binding document. Although commitments are owned by a variety of agencies, the biggest successes are in the area of open data. However, the action plan presented a number of other innovative proposals in the areas of transparency and accountability, areas that can form the basis of an even more participatory and ambitious second plan.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) carries out a biannual review of the activities of each OGP participating country.

Slovakia officially began participating in OGP in September 2011, when Prime Minister Iveta Radičová declared the government's intent to join. However, as a result of the early elections, a new government headed by Prime Minister Robert Fico was charged with implementation of the Slovak commitments.

The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Civil Society was the lead implementing and co-ordinating body for the OGP activities in Slovakia. The office has limited formal powers or resources and draws its influence mostly from the political backing it receives. After the elections in 2012 the Plenipotentiary was relocated from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of the Interior.

The OGP action plan in Slovakia is a legally binding document. This ensures that affected institutions take actions or explain the lack of them.

OGP PROCESS

Countries participating in the OGP follow a process for consultation during development of their OGP action plan and during implementation.

Overall, Slovakia developed the OGP plan in a participatory way. The government provided fourteen days of advanced notice to key stakeholders to comment on the draft action plan. However, there were several factors that appear to have limited participation in the consultation. Most notably, Slovakia did not create a participatory platform for stakeholders to consult and evaluate its OGP activities.

The government developed preliminary themes of the plan in consultation with four civil society organisations and representatives from academia. These organisations and individuals later formed the Slovak OGP Advisory Board. However, this board was largely a consultative body with few formal powers. The Government Council of Non-Profit Organisations also discussed the draft action plan. The researcher did not notice complaints suggesting that the process was closed to those interested.

Overall the government's progress report was balanced, and the draft report was made available online and in-person.

At a glance

Member since:	**2011**
Number of commitments:	**22**

Level of Completion:

Completed:	**8 of 22**
Substantial:	**0 of 22**
Limited:	**6 of 22**
Not started:	**2 of 22**

Timing:

On schedule:	**10 of 22**

Commitment emphasis:

Access to information:	**12 of 22**
Participation:	**7 of 22**
Accountability:	**11 of 22**
Tech & innovation for transparency & accountability:	**11 of 22**

Number of Commitments with:

Clear relevance to an OGP Value:	**22 of 22**
Moderate or Transformative potential impact:	**18 of 22**
Substantial or complete implementation:	**8 of 22**
All three (✪):	**7 of 22**

This report was prepared by Matej Kurian, independent researcher.

As part of OGP, countries are required to make commitments in a two-year action plan. Table 1 summarises each commitment, its level of completion, its ambition, whether it falls within Slovakia's planned schedule, and the key next steps for the commitment in future OGP action plans. Slovakia's plan covered a wide variety of sectors and had a number of ambitious commitments, as evidenced below. Slovakia completed eight of its 22 commitments, officially withdrew 6 with ambition to complete some of them as part of 2014-2015 Action Plan.

Table 1: Assessment of Progress by Commitment

COMMITMENT SHORT NAME	POTENTIAL IMPACT				LEVEL OF COMPLETION				TIMING	NEXT STEPS
	NONE	MINOR	MODERATE	TRANSFORMATIVE	NOT STARTED	LIMITED	SUBSTANTIAL	COMPLETE		
✪ COMMITMENT IS CLEARLY RELEVANT TO OGP VALUES AS WRITTEN, HAS SIGNIFICANT POTENTIAL IMPACT, AND IS SUBSTANTIALLY OR COMPLETELY IMPLEMENTED.										
✪ **1. Open Data Portal Launch–**To develop and launch an Open Data Portal									On schedule	**New commitment** building on existing one
Open Data Publishing / ✪ **2.** To publish pilot open data sets									On schedule	**Further work** on basic implementation
✪ **6.** To publish at least two datasets from each ministry on the Open Data Portal									On schedule	New commitment
✪ **7.** To publish data regarding ITMS									On schedule	**Maintenance and monitoring** of completed implementation
3. Datasets Mapping–To develop a list of all datasets as well as a plan for their progressive publication on the Open Data Portal									Behind schedule	Further work
✪ **4. Data Standards–**To develop technical and contents specification for public administration data, meta data for the Open Data Portal, and guidelines for data publication and use									On schedule	Maintenance and monitoring
5. Improving Register of Contracts–To develop the Central Register of Contracts reflecting the needs of public users.									Unclear	New commitment
EU Funds and Subsidies Monitoring / **8.** To publish data regarding EU funds and subsidies									Behind schedule	Further work
9. To prepare a tender for public procurement of web application for different financial allocation and other ministry grant schemes									On schedule	**Revision of commitment** to be more achievable or measurable
10. To launch a portal on current financial allocations and other ministry grant schemes					Officially withdrawn					Revision of commitment

COMMITMENT SHORT NAME	POTENTIAL IMPACT				LEVEL OF COMPLETION				TIMING	NEXT STEPS
	NONE	MINOR	MODERATE	TRANSFORMATI	NOT STARTED	LIMITED	SUBSTANTIAL	COMPLETE		
✪ Commitment is clearly relevant to OGP values as written, has significant potential impact, and is substantially or completely implemented.										
Participatory Policy Making ✪ **11.** To prepare three public consultations and train involved public administration staff and representatives of non-governmental organisations	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	On schedule	No further action
✪ **12.** To apply proposed participatoy methods on three public policies	■	■	■	■			■	■	On schedule	New commitment
14. To create rules for public involvement in policy-making processes	■	■	■	■	■				On schedule	Further work
13. Lawmaking Public Participation Rules– To draft a bill on the participation of the public in the legislative process				■	Officially withdrawn					Further work
Collective e-Petitions **15.** To prepare and launch collective eletronic petitions	■			■	■	■			Officially withdrawn	Revision of commitment
16. To amend guidelines for meeting materials submitted to the government of Slovakia	■	■	■	■	Officially withdrawn					Further work
17. OGP Steering Committee–To draft a law that establishes a working group to implement the OGP action plan	■				■	■			Behind schedule	Revision of commitment
Transparency Council and **18.** To draft laws to establish the Transparency Council	■	■	■		Officially withdrawn					Revision of commitment
19. To develop criteria and parameters to be evaluated by the council	■	■	■		Officially withdrawn					Revision of commitment
20. To carry out the first evaluation of the Openness Barometer	■	■	■	■	Officially withdrawn					Revision of commitment
21. Whistle-Blowers Protection Act–To draft a bill to protect whistle-blowers who expose corruption	■	■	■		■	■			Behind schedule	Further work
22. 2014–2015 Action Plan Development– To develop the next OGP action plan	■	■			■				On schedule	Further work

Table 2: Summary of Progress by Commitment

NAME OF COMMITMENT	SUMMARY OF RESULTS
✪ COMMITMENT IS CLEARLY RELEVANT TO OGP VALUES AS WRITTEN, HAS SIGNIFICANT POTENTIAL IMPACT, AND IS SUBSTANTIALLY OR COMPLETELY IMPLEMENTED.	
✪ 1. Open Data Portal Launch • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Complete	The portal helps stakeholders locate relevant state-produced data without asking them their reasons for accessing the data. Prior to OGP the government did not undertake any effort to launch an open data portal. Civil society organisations welcomed this commitment as a significant step forward in proactive disclosure. The proposal to include data-quality features in the next action plan is in line with expectations of civil society representatives. This commitment was completed ahead of schedule.
Dataset Publishing ✪ 2. Pilot Datasets • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Moderate • Completion: Complete ✪ 6. Continuous Dataset Publishing • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Complete ✪ 7. ITMS Datasets • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Complete	These commitments, as well as data.gov.sk, are some of the biggest OGP contributions. Civil society organisations welcomed this commitment as a significant step forward in proactive disclosure. However, the quality of data the government publishes requires further improvement. In particular, civil society representatives were dissatisfied by the datasets catalogued at data.gov.sk. The datasets published were mainly characterised as "uninteresting" of "low value," closed formats, incomplete information on updates, or plainly broken links or data. Even the government self-assessment report acknowledged the limitations of the pilot datasets published as part of its OGP action plan. The IRM researcher recommends further work on dataset publishing.
3. Datasets Mapping • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Limited	This commitment developed the first list that documents the nature of data collected and maintained by government agencies and a schedule for their release. Civil society organisations (CSOs) welcomed the government's progress on this commitment, but at the same time, CSOs assessed it as incomplete. Several valuable datasets were missing, including cadastral maps, real estate trading, and data concerning financial health of municipalities. The researcher recommends further work on basic implementation to fill the gaps CSOs identified.
✪ 4. Data Standards • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Moderate • Completion: Complete	Government and civil society successfully developed the technical standards for the open data portal. They both saw the collaboration as exemplary. A positive, unintended side effect is that the proposed data standards are likely to become mandatory "open-data" practice for public administration. While the standards can not force an official to produce open data, it ensures that if officials decided to do so, they must follow the mandatory and sanctionable requirements. The researcher recommends further work on monitoring compliance and development of advanced data standards.
5. Improving Register of Contracts • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Minor • Completion: Limited	The government updated the Central Register of Contracts several times during the action plan implementation period. However, despite civil society feedback on the website, the website continues to be difficult (even impossible) to use. Only a few changes the government made to the website were based on stakeholder feedback. According to a prominent advocate, despite his repeated submissions, the government addressed very few gaps that were relevant to the general public. The commitment fell short, in both specificity and ambition, of using the register as a tool for improving public spending transparency and accountability. The researcher recommends that the government should adopt a new commitment building on the existing one.
EU Funds and Subsidies Monitoring 8. EU Funds and Subsidies Data Publishing • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Limited 9. Preparation of a Tender • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Minor • Completion: Complete 10. Portal Launch • OGP Value Relevance: Clear	The government made limited progress in creating a portal to publish data regarding EU funds and state subsidies. According to the government, due to insufficient co-operation from individual ministries and lack of funds to develop web-based application, most of the commitment to launch the portal has been postponed to 2015. The commitments' execution fell short of it's unrealised potential to bring transparency and accountability into the process of using EU funds. In addition, stakeholders also raised concerns about the integrity and costs of the e-Democracy and Open Government Project, which includes the subsidies portal. Neither the Office of the Plenipotentiary or the implementing governmental agency (National Agency for Network and Electronic Services (NASES) were able to explain the cost estimates. The IRM researcher recommends that the data publishing on EU funds and tender preparation should be either justified in public, revised, or abandoned. The government should carry out a wider consultation with the portal's future users.

	• Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Officially Withdrawn	
	✪ 11. Use Participatory Methods, and Train Involved Public Administration Staff and Representatives of Non-governmental Organisations • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Moderate • Completion: Complete	
	✪ 12. Apply Proposed Participatoy Methods on Three Public Policies • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Complete	
	14. Create Rules for Public Involvement in Policy-Making Processes • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Not started	
13. Law making Public Participation Rules • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Moderate • Completion: Unclear		According to the government self-assessment report, the Ministry of Justice began work on the bill with the intent of enacting it by 2015. The ministry proposed that the bill would be introduced along with SLOVLEX, a platform for creating and maintaining effective legislations in Slovakia. The researcher found no evidence for the level of progress achieved on this commitment. Civil society and government responses did not help the researcher determine the government's progress on this commitment. The researcher recommends the government renew its efforts to implement this commitment and ensure wide public consultations during the pre-legislative process.
Collective e-Petitions	**15.** Launch Collective Eletronic Petitions • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Moderate • Completion: Limited	The Office of the Plenipotentiary managed to create a position paper on e-petitions and incorporate the petitioning platform into a project "E-democracy and the Open Government," expected launch in early 2015. This commitment was partially fulfilled, and the government will miss the original deadline by two years. While the government's progress on this commitment could contribute to a more responsive government, the requirements for submitting collective e-petitions are unrealistic, according to stakeholders. While reservations concerning E-democracy and Open Government Project apply to e-petitions as well (see commitments 8, 9, and 10), the researcher recommends further work on formalising public input.
	16. Amend Guidelines for Materials Submitted for Government Meetings • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Officially Withdrawn	
17. OGP Steering Committee • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Minor • Completion: Limited		The government was unable to establish an effective board to supervise the implementation of the action plan. Despite the original, wider mandate of the working group that the government established, the group largely focused on open data related commitments.
Transparency Council and Openness	**18.** Transparency and Open Governance Council • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Moderate • Completion: Officially Withdrawn	According to concerned stakeholders, the commitment was considered a highly ambitious and highly visible political goal in the action plan. However, in September 2013, the government withdrew the commitment to create a Transparency and Open Government Council, develop criteria for an annual review of government transparency, and carry out a first assessment. According to civil society representatives, this reflected a change in political priorities between governments of Prime Minister Radicova (who drafted the action plan) and Prime Minister Robert Fico (who implemented it). The IRM researcher recommends revising this commitment to make it more achievable and measurable.
	19. Openness Barometer, Criteria • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Moderate • Completion: Officially Withdrawn	
	20. Openness Barometer, First Assessment • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact:	

• Transformative • Completion: Officially Withdrawn	
21. Whistle-Blower Protection Act • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Transformative • Completion: Limited	The government did not fulfil this commitment to prepare a Whistle-Blower Protection Act; it postponed the deadline. During the implementation, the Office of the Plenipotentiary first constituted a working group that analysed the existing legislation, suggesting necessary changes and working on a draft law. As one stakeholder noted, this was less of a working group than it was an opportunity for civil servants to learn about whistle-blowing. The Ministry of Interior later constituted a new working group, without managing the relationship or feedback of the previous group. The IRM researcher recommends further work on basic implementation of this commitment.
22. 2014–2015 Action Plan Development • OGP Value Relevance: Clear • Potential Impact: Minor • Completion: Not started	This commitment has not started, and the government can ensure effective implementation by making the action plan development process even more open and by engaging previously untapped potential stakeholder groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Slovakia's action plan contained a number of ambitious commitments related to core OGP values of transparency, public participation, and accountability. However, the current review of its Freedom of Information Act and its now abandoned review of the Petitions Act raise concerns about credibility of the government's commitments towards OGP values. Stakeholders noted that at this time, the OGP is more of a public relations stunt than an effective platform for deepening transparency and increasing good governance. Going forward the government could strive to enhance OGP relevance for citizens. Based on the challenges and findings identified in this report, this section presents the principal recommendations:

- **Preserve current standards of and track performance of the key accountability tools**, especially Freedom of Information Act.
- **Ensure effective implementation of the action plan**. The government should provide the Office of the Plenipotentiary with appropriate resources (both of human and political backing) in order for it to receive necessary co-operation from other bodies.
- **Build on existing efforts**. The government should continue basic implementation, especially in the area of open data.
- **Justify costs**. Satisfactorily justify the costs and function of the planned e-Democracy and Open Government Project.
- **Widen consultations**. The OGP is generally unknown to many potentially relevant target groups. The government could find and consult additional target groups, especially municipalities, businesses, and academia.

Matej Kurian is a freelance researcher in the field of good governance and government transparency. He worked previously at Transparency International Slovakia where he managed online projects related to transparency in public procurement, judiciary, and public contracting. His research interests include elections in non-democratic regimes and political theory.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and improve accountability.

Open Government Partnership

I. BACKGROUND

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder international initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In pursuit of these goals, OGP provides an international forum for dialogue and sharing among governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector, all of which contribute to a common pursuit of open government. OGP stakeholders include participating governments as well as civil society and private sector entities that support the principles and mission of OGP.

Introduction

Slovakia officially began participating in OGP in September 2011 when the Prime Minister of Slovakia at the time, Iveta Radičová, declared the government's intent to join.

To participate in OGP, governments must exhibit a demonstrated commitment to open government by meeting a set of minimum performance criteria on key dimensions of open government that are particularly consequential for increasing government responsiveness, strengthening citizen engagement, and fighting corruption. Indicators produced by organisations other than OGP to determine the extent of country progress on each of the dimensions, with points awarded as described below. Slovakia entered into the partnership exceeding the minimal requirements for eligibility. At the time of joining, the country had a high score for Open Budgets (2 out of a possible 2),[1] a high score (4 out of possible 4) based on the Freedom of Information Act,[2] a high sore in Asset Disclosure for Senior Officials and Politicians (4 out of a possible 4),[3] and a score of 9.12 out of a possible 10 on the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index Civil Liberties sub score.[4]

All OGP participating governments must develop OGP country action plans that elaborate concrete commitments over an initial two-year period. Governments should begin their action plans by sharing existing efforts related to a set of five "grand challenges," including specific open government strategies and ongoing programs. (See Section 4 for a list of grand challenge areas.) Action plans should then set out each government's OGP commitments, which stretch government practice beyond its current baseline with respect to the relevant grand challenge. These commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete ongoing reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area.

Along with the other cohort 2 OGP countries, Slovakia developed its national action plan from January through April 2012. The effective start date for the action plan submitted in April was officially 1 July 2012 for implementation through 30 June 2013. It published its self-assessment during October 2013. According to the OGP schedule,[5] officials and civil society members are to revise the first plan or develop a new plan by April 2014, with consultation beginning January 2014.

Pursuant to OGP requirements, the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) of OGP partnered with an experienced, independent local researcher to carry out an evaluation of the development and implementation of the country's first action plan. In Slovakia, the IRM partnered with Matej Kurian, an independent researcher with expertise in governance, authored this progress report. It is the aim of the IRM to inform ongoing dialogue around development and implementation of future commitments in each OGP participating country.

Institutional Context

The Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society led implementing and co-ordinating OGP activities in Slovakia. The real influence of this office is derived from the support it receives from the executive power, rather than its limited formal and budgetary powers. According to the stakeholders the researcher interviewed, the office was seriously understaffed, especially considering the ambition of the Slovak action plan. There was roughly one full-time person working with the initiative.[6]

The political transition left its mark on the OGP action plan's development and implementation. This transition period started in 2012 during the early legislative elections in 2012 and included the settling-in period of the new administration. As a result, the plenipotentiary relocated from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of the Interior. The plenipotentiary's relocation is reflective of the political importance attached to the office (see Chapter II), since his formal powers remained the same.

Most of the OGP action plan authority came from its legal nature—individual tasks were passed by the Decree of the Government 50/2012,[7] which ensured that affected institutions have to take actions or explain the lack of actions.

The complexity of the political situation is well illustrated in the resignation of the Plenipotentiary Vagač in November 2013. Vagač had been appointed to the post by the government of Prime Minister Radičová. As reasons for his resignation, Vagač cited his inability to push through his agenda as well as the government's poor co-operation with civil society.[8] At the time the researchers were writing this report, the post was vacant, with Vice Prime Minister Kaliňák claiming there was no need to appoint a new head of department.[9]

Methodological Note

The IRM partners with experienced, independent national researchers to author and disseminate reports for each OGP participating government, working with local individuals or organisations with experience in assessing open government. Matej Kurian, a freelance researcher in the field of transparency and accountability, authored this report.

IRM researchers review two key documents provided by the national governments: the first national action plan, and the government's self-assessment of the first action plan process. The researcher reviewed two key documents prepared by the government: the first Slovak action plan[10] and the self-assessment published by the government in October 2013.[11]

The IRM researcher also interviewed appropriate government officials and other stakeholders and gathered the views of civil society. To gather the voices of multiple stakeholders, the IRM researcher organised two stakeholder forums (here on cited as IRM stakeholder forums) and multiple individual interviews with key players. The researcher references these documents numerous times in this report.

OGP staff and a panel of experts reviewed this report before publication. The government was also given an opportunity to comment, provide additional information, and identify factual errors prior to publication.

[1] Open Budget Partnership, *Open Budgets Change Lives* (Washington, DC: Open Budget Partnership, 2012). http://bit.ly/1fAV22Y

[2] http://bit.ly/I7fSfN

[3] Simeon Djankov, Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, and Andrei Shleifer, "Disclosure by Politicians," (Tuck School of Business Working Paper 2009-60, 2009): http://bit.ly/19nDEfK; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Types of Information Decision Makers Are Required to Formally Disclose, and Level Of Transparency," in *Government*

at a Glance 2009, (OECD, 2009). http://bit.ly/13vGtqS; Ricard Messick, "Income and Asset Disclosure by World Bank Client Countries" (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009). http://bit.ly/1cIokyf

[4] Economist Intelligence Unit, "Democracy Index 2010: Democracy in Retreat" (London: Economist, 2010). Available at: http://bit.ly/eLC1rE

[5] Open Government Partnership, Calendar, http://bit.ly/1gHJxrM.

[6] Miková, Karolína. 2013. Interview, November 4, 2013

Office of the Plenipotentiary. 2013. E-mail conversation. November 5, 2013.

[7] Vláda SR. 2012. „Uznesenie vlády č. 50/2012 k návrhu Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike." http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=20747, accessed on Jan 26, 2013

[8] SME.sk. 2013." Splnomocnenec pre tretí sektor končí, neprešli mu návrhy". http://www.sme.sk/c/6988256/splnomocnenec-pre-treti-sektor-konci-nepresli-mu-navrhy.html, accessed 6 November 2013

[9] Ibid

[10] http://bit.ly/I5S0ZJ (in English); http://bit.ly/IiAUYa (in Slovak)

[11] http://bit.ly/17R8riJ (in English); Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011–2013"

II. PROCESS: DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION PLAN

In Slovakia, the government consulted with a few civil society organisations (CSOs) on the draft of the action plan. Time constraints, lack of publicity, and general lack of capacity among Slovak CSOs to engage in consultations also resulted in the narrow scope and nature of the consultation process.

Countries participating in OGP follow a set process for consultation during development of their OGP action plan. According to the OGP' Articles of Governance, countries must:

- Make the details of their public consultation process and timeline available (online at minimum) prior to the consultation
- Consult widely with the national community, including civil society and the private sector; seek out a diverse range of views and; make a summary of the public consultation and all individual written comment submissions available online
- Undertake OGP awareness raising activities to enhance public participation in the consultation
- Consult the population with sufficient forewarning and through a variety of mechanisms—including online and through in-person meetings—to ensure the accessibility of opportunities for citizens to engage.

A fifth requirement, during consultation, is set out in the OGP Articles of Governance. This requirement is dealt with in the section "III: Consultation during implementation":

Countries are to identify a forum to enable regular multi-stakeholder consultation on OGP implementation—this can be an existing entity or a new one. This is dealt with in the next section, but evidence for consultation both before and during implementation is included here and in Table 1 for ease of reference.

Table 1: Action Plan Consultation Process

Phase of Action Plan	OGP Process Requirement (Articles of Governance Section)	Did the government meet this requirement
During Development	Timeline and process: Prior availability	Yes
	Timeline: Online	Yes
	Timeline: other channels	Yes, regional meetings
	Timeline: Links	http://bit.ly/17wPSWG; http://bit.ly/17wPVSj
	Advance notice	Yes
	Advance notice: Days	14
	Awareness-raising activities	No
	Online consultations	Yes
	Online consultations: Link	http://bit.ly/I5UEP8
	In-person consultations	Yes
	Summary of comments	Yes, http://bit.ly/1d2Crtx
During Implementation	Regular forum	No

The government's development of the action plan took place between November 2011 and January 2012 in a complex political context. On 22 February 2012 the government adopted the action plan through a Decree of Government (50/2012).[1]

First, Slovakia decided to adopt its action plan as a legally binding document at the governmental level ("Decree of Government"), requiring specific procedures, including an opportunity for the public and other departments to comment on the draft. Second, the action plan had to be developed by an administration in resignation waiting for the early elections on 10 March 2012[2] if Slovakia was to meet the 9 April 2012 deadline set by the OGP Steering Committee.[3] Third, the action plan carried both symbolic and political significance for the government, which emphasised transparency and accountability in its coalition manifesto.[4]

The personal involvement of the Prime Minister in resignation (Radičová), who co-submitted the action plan to the government, shows the document's importance.[5] The government adopted the action plan a month before the early elections, leaving it up to the new government to decide its fate.

The action plan development provided significantly more space for participation and influence than is required by the Slovak legislation. The Office of the Plenipotentiary invited more than 400 organisations to take part in three regional workshops. However, the government did not engage several potential stakeholder groups, and it remains unclear how the government incorporated stakeholders' comments in the final text of the action plan (see below). The government made the timeline of the implementation plan available on the national OGP site along with semi-regular updates.

The administration drafted the action plan, consulting representatives from at least four CSOs and academia on the preliminary themes of the plan in early November 2011. These CSOs and academics later became members of the Slovak OGP Advisory Board, which was largely a consultative body with few formal powers.[6] Subsequently, the administration prepared the updated draft after consulting select NGOs,[7] as well as stakeholders at the Open Ideas for Slovakia workshop.[8] The administration provided the final revision of the draft to the Advisory Board Members in late December 2011 and consulted on 12 January 2012.[9]

Subsequently, the Government Council for Non-Profit Organisations, a formal government consultative body of civil society composed of civil society organisations and government representatives, discussed and acknowledged the draft.[10] Some of the interviewed stakeholders felt that a wider and more diverse inclusion of stakeholders, such as representatives from businesses, academia, and the local government, could have contributed to the quality of the action plan. Nonetheless, the researcher did not notice complaints suggesting that the process was closed to those interested. It also appears that the time constraints and the lack of publicity were the main factors for the narrow nature and scope of consultations on the action plan.

After the government published its draft action plan, the general public consultations commenced on 16 January 2012.[11] In the next 14 days, the government invited the general public to comment on the document, either online or in person at three regional meetings the government organised. None of these meetings were mandatory under Slovak law, but they were carried out in the spirit of the OGP value of enhancing public participation. Some 50 participants took part in these meetings[12] and two citizen submitted comments online.[13] The consultation process report is unclear on whether any of the public comments and how were incorporated in the final action plan.[14]

Following the legislation to draft rules, both agencies and the public had an opportunity to comment on the draft for seven days, the shortest period legally allowed, with government citing time as their main constraint. The submitted comments were technical in nature, and the administration incorporated most of them; the government solved major reservations in conciliation meeting or reclassified them as minor.[15]

[1] Vláda SR. 2012. "Návrh Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike - Materiál programu rokovania" http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=20747, accessed 1 November 2013

[2] Sme.sk. 2011. "Poslanci schválili predčasné voľby, k urnám sa pôjde 10. marca 2012," http://www.sme.sk/c/6096603/poslanci-schvalili-predcasne-volby-k-urnam-sa-pojde-10-marca-2012.html, accessed 1 November 2013

[3] Vláda SR. 2012. "Návrh Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike - Predkladacia správa" http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-141984?prefixFile=m, accessed 1 November 2013

[4] Ibid

[5] Vláda SR. 2012. "Návrh Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike - Materiál programu rokovania" http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=20747, accessed 1 November 2013

[6] Úrad vlády SR. 2011. "Zápis zo stretnutia ku iniciatíve Open Government Partnership (OGP), 4 November 2011 na Úrade vlády." Unpublished.

[7] Miková, Karolína. 2013. Interview. Nov 4, 2013.

[8] Vozárová, Eva. Aliancia Fair-Play. 2014. E-mail conversation.

[9] Úrad vlády SR. 2011. "Meeting invitation", e-mail

[10] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. "Zápis z tretieho rokovania Výboru pre mimovládne neziskové organizácie, 2. februára 2012" http://tretisektor.gov.sk/data/att/6027_subor.docx, accessed on November 3, 2013

[11] Ibid

[12] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. "Začiatok pripomienkovania draftu Akčného plánu" http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/zaciatok-pripomienkovania-draftu-akcneho-planu/, accessed 1 November 2013

[13] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. List of participants, unpublished

[14] Úrad splnomocnenca pre rozvoj občianskej spoločnosti. 2012. "Správa z regionálnych stretnutí k Akčnému plánu - sumár pripomienok." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/sprava-z-regionalnych-stretnuti-k-akcnemu-planu-sumar-pripomienok/, accessed Jan 25, 2014

[15] Portál právnych predpisov. 2012. "Vyhodnotenie MPK Návrhu Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike." https://lt.justice.gov.sk/Document/PrintForm.aspx?instEID=191&matEID=4867&docEID=232841&docFormEID=30&docTypeEID=-1&format=pdf&langEID=1&tStamp=20120216160609593, accessed on Nov 1, 2013

III. PROCESS: CONSULTATION DURING IMPLEMENTATION

In Slovakia, apart from informal discussions between civil society and the Office of the Plenipotentiary on open data, the administration made no systematic efforts to ensure public oversight over the implementation of the action plan.

As part of their participation in OGP, governments commit to identify a forum to enable regular multi-stakeholder consultation on OGP implementation—this can be an existing entity or a new one. This section summarises that information.

Consultation Process

Slovakia did not create an adequate platform to consult and evaluate its efforts on the Open Government Partnership despite two specific commitments in the action plan (see commitments 17 and 18).[1] First, the government retracted its commitment to create a top-level "Transparency and Open Government Council" chaired by the prime minister and including representatives of civil society. It did this shortly before the end of the implementation period citing the existence of "too many advisory bodies" as its reason.[2] According to civil society stakeholders, the government's move to retract this commitment symbolised shifting political priorities, a result from changes in the administrations during the implementation period.[3] Second, the politically less exposed inter-departmental working group tasked with overseeing the implementation of the action plan met just once in 18 months and discussed only open data issues (also see Section IV for the analysis of commitment 17).

At the same time, members of civil society and the Office of the Plenipotentiary occasionally informally consulted each other about open data tasks, especially the data standards they needed to achieve, and publishing datasets as well as on matters concerning whistle-blowers' protection.

The government did not take systematic efforts to obtain informed feedback from stakeholders outside existing institutions during the implementation period. The government recognised its lack of engaging in a systematic exchange of views and evaluation on the OGP action plan in its self-assessment report.[4] It cited this lack as "one of the deficiencies in the implementation"; civil society stakeholders share this view.[5]

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[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Akčný plán Iniciatívy pre otvorené v Slovenskej republike pre roky 2011-2013." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/1878_akcny-plan-otvorene-vladnutie+uznesenie-vlady.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.

[2] Vláda SR. 2013. " Návrh na zrušenie úloh C.20. a C.21. z uznesenia vlády Slovenskej republiky č. 50 z 22. februára 2012 k návrhu Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike – Predkladacia správa". http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-158953?prefixFile=m_, accessed Nov 7, 2013.

[3] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, October 24, 2013. See Annex: Methodology for details.

[4] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013

[5] Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia. 2013. "Správa z hodnotiaceho workshop Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4137_sprava-z-hodnotiaceho-workshopu-ap-ogp.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS

All OGP participating governments develop OGP country action plans that elaborate concrete commitments over an initial two-year period. Governments begin their OGP country action plans by sharing existing efforts related to their chosen grand challenge(s), including specific open government strategies and ongoing programs. Action Plans then set out governments' OGP commitments, which stretch government practice beyond its current baseline with respect to the relevant policy area. These commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete on-going reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area.

OGP commitments are to be structured around a set of five "grand challenges" that governments face. OGP recognizes that all countries are starting from different baselines. Countries are charged with selecting the grand challenges and related concrete commitments that most relate to their unique country contexts. No action plan, standard, or specific commitments are to be forced on any country.

The five OGP grand challenges are:

1. Improving Public Services—measures that address the full spectrum of citizen services including health, education, criminal justice, water, electricity, telecommunications, and any other relevant service areas by fostering public service improvement or private sector innovation.
2. Increasing Public Integrity—measures that address corruption and public ethics, access to information, campaign finance reform, and media and civil society freedom.
3. More Effectively Managing Public Resources—measures that address budgets, procurement, natural resources, and foreign assistance.
4. Creating Safer Communities—measures that address public safety, the security sector, disaster and crisis response, and environmental threats.
5. Increasing Corporate Accountability—measures that address corporate responsibility on issues such as the environment, anti-corruption, consumer protection, and community engagement.

While the nature of concrete commitments under any grand challenge area should be flexible and allow for each country's unique circumstances, OGP commitments should be relevant to OGP values laid out in the OGP Articles of Governance and Open Government Declaration signed by all OGP participating countries. The IRM uses the following guidance to evaluate relevance to core open government values:

- **Access to information -** These commitments:
  - o pertain to government-held information;
  - o are not restricted to data but pertains to all information;
  - o may cover proactive or reactive releases of information;
  - o may pertain to strengthen the right to information; and
  - o must provide open access to information (it should not be privileged or internal only to government).
- **Citizen Participation** — governments seek to mobilise citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative and effective governance. Commitments around access to information:

- open up decision-making to all interested members of the public; such forums are usually "top-down" in that they are created by government (or actors empowered by government) to inform decision-making;
- often include elements of access to information to ensure meaningful input of interested members of the public into decisions;
- often include the enhancing citizens' right to be heard, but do not necessarily include the right to be heeded.
- **Accountability —** there are rules, regulations, and mechanisms in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments.
  - As part of open government, such commitments have an "open" element, meaning that they are not purely internal systems of accountability without a public face.
- **Technology and Innovation** — Commitments for technology and innovation
  - promote new technologies and offer opportunities for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration.
  - Should make more information public in ways that enable people to both understand what their governments do and to influence decisions;
  - May commit to supporting the ability of governments and citizens to use tech for openness and accountability; and
  - May support the use of technology by government employees and citizens alike.

Recognising that achieving open government commitments often involves a multi-year process, governments should attach timeframes and benchmarks to their commitments that indicate what is to be accomplished each year, wherever possible.

This section details each of the commitments Slovakia included in its initial action plan. The commitments in this report are clustered under five themes: (1) OGP action plan procedural tasks; (2) High-Level Transparency Evaluations; (3) Open-Data; (4) Participatory Policy-Making; and (5) Whistle-Blowing. Some of the clusters include a single commitment, while others have multiple commitments. In these latter cases, the commitments have been evaluated together on a single fact sheet in order to avoid repetition and make reading easier for OGP stakeholders.

While most indicators given on each commitment fact sheet are self-explanatory, a number of indicators for each commitment deserve further explanation.
- Relevance: The IRM researcher evaluated each commitment for its relevance to OGP Values and OGP Grand Challenges.
  - OGP values: Some OGP commitments are unclear in their relationship to OGP values. In order to identify such cases, the IRM researcher made a judgment based on a close reading of the commitment text. This identifies commitments that can better articulate their relationship to fundamental issues of openness.
  - Grand challenges: While some commitments may be relevant to more than one grand challenge, the reviewer only marked those that had been identified by government (as almost all commitments address a grand challenge).
- Ambition:
  - *Potential impact:* OGP countries are expected to make ambitious commitments (with new or pre-existing activities) that stretch

government practice beyond an existing baseline. To contribute to a broad definition of ambition, the IRM researcher judged how potentially transformative commitment might be in the policy area. This is based on researcher's findings and experience as a public policy expert.

- *New or pre-existing:* The IRM researcher also recorded, in a non-judgmental fashion whether a commitment was based on an action that pre-dated the action plan.
- Timing:
    - *Projected completion:* The OGP Articles of Governance encourage countries to put forth commitments with clear deliverables with suggested annual milestones. In cases where this is information is not available, the IRM researcher makes a best judgment, based on the evidence of how far the commitment could possibly be at the end of the period assessed.

1. Open Data Portal Launch

Develop and launch the Open Data Portal

Commitment Description

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Answerability</td><td>Lead institution</td><td colspan="5">Government Office of the Slovak Republic</td></tr>
<tr><td>Supporting institutions</td><td colspan="5">N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td>Point of contact specified?</td><td colspan="5">No</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Specificity and measurability</td><td colspan="5">High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Relevance</td><td>OGP grand challenges</td><td colspan="5">Improving public services</td></tr>
<tr><td>OGP Values</td><td>Access to Information</td><td>Civic Participation</td><td>Accountability</td><td>Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>√</td><td></td><td></td><td>√</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Ambition

New vs. pre-existing	Potential impact
New	Transformative (The commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area.)

Level of completion

Start date: N/A	End date: April 2012	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete

Next steps

New commitment building on existing implementation

What happened?

The government launched the open data portal ahead of plan in March 2012, and it is available at http://www.data.gov.sk/. There was no commitment to create such a portal prior to Slovakia's accession to the Open Government Partnership. Civil society organisations (CSOs) welcomed the launch of the portal as a symbol of paradigmatic change in proactive data publishing. They noted that its impact is contingent on to-be-released data, especially on the value of the data and its timely updates, as well as on data uptake by users. The new data-quality related features, which the government plans to include, are closely aligned with the community's expectations.

The open data portal is basically a catalogue or directory of links to datasets produced by Slovak public institutions. The data portal helps users—businesses, civil society organisations, citizens, or public bodies—locate relevant data and enables them to reuse the data without them having to provide their reasons for accessing such data. For example, users can use datasets to produce a business report, or users can upload them

onto a website that uses the different government datasets to inform the public about recent college graduate students' unemployment rates.

The government launched its open data portal in March 2012, initially publishing three datasets (see commitment 6 for more details). Much to the stakeholders' delight, the government decided to adopt an open-source platform, CKAN, developed by the Open Knowledge Foundation (OKFN) rather than create its own solution. This significantly reduced deployment time as well as public resources.[1] The portal is thus currently hosted on the OKFN's servers.

Throughout the implementation period, the government published more datasets on the portal. With a brief period in November 2012 caused by the OKFN internal migration,[2] the researcher did not identify any accessibility issues. Several ministries voiced their concerns on data security and expressed their desires to plan migrating and developing the government's own software solutions (see Section IV, Commitments 8, 9, and 10).

Did it matter?
Both the government report and CSOs welcome the portal's launch and see it as a desirable standard of government data openness.[3] Yet, the data portal's meaningfulness resides on other factors besides the portal itself.

CSOs note that the success of the portal depends on the available data, their quality, and timely updates—one of the interviewees said "data is more important than the portal."[4] (Please see Section IV, commitments 2, 6, and 7, for a more detailed discussion of the data sets.)

In addition, stakeholders cited two factors that severely limit usefulness of the open data portal and datasets:

- Missing data licenses[5] preventing them from using the data envisioned by the action plan[6]
- Informative status of the data only ("data are not to be used for legal actions")

Finally, there are no statistics on usage. The researcher was also unable to obtain even anecdotal evidence of the portal uptake by CSOs or government bodies. This was because most of the valuable datasets are either inaccessible or provided by datanest.sk, a data portal run by Fair-Play Alliance, a prominent non-profit organisation.

Moving forward
The government and the CSOs are in agreement on the need to

- publish more datasets;
- demonstrate the benefits and the application of data to the wider audience, including government officials; and
- improve the quality of the data published.

In addition, the IRM researcher recommends that government takes steps to ensure

- preservation of an open-source publishing platform supported by the international community;
- data listed in the catalogue have clear, re-use and re-purpose licenses;
- data listed in the catalogue are authoritative for all legal purposes; and
- portal usage is monitored, evaluated, and published quarterly by the responsible governmental agency.

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[1] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology for details; Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia. 2013. "Správa z hodnotiaceho workshop Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4137_sprava-z-hodnotiaceho-workshopu-ap-ogp.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013

[2] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013

[3] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology for details
[4] Ibid
[5] Illek, Ľubomír, 2013. Spoločnosť pre otvorené IT. Interview on October 28, 2013.
[6] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Akčný plán Iniciatívy pre otvorené v Slovenskej republike pre roky 2011-2013."
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/1878_akcny-plan-otvorene-vladnutie+uznesenie-vlady.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.

2., 6., and 7. Dateset Publishing

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

Plan of the Slovak Republic

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 of for data publication.

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

Commitment Description						
Answerability	**Lead institution**	2: Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family; Government Office of the Slovak Republic 6: Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society 7: Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development				
	Supporting institutions	2: not applicable 6: individual ministries, Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Authority of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre, Statistical Office, Public Procurement Office 7: not applicable				
	Point of contact specified?	No				
Specificity and measurability		High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)				
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Improving public services				
	OGP Values	**Access to Information**	**Civic Participation**	**Accountability**	**Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.**	**None**
	2. Pilot Datasets	√			√	
	6. Continuous Dataset Publishing	√			√	
	7. ITMS Datasets	√			√	
Ambition						
Commitment	**New vs. pre-existing**	**Potential impact**				
2. Pilot Datasets	New	Moderate (the commitment is a major step forward in the relevant policy area, but remains limited in scale or scope)				
6. Continuous Dataset Publishing	New	Transformative (The commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area.)				
7. ITMS	New	Transformative (The commitment entails a reform				

Datasets		that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area.)	
2. Pilot Datasets			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** May 2012	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete
6. Continuous Dataset Publishing			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** June 2013	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete
7. ITMS Datasets			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** November 2012	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete
Next steps			
2. Pilot Datasets	Further work on basic implementation		
6. Continuous Dataset Publishing	New commitment building on existing implementation		
7. ITMS Datasets	Maintenance and monitoring of completed implementation		

What happened?

The creation of the data.gov.sk and publishing of the datasets are some of the biggest Open Government Partnership contributions. Civil society organisations (CSOs) also welcomed this commitment as a symbol of paradigmatic change in pro-active data publishing, but note that its impact is contingent on to-be-released data and uptake by users.

The government met all three commitment requirements regarding data publishing. However, the quality of data requires further work: the government should improve the currently published data to make it more useful or meaningful, and the government should make the data available in open data formats with clear licenses.

Did it matter?

The datasets catalogued at data.gov.sk, according to the civil society representatives, were unsatisfactory. Civil society representatives described the government's intent as an attitude of crossing tasks off a to-do list. Furthermore, a respectable open-data activist stated the portal had "no data of interest" (for him).[1]

The stakeholders' main reservations concerning datasets was their unsatisfactory nature—data that was "uninteresting," of "low value," or in closed formats, or the data had incomplete information on updates or plainly broken links.[2] Thus, it is not surprising that civil society uses the datasets on a limited basis.

The government's self assessment report also acknowledged the problems with pilot datasets. Even though these were published on time, they are in closed format and will need to be published anew to meet the standards.[3]

Finally, a prominent advocate of the Fair-Play Alliance pointed out that the number of published datasets could be consolidated. He noted, the crime statistics that are currently published as 12 separate datasets can be combined into one dataset, which should be updated on a monthly basis. Using the same example, the advocate also raised the point concerning utility of the data with too high a level of granularity.[4]

Moving forward

In the opinion of the IRM, given the high level of importance attached to this commitment, by civil society representatives in particular, the IRM researcher recommends that the action plan for 2014–2015

- contains a new commitment reiterating continuous and co-ordinated data publishing of high value-datasets meeting required data standards;
- introduces regular checks on data quality (as well as integrity) and timeliness; and
- demonstrates the benefits and the application of data to the wider audience, including the government officials.

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[1] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology.

[2] Ibid; IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology

[3] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.

[4] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology

3. Datasets Mapping

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

Commitment Description		
Answerability	**Lead institution**	The Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society
	Supporting institutions	individual ministries, Authority of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre, Statistical Office, Public Procurement Office
	Point of contact specified?	No
Specificity and measurability		Medium (Commitment language describes an activity that is objectively verifiable, but it does not contain specific milestones or deliverables.)
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Improving public services

	OGP Values	**Access to Information**	**Civic Participation**	**Accountability**	**Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.**	**None**
		√			√	

Ambition	
New vs. pre-existing	**Potential impact**
New	Transformative (The commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area.)

Level of completion			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** June 2012	Actual completion	Limited
		Projected completion	Complete

Next steps
Further work on basic implementation

What happened?

The government fulfilled this commitment, and it published the first ever public list of 526 governmental datasets, including a time frame for their publication on the open data portal data.gov.sk.[1] Civil society organisations (CSOs) welcomed the progress of this comitment, but at the same time, they assessed the list as incomplete and stressed the need for sustained efforts to complete the task.[2] For this reason, the researcher assesses the commitment's completion as limited.

The list of datasets provides users with information on what data various agencies collect and maintain. This is important for internal government users, business, activists, or civil society organisations.

Following the requests by the Office of the Plenipotentiary, government institutions self-reported datasets maintained by their organisation, their nature and technical details, and suitability and preparedness to be published in the open data formats. Acting on the information and negotiations with the bodies, the office published the first list of the datasets including deadlines for their publication.[3]

Did it matter?

According to the civil society representatives, these lists were incomplete, with several valuable datasets missing, including cadastral maps, real estate trading, or data concerning financial health of municipalities. Furthermore, it seems implausible that the Ministry of Education, one of the largest ministries within the government, maintains only four reported datasets.[4] Finally, the list published by the office contains, to date, more than 100 datasets with which negotiations on their release have not been completed.

Despite these limitations, IRM Open Data Stakeholder Meeting revealed that the list is considered an important step in dataset mapping that should be improved upon and taken in the next action plan.[5]

Moving forward

In the opinion of the IRM researcher the government should take the following steps to improve this commitments' implementation:

- Reach an agreement on a publication date for disputed datasets.
- Consider closer co-ordination with the Ministry of Finance who monitors development of Information Systems within the government.
- Consider involving the public in identifying unlisted, but existing, datasets to avoid duplication.
- Support mapping of the municipal datasets, where possible.

[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. „Datasety štátnej správy". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/datasety-statnej-spravy/, accessed 4 November 2013.
[2] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology for details IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[3] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[4] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. „Datasety štátnej správy". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/datasety-statnej-spravy/, accessed 4 November 2013.
[5] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology

4. Data Standards

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 public license.

Commitment Description						
Ansreswerabili	**Lead institution**	The Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society				
	Supporting institutions	N/A				
	Point of contact specified?	No				
Specificity and measurability		High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)				
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Improving public services				
	OGP Values	**Access to Information**	**Civic Participation**	**Accountability**	**Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.**	**None**
		√			√	

Ambition	
New vs. pre-existing	**Potential impact**
New	Moderate (The commitment is a major step forward in the relevant policy area, but it remains limited in scale or scope.)

Level of completion			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** September 2012	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete

Next steps	
4. Data Standards	Maintenance and monitoring of completed implementation

What happened?

The government successfully developed technical standards for the data portal with the involvement of civil society representatives and provided access to missing government data licenses. If there is a significant policy spillover, the proposed standards are likely to become mandatory "open-data" practice for public administration.

Stakeholders can see the development of the open data standards as a model collaboration on a technical issue between civil society and government entities. All interviewed stakeholders expressed great satisfaction with the process of consultations, as well as the end result.[1]

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[1] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013; IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology for details See Annex: Methodology
Illek, Ľubomír, 2013. Spoločnosť pre otvorené IT. Interview. 28 October 2013;
Bíro, Peter. 2013. Ministry of Finance, Standardization Committee. Phone interview on 14 October 2013.

The Office of the Plenipotentiary developed data standards for data.gov.sk[1] and discussed formulating similar IT standards for public administration.[2] Both results are greatly important in providing authoritative definitions of the "open data."

Furthermore, a ban on restrictive licensing requirements in the new open data definition, provided an avenue to address the issue of missing government data licenses[3] that governed the use and re-use of published data.

Did it matter?
The standards were a crucial first step in defining requirements for the data.gov.sk, even if the government does not always adhere to its own standards (see Commitment 2, 6, and 7).

More importantly, in the IRM researcher's opinion, the possible adoption of a legal framework to implement the open data standards will have a significant effect on the public administration. While the standards can not force an official to produce open data, it ensures that if the official were to do so, he or she must meet mandatory and sanctionable requirements.

Moving forward

The IRM reseacher recommends the work on open data standards be followed by compliance monitoring, development of advanced data standards (linked-data), and general government data license(s).

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[1] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[2] Ibid; Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[3] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology

5. Improving Register of Contracts

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

Commitment Description		
Answerability — **Lead institution**		Government Office of the Slovak Republic
Answerability — **Supporting institutions**		n/a
Answerability — **Point of contact specified?**		No
Specificity and measurability		Low (Commitment language describes activity that can be construed as measurable with some interpretation on the part of the reader)
Relevance — **OGP grand challenges**		Improving public services

	OGP Values	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Accountability	Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.	None
Relevance		√			√	

Ambition		
New vs. pre-existing	**Potential impact**	
Pre-existing	Minor (The commitment is an incremental but positive step in the relevant policy area.)	

Level of completion			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** Not specified	Actual completion	Limited
		Projected completion	Complete

Next steps
New commitment building on existing implementation

What happened?

The Central Register of Contracts (CRC) received several updates during the action plan implementation period that were mostly related to the needs of public bodies. Stakeholders addressed some important issues; however, as civil society stakeholders noted, despite over three years of feedback on the website from civil society, the site continues to be difficult, near impossible, to use.[1]

In an effort that pre-existed Slovak participation in the OGP, one that attempted to infuse transparency in public spending, the CRC functioned as a government repository where most central government institutions published large shares of their contracts.[2] Contracts have to be published online before they become operational. At the time of writing this report, the government has published online more than 490,000 contracts, worth roughly 2.3 billion euros, and there is no explicit way of using the site as an accountability or whistle-blowing tool.

While the government's self-assessment report mentions several areas that received support during the implementation process (such as technical support, data corrections, bulk imports, and anonymising personal data),[3] only two of the claimed changes reflect needs of the interviewed stakeholders: advanced logging of changes in the data (XML),

and test access to application programmable interface (API). None of the changes was geared towards a non-specialist audience—governmental or watchdog.

Note that the improvement was largely reactive. For example, access to structured data on changes followed only after Fair-Play Alliance (an Open Data watchdog) suggested a significant number of changes within the contracts, largely undetectable by the general population.[4] However, stakeholders can access the record by direct link only, as the site does not provide a link to it.[5]

Did it matter?
The commitment fell short of specificity and ambition to address the most important issue concerning the contracts' repository—its unrealised potential in bringing transparency and accountability, due to missing use-case for general public and to poor interface.

Even if the government assessment falls short of the improvements' impact analysis, none of the interviewed stakeholders disputed the need for further improvement. Civil society organisations' stakeholders voiced strong dissatisfaction with the portal, citing "critical infant illnesses,"[6] which included poor search, unreliable meta-data, and problematic matching of amendments with the original contract.

In addition, a prominent advocate from the watchdog Fair-Play Alliance noted that the government addressed very few of the glitches with relevance to general population despite his repeated submissions, and he believes that the portal seems to be "more a tool for the administration than the general public."[7]

In addition stakeholders criticised the official portal in 2011 with a problematic interface and lack of engagement, when Fair-Play Alliance and Transparency International Slovakia launched an alternative contracts' portal (www.otvorenezmluvy.sk).[8]

Moving forward

The IRM researcher recommends the government adopt a new commitment in its next action plan that builds on the existing commitment. The new commitment should be clearly articulated, and the government should take the following steps:

- Improve the quality of published data by reducing the amount of free-text fields.
- Address reported usability issues, such as phrase searches and other bugs reported by the users.
- Create specific use-cases and incentives for the public and administration to use the data.
- Make sure that data is accessible both in bulk download as well as through APIs.
- Centralise remaining contracts in one place.

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[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[2] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[3] ibid
[4] Aliancia Fair-Play. 2013. "V Centrálnom registri zmlúv údaje tajne menia." http://fairplay.blog.sme.sk/c/326440/V-Centralnom-registri-zmluv-udaje-tajne-menia.html, accessed 3 November 2012.
[5] Lacko, Pavol. Aliancia Fair-Play. 2014. Email conversations. Jan 23, 2014.
[6] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[7] Ibid

[8] Transparency International Slovensko. 2011. "Nový portál pre kontrolu verejných zmlúv: OtvorenéZmluvy.sk." http://www.transparency.sk/sk/novy-portal-otvorene-zmluvy/, accessed 6 November 2012.

8., 9., and 10. EU Funds and Subsidies Monitoring

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.

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.

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.

Commitment Description						
Answerability	**Lead institution**	8.: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society 9.: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society / Office of the Government 10.: Office of the Government				
	Supporting institutions	8: Individual ministries, Government Office of the Slovak Republic,				
	Point of contact specified?	No				
Specificity and measurability		High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)				
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Increasing public integrity				
	OGP Values	**Access to Information**	**Civic Participation**	**Accountability**	**Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.**	**None**
	8. EU Funds and Subsidies Data Publishing	√		√	√	
	9. Preparation of a Tender	√		√	√	
	10. Portal Launch	√		√	√	
Ambition						
Commitment	**New vs. pre-existing**	**Potential impact**				
8. EU Funds and Subsidies Data Publishing	New	Transformative (the commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area)				
9. Preparation of a Tender	New	Minor (the commitment is an incremental but positive step in the relevant policy area)				
10. Portal Launch	New	Transformative (the commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area)				
Level of completion						
8.EU Funds and Subsidies Data Publishing						

Start date: N/A	End date: November 2012	Actual completion	Limited
		Projected completion	Complete
9. Preparation of a Tender			
Start date: N/A	End date: December 2012	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete
10. Portal Launch			
Start date: N/A	End date: September 2012	Actual completion	Officially withdrawn
		Projected completion	Officially withdrawn

Next steps	
8. EU Funds and Subsidies Data Publishing	Further work on basic implementation
9. Preparation of a Tender	Revision of the commitment to be more achievable or measurable
10. Portal Launch	Revision of the commitment to be more achievable or measurable

What happened?

The government has made limited progress in creating a portal with information on use of domestic and EU subsidies schemes. While the government took the initial steps in mapping the various schemes on which information would be made available online, it postponed most of the commitment milestones until 2015.

The Office of the Plenipotentiary cited insufficient co-operation from individual ministries and lack of funds to develop web-based application as major reasons for the delays.[1] While stakeholders could see securing funding for the application by including it in "e-Democracy and Open Government project" as a step forward, there are serious reservations concerning the project itself.

Did it matter?

At the time of writing the report, the researcher noted that the government had further developments underway. This makes a clear assessment of the commitment, as well as concrete recommendations for its future direction, difficult.

The commitment execution fell short of its unrealised potentional in bringing transparency and accountability in the use of EU funds, an area known for notorious corruption and waste.[2]

In addition, stakeholders rasied serious concerns about the integrity and meaningfulness of the "e-Democracy and Open Government" project to deliver improved data.gov.sk (IV, commitments 1–3 and 6–7); subsidies portal (IV, commitments 8–10); and e-petitions (IV, commitments 15–16). According to some stakeholders the project was "way too expensive" and outright "fraudulent."[3] Their main concerns were with the actual utility of the portal and its expense. As stakeholders pointed out "nobody will be happy with it for too much money."[4]

The National Agency for Network and Electronic Services (NASES) will run Project e-Democracy and Open Government, an agency that is also responsible for the project's procurement. The project's estimated cost is € 42 million, according the upcoming procurement advance notice.[5] The project is composed of several subcomponents and includes modifications of IT systems at Office of the Government. In part the Office of the Plenipotentiary prepared functional specifications concerning parts related to action plan commitments.

An example of a problematic component is the budget for the portal for e-petitions (see commitments 15–16), which is € 1 million euro. Even if similar to the US government portal, *We the People*, at least it is freely available and re-usable.[6] Furthermore, costs of individual applications and portals is available on a very high level of detail—making it extremely difficult to assess the efficacy of its spending.[7]

NASES did not provide the researcher other explanations for the project costs besides estimates of the feasibility study that consulted experts consider unreliable. A representative of NASES emphasised that the final cost depends on the result of the procurement and that NASES might reassess the functionality of the project before its implementation.[8]

Apart from the high financial cost, the project goals seem to be inconsistent with existing reality. For example, the project documentation for the open data portal claims that only 20 datasets are currently published and plans to publish a meager 170 datasets (while over 200 datasets were already published). Similarly, the project's ambition to publish 20 subsidy schemes by 2017,[9] is a very modest one. Finally, while the self-assessment report mentions the government consulted the IT sector,[10] stakeholders were not aware of such consultations.[11]

Moving forward
The Plenipotentiary did not communicate clearly the estimated cost and benefits of the portal to the OGP community, the IRM researcher recommendeds that

- project objectives and costs are clearly communicated to the OGP community;
- cost-breakdown per application are published; and
- the applications' technical specifications are consulted and validated with the future heavy users.

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[1] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 17 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology

[2] Illek, Ľubomír, 2013. Spoločnosť pre otvorené IT. Interview. 28 October 2013.

[3] Ibid

[4] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology

[5] Úrad pre verejné obstarávanie. 2013. Predbežné oznámenie 18907 – POS. http://www.uvo.gov.sk/evestnik/-/vestnik/224484. Accessed on Jan 11.1, 2014.

[6] NASES. 2013. Zmluva o NFP. Dostupná na http://www.otvorenezmluvy.sk/documents/842579-urad-vlady-slovenskej-republiky-narodna-agentura-pre-sietove-a-elektronicke-sluzby-zmluva-o-poskytnuti-n?q=EHZ,

[7] NASES. 2013. Zmluva o NFP. Dostupná na http://www.otvorenezmluvy.sk/documents/842579-urad-vlady-slovenskej-republiky-narodna-agentura-pre-sietove-a-elektronicke-sluzby-zmluva-o-poskytnuti-n?q=EHZ

[8] Janota, Rastislav. 2013. NASES. Interview on Nov 26, 2013.

[9] Ministerstvo financií SR. 2013. "Písomné vyzvanie na Národný projekt: Elektronické služby Úradu vlády Slovenskej republiky - eDemokracia a otvorená vláda." Available at http://www.informatizacia.sk/ext_dok-pv_elektronicke-sluzby-uv-sr_edemokracia-a-otvorena-vlada/15865c, accessed Nov 6, 2013.

[10] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed Nov 3, 2013

[11] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, October 17, 2013; IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology; Illek, Ľubomír, 2013. Spoločnosť pre otvorené IT. Interview. 28 October 2013.

11., 12., and 14. Participatory Policy Making

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

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

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.

Commitment Description

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Answerability</td><td>Lead institution</td><td colspan="5">11. and 14.: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society
12: Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs</td></tr>
<tr><td>Supporting institutions</td><td colspan="5">11: Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs</td></tr>
<tr><td>Point of contact specified?</td><td colspan="5">No</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Specificity and measurability</td><td colspan="5">High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Relevance</td><td>OGP grand challenges</td><td colspan="5">Not specified</td></tr>
<tr><td>OGP Values</td><td>Access to Information</td><td>Civic Participation</td><td>Accountability</td><td>Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.Prepare three public consultations</td><td></td><td>√</td><td>√</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>12. Carry out three consultations</td><td></td><td>√</td><td>√</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>14. Create rules for public involvement</td><td></td><td>√</td><td>√</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Ambition

Commitment	New vs. pre-existing	Potential impact
11.Prepare three public consultations	New	Moderate (The commitment is a major step forward in the relevant policy area, but it remains limited in scale or scope.)
12. Carry out three consultations	New	Transformative (the commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area)
14. Create rules for public involvement	New	Transformative (The commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area.)

Level of completion

11.Prepare three public consultations			
Start date: N/A	End date: August 2012	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete
12. Carry out three consultations			
Start date: N/A	End date: September 2013	Actual completion	Complete
		Projected completion	Complete
14. Create rules for public involvement			
Start date: N/A	End date: November 2013	Actual completion	Not started
		Projected completion	Not started
Next steps			
11. Prepare three public consultations	None: Completed implementation		
12. Carry out three consultations	New commitment building on existing implementation		
14. Create rules for public involvement	Further work on basic implementation		

What happened?

Recognising the importance of participatory policy-making, Slovakia's OGP action plan included a three-step process to pilot participatory processes in policy-making, analyse results from these pilot tests, and draft recommendations for future policy-making.[1] Officials, in collaboration with the Ministries of Environment, Social Affairs, and Foreign Affairs, identified policy areas for public involvement and drafted process manuals.[2] While the government originally intended to use the action plan to test various methods of public involvement, in the end most ministries ended up using the same model with slight modifications. According to the author of the model, the involved institutions had little interest in tweaking or changing it.[3]

None of the three ministries managed to pass legislation using meaningful participatory processes. The Office of the Plenipotentiary is currently evaluating the processes and plans to submit its Position Paper on Participatory Policy-Making in late November 2013.[4]

Did it matter?
Interviewed stakeholders from civil society organisations voiced their support for participatory policy-making, even though they hold differing views on the nature and scope of participation. In order to assess the participation's meaningfulness, stakeholders must have a significant degree of involvement in the process, as well as control over the final policy.[5]

However, apart from the Ministry of the Environment, the OGP had some positive impact on the participatory processes at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, even though it made no impact on the final policies of these ministries.[6] Below I discuss the progress of the three ministries:

- Participatory policy-making should have been an easy task for the Ministry of Environment, as several participatory meetings took place prior to its inclusion in the OGP action plan. However, with the change of government, the government selected a new policy area citing the need for urgent legislative action;[7] however, this was disputed by activists.[8] According to the self-

assessment report, the process followed was "incompliant with the proposed participatory method failing to create a co-ordination group, steering committee or involving external facilitator."

Interviewed stakeholders repeatedly emphasised this point.[9] Apart from presenting the final proposal at a public consultation, the ministry stated it had consulted the policy in an inter-department review process that allowed public involvement, which it had to do anyway.[10] Activists have sued the government over violating Legaslation Drafting Rules, and activists submitted more than 200 lawsuits against the ministry alleging it violated the Aarhus Convention.[11]

- Ministry of the Social Affairs maintained working relations with CSOs while preparing the law on social services. Deviating slightly from the proposed model—for example, failing to maintain a public record of its activities—the ministry managed to involve relevant stakeholders and engaged with them through thematic working groups.

Stakeholders saw this process as an improvement compared to previous administrations' processes, even if the final product fell short of stakeholders' expectations. According to one of the representatives of the Association of Social Services Providers, the ministry did not provide feedback on the comments and proposals submitted by the members of their working group and presented the proposal only after it was termed ready.[12]

Furthermore, other interviewed stakeholders felt that the government did not honor agreements reached at the working group, and the ministry backtracked on the working group's collectively agreed upon solution, albeit, the ministry did this under pressure from the Ministry of Finance.[13]

- The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs (MFA) intended to use participatory processes in creating a National Strategy of Human Rights Protection and Promotion.[14] The Strategy did not come about, and in September 2013, the government postponed the deadline for the task until June 2014, following a heated debate that reduced the wide-ranging Strategy to LGBTQ rights and abortions.

Out of the pilots discussed, participatory processes put in place at the MFA, managed to achieve the highest degree of public involvement, including a website where public servants organised public consultations and posted minutes of meetings and position papers.[15]

The stakeholders interviewed by the IRM researcher listed two main reasons why this strategy was not adopted in time: first, even if officials repeatedly extended the deadline, there was never enough time, and the MFA seemed determined to meet the target date, even within the short time frame of six months. According to a representative of the Milan Simecka Foundation, "by the time processes were in place and we had something to discuss, only three months remained as people went on vacation."[16] Another representative noted that the draft material was rushed and still "needed time to incorporate expert critique."[17] Second, participants noted, the MFA positioned itself as facilitator of the discussions but did not provide clear policy expectations. It also did not take an active stance when required, leading to an inability in steering discussions, especially at public consultations, where the discussion was reduced to topics, such as LGBTQ rights and abortions.[18]

Moving forward

The IRM researcher recommends further work on the implementation of this commitment. Bearing in mind of repeated concerns of the civil society, the government should in the view of the IRM researcher ensure

- sufficient time is allocated for participatory process;
- clear communication to all participants of end-policy and process expectations;
- civil society has necessary resources to take part in participatory policy-making; and
- participants receive timely feedback on their suggestions.

[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Akčný plán Iniciatívy pre otvorené v Slovenskej republike pre roky 2011-2013."
ttp://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/1878_akcny-plan-otvorene-vladnutie+uznesenie-vlady.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[2] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[3] Miková, Karolína. 2013. Interview. 4 November 2013.
[4] Ibid. The report was published on 23 January 2014 on the Plenipotentiary's website -
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/analyza-aalebo-evaluacia-styroch-dialogov-o-verejnych-politikach-precitajte-si-spravu-z-vyskumu/
[5] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[6] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[7] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed Nov 3, 2013.
[8] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[9] Ibid
[10] Ibid
[11] Lukáč, Juraj. 2013. OZ Vlk. E-mail. 25 October 2013.
[12] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[13] Ibid; Woleková, Helena. 2013. Sociofórum. Interview 29 October 2013.
[14] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[15] Úrad vlády SR. 2013. "Príprava Celoštátnej stratégie ochrany a podpory ľudských práv v Slovenskej republike" http://www.radavladylp.gov.sk/celostatna-strategia-ochrany-a-podpory-ludskych-prav-v-sr/, accessed 6 November 2013
[16] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology;
[17] Petocz, Kalman. 2013. Interview. 30 November 2013..
[18] Miková, Karolína. 2013. Rozhovor zo dňa 4. novembra 2013;

13. Lawmaking Public Participation Rules
Draw up Bill on the participation of the public in the legislative process.

Commitment Description		
Answerability	**Lead institution**	Ministry of Justice
	Supporting institutions	N/A
	Point of contact specified?	No
Specificity and measurability		Medium (Commitment language describes an activity that is objectively verifiable, but it does not contain specific milestones or deliverables.)
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Improving public services

		Access to Information	Civic Participation	Accountability	Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.	None
Relevance	**OGP Values**					
		√	√			

Ambition		
New vs. pre-existing	**Potential impact**	
New	Moderate (The commitment is a major step forward in the relevant policy area, but it remains limited in scale or scope.)	

Level of completion			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** June 2013	Actual completion	Unable to tell from government and civil society responses
		Projected completion	Officially withdrawn

Next steps	
13. Lawmaking Public Participation Rules	Further work on basic implementation

What happened?
During the implementation period, the government did not prepare the bill on the participation of the public in the legislative process. According to the government's self-assessment report, the Ministry of Justice began work on the bill with the intent to make it effective by 2015[1] along with SLOVLEX, a platform for creating and maintaining effective legislations in Slovakia.[2]

The government also cited the ongoing work on SLOVLEX as reasons for postponing the drafting of the bill until 2014.[3] The researcher could not verify these claims with the Ministry of Justice not responding to e-mails. It also seemed that the government used justification to avoid the real intent of the commitment (see below).

Did it matter?
In the absence of any evidence of progress, the researcher can not assess the commitment's actual impact. The commitment aimed to introduce early notice for every draft bill "published by sponsors, the government or a municipality, before it is

addressed by the approving authority . . . [to] significantly strengthen the principle of legal assurance of citizens."[4]

Considering the purpose of the commitment, the ministry's stated reasons for delaying the commitment's implementation were largely technical and avoided the real goal of the commitment. For example, the ministry could explore access of the public to policy-making in other phases of preparation, such as white papers, legislative intents, or working groups.

At the IRM stakeholders' meeting, the stakeholders repeatedly emphasised the need for an improved early notice system, including publishing white papers and background studies, since under the current legal provisions the opportunity to provide feedback often follows after "things are already decided."[5]

In addition, it is unclear how the Ministry of Justice accommodated (or plans to accomodate) the requirement to draft a bill using participatory methods.[6] None of the CSOs' stakeholders interviewed by the IRM researcher were aware of any consultations.[7]

Moving forward
In the opinion of the IRM researcher, the government should revive its efforts to enhance public involvement in law-making and make it more transparent. Public consultation, in-person and online, should be facilitated at the start of the pre-legislative process. Such consultations should not be postponed until after sufficient technical details on SLOVLEX are available.

The IRM researcher, in particular, recommends the government consider the following:
- Introducing early warning systems in law making.
- Increasing legal standing and the rights of participants as per the OGP value of enhancing public participation as well as the Aarhus Agreement in other policy domains.
- Adopting measures to improve the capacity such as cost reimbursements of the civil society to participate in policy-making.

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[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[2] Sme.sk. 2012. "Záväzné znenia zákonov budú zadarmo na webe"
http://www.sme.sk/c/6538734/zavazne-znenia-zakonov-budu-zadarmo-na-webe.html, accessed 6 November 2013
[3] Úrad splnomocnenca pre rozvoj občianskej spoločnosti. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, navštívené 3. novembra 2013.
[4] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. "Návrh akčného plánu pre roky 2012-13". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/navrh-akcneho-planu-pre-roky-2012-13/, accessed 1 November 2013
[5] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[6] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[7] Ibid: Miková, Karolína. 2013. Interview. Nov 4, 2013.

15. and 16. Collective e-Petitions

15. Prepare and launch collective electronic petitions.

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

Commitment Description						
Answerability	**Lead institution**	Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society				
	Supporting institutions	Government Office of the Slovak Republic				
	Point of contact specified?	No				
Specificity and measurability		High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)				
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Improving public services				
	OGP Values	**Access to Information**	**Civic Participation**	**Accountability**	**Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.**	**None**
	15. Launch collective electronic petitions		√		√	
	16. Amend guidelines for materials submitted for government meetings		√			

Ambition		
Commitment	**New vs. pre-existing**	**Potential impact**
15. Launch collective electronic petitions	New	Moderate (The commitment is a major step forward in the relevant policy area, but it remains limited in scale or scope.)
16. Amend guidelines for materials submitted for government meetings	New	Transformative (the commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area)

15. Launch collective electronic petitions			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** December 2012	Actual completion	Limited
		Projected completion	Officially withdrawn
16. Amend guidelines for materials submitted for government meetings			

Start date: N/A	End date: November 2013	Actual completion	Officially withdrawn
		Projected completion	Officially withdrawn
Next steps			
15. Launch collective electronic petitions	Revision of the commitment to be more achievable or measurable		
16. Amend guidelines for materials submitted for government meetings	Further work on basic implementation		

What happened?

The government made limited progress to simplify petitioning the government by the time the researcher wrote this report. The Office of the Plenipotentiary managed to create a position paper on e-petitions[1] and incorporate the petitioning platform into "e-Democracy and the Open Government" project proposal, which officials expected would be launched in the first half of 2015[2]—missing the original deadline by more than two years. Furthermore, when it comes to including e-petitions on government functioning, the progress report cites a deadline extension by end of 2013, when "complete information about the workflow of the e-petitions will be known."[3]

Did it matter?

While the government made substantial progress on the commitment, which could contribute to more consultative and responsive government, stakeholders have voiced several reservations.

While the government report claims wide consultations on implementing the e-petitions system, stakeholders interviewed by the IRM researcher were unaware of such consultations.[4] The Office of the Plenipotentiary was also unable to provide a list of the stakeholders it consulted.

Furthermore, there are unrealistic requirements for submitting collective e-petitions. For example, the requirement of gathering 15,000 signatures over the period of 30 days seems unnecessarily high, and it is not clear how the government arrived at these figures. This same amount of signatures is required for candidates that run as presidential candidates, but without the time constraint.[5]

Finally, the government's stated reasons for postponing the modification of its procedural rules seem too technical and are not very persuasive, especially if all fundamental parameters are already listed in the position paper. The most fundamental reservation results from the incorporation of the portal into e-Democracy and Open Government project, especially the portal's expected cost (see Commitments 8, 9, and 10).

Moving forward

The IRM researcher recommends that the government continues further work on this commitment. It should consider creating a platform to establish acceptable thresholds and workflow during the implementation of the the e-petitions platform. Furthermore, it should sufficiently explain project functionality and costs.

[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Elektronické hromadné žiadosti." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4101_elektronicke-hromadne-ziadosti.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.

[2] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.

[3] Ibid.

[4] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #1, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology; IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology

[5] Constitution of the Slovak Republic. http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1992-460, accessed 6 November 2013

17. OGP Steering Committee

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

Commitment Description

Answerability	**Lead institution**	Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society
	Supporting institutions	N/A
	Point of contact specified?	No
Specificity and measurability		Medium (Commitment language describes an activity that is objectively verifiable, but it does not contain specific milestones or deliverables.)
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	None

	OGP Values	**Access to Information**	**Civic Participation**	**Accountability**	**Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.**	**None**
				√		

Ambition

New vs. pre-existing	Potential impact
New	Minor (The commitment is an incremental but positive step in the relevant policy area.)

Level of completion

Start date: N/A	End date: May 2012	Actual completion	Limited
		Projected completion	Complete

Next steps

Revision of the commitment to be more achievable or measurable

What happened?

The government achieved this commitment, at best, only superficially. The activities and the degree of involvement did not meet the spirit of the task, which was to establish an effective board to supervise the implementation of the action plan.

According to the self-assessment report, the working group met just twice over the period of 16 months—first in May 2012 and then in June 2013,[1] at the end of the period assessed by this report, when the working group "started its active work."

Even though the working group's original mandate was wider, the self-assessment report as well as the June 2013 meeting notes[2] make it clear that the working group limited itself to the open data-related commitments.

Finally, activities of the Government Council for Non-Profit Organisations, composed of representatives from civil society, umbrella organisations,[3] and government with regards to the action plan, can not be considered an effective oversight body. According

to the interviewees familiar with the meetings, the discussions concerning the initiative were perfunctory and without substantial debates.[1]

Did it matter?
In the opinion of the IRM researcher, an effective working group overseeing the implementation of the action plan could have positively influenced the delivery of the commitments and could have shared the progress with all relevant stakeholders. However, it did not do this.

The government did not ensure a structured and meaningful exchange of views with various stakeholders, nor did it evaluate the implementation of the action plan. The government recognised this in its self-assessment report, citing its failure as "one of the deficiencies in the implementation" of the action plan.[2] Furthermore, the low outreach to stakeholders and the narrow focus prevented the creation of an open government "community of practice."

The interviewed stakeholders did not raise the issue spontaneously and were mostly cognizant of deadlines of commitments that were of most interest to them. However, there is no evidence of any systemic tracking commitment progress or adherence to deadlines by local CSOs.

Moving forward
The IRM researcher concurs with the 2014–15 action plan proposal that this commitment has been re-done. However, the researcher has reservations concerning the proposed co-ordination and oversight role of the Government Council for Non-Profit Organisations.[3]

In the opinion of the IRM researcher the capacity of the council at large to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the action plan might be very limited due to the council's two-chamber system with 50 representatives. Furthermore, even the CSO chamber of the council lacks government oversight specialists, and the work would have to be contracted out.[4] As a possible solution, the researcher recommends the creation of a smaller representative working group composed from the members of both chambers as well as external experts.

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[1] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
Woleková, Helena. 2013. Sociofórum. Interview Oct 29, 2013
[2] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013".
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[3] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. „Návrh Akčného plánu pre roky 2014-15"
http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/navrh-akcneho-planu-pre-roky-2014-15/, accessed Nov 3, 2013.
[4] Vláda SR. 2012. "Štatút Rady vlády Slovenskej republiky pre mimovládne neziskové organizácie."
http://tretisektor.gov.sk/data/files/3781_statut-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.

18., 19., and 20. Transparency Council and Openness Barometer

18. Draw up statutes of 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

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

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

Commitment Description							
Answerability	**Lead institution**	The Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society, Government Office of the Slovak Republic					
	Supporting institutions	N/A					
	Point of contact specified?	No					
Specificity and measurability		High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)					
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Increasing public integrity					
	OGP Values	**Access to Information**	**Civic Participation**	**Accountability**	**Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.**	**None**	
	18. Transparency and Open Governance Council			√			
	19. Openness Baramoter – Criteria			√			
	20. Openness Barometer - First Assessment			√			
Ambition							
Milestone	**New vs. pre-existing**	**Potential impact**					
18. Transparency and Open Governance Council	New	Moderate (the commitment is a major step forward in the relevant policy area, but remains limited in scale or scope)					
19. Openness Baramoter - Criteria	New	Moderate (The commitment is a major step forward in the relevant policy area, but it remains limited in scale or scope.)					
20. Openness Barometer - First Assessment	New	Transformative (The commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area.)					

Level of completion			
18. Transparency and Open Governance Council			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** February 2012	Actual completion	Officially withdrawn
		Projected completion	Officially withdrawn
19. Openness Baramoter – Criteria			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** July 2012	Actual completion	Officially withdrawn
		Projected completion	Officially withdrawn
20. Openness Barometer - First Assessment			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** July 2012	Actual completion	Officially withdrawn
		Projected completion	Officially withdrawn
Next steps			
18. Transparency and Open Governance Council	Revision of the commitment to be more achievable or measurable		
19. Openness Baramoter - Criteria	Revision of the commitment to be more achievable or measurable		
20. Openness Barometer - First Assessment	Revision of the commitment to be more achievable or measurable		

What happened?

In September 2013, The government withdrew the commitment to create the Transparency and Open Government Council, a high level governmental transparency board chaired by the prime minister with representatives of the civil society. The government cited "too many advisory bodies" as its reason for withdrawing the commitment.[4] According to civil society stakeholders, administrative lack of action on developing the exisiting draft council statute for over a year is symbolic of the changes in political priorities.[5]

Subsequently, the government also officially retracted commitments to (1) establish an assessment criteria for an annual review of government transparency ("Transparency Barometer") and (2) carry out the first review. It stated "non-existence of the Council as the main reason."[6]

Government documents on the withdrawals as well as the government's self-assessment report provided only technical and cursory explanations without any discussion of the commitments' content or desirability.[7]

Did it matter?

Many of the stakeholders suggested that this commitment to form a transparency council and perform annual transparency assessments was the most ambitious and the most highly politically visible goal in the action plan. It is not surprising, then, that stakeholders see the government's decision not to carry out the proposed activities as a calculated (symbolic) break of the current administration (under Fico) from Radicova's government. The former emphasised issues of transparency and accountability.

If executed, the advisory governmental body composed of high-level politician (ministers and state secretaries) with a mandate to co-ordinate annual transparency

self-assessments could have made a significant contribution on both a symbolic (issue recognition) as well practical level (assessment and policy co-ordination).[8] This is especially so when Slovakia is one of the countries with the highest corruption perception rates within the EU along with low public trust in political institutions.[9] Businesses also frequently cite corruption as one of the main problems in the country.[10]

Finally, Transparency International's existing 2012 National Integrity System is the single systematic assessment in several years,[11] making it difficult for Slovak watchdog organisations, already lacking in capacity, to carry out and track annual transparency developments at a ministry and agency level.

Moving forward

The IRM researcher recommends that the government regularly conduct corruption-risk assessments at the level of individual agencies and ministries. Specifically, he proposes the following:
- Inclusion of the Openness Barometer in the next action plan.
- Making efforts to identify an appropriate and respectable agent to carry out assessments.
- Developing and validating a robust methodology.
- Exploring methods to support independent government transparency assessments from the civil society organisations' side.

[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[2] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Stretnutie medzirezortnej pracovnej skupiny k plneniu úloh vyplývajúcich z Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v SR – zverejňovanie datasetov a rezortných dotačných schém".
[3] Platforms of NGOs dealing with similar issues
[4] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013
[5] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[6] Vláda SR. 2013. "Návrh na zrušenie úloh C.20. a C.21. z uznesenia vlády Slovenskej republiky č. 50 z 22. februára 2012 k návrhu Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike – Predkladacia správa". http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-158953?prefixFile=m_, accessed 7 November 2013.
[7] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013; Vláda SR. 2013. " Návrh na zrušenie úloh C.20. a C.21. z uznesenia vlády Slovenskej republiky č. 50 z 22. februára 2012 k návrhu Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike – Predkladacia správa". http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-158953?prefixFile=m_, accessed 7 November 2013.
[8] Podnikateľská aliancia Slovenska. 2013. „Korupcia oberá štát o pol miliardy eur ročne". http://alianciapas.sk/korupcia-obera-stat-o-pol-miliardy-eur-rocne/, accessed 7 November 2013.
[9] Ibid; European Commission. 2012. „Public Opinion In The European Union - Standard Eurobarometer 77 – Tables of Results". http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb77/eb77_anx_en.pdf, accessed Nov 7, 2013.

[10] Transparency International Slovensko. 2012. "Národný systém integrity spravovania na Slovensku – hodnotiaca správa". http://www.transparency.sk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/2012_Narodny_system_integrity_sprovania_sprava.pdf, accessed 7 November 2013.

[11] Ibid

21. Whistleblowers Protection Act

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

Commitment Description		
Answerability	**Lead institution**	Ministry of Interior
	Supporting institutions	Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society
	Point of contact specified?	No
Specificity and measurability		High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	Increasing public integrity

		Access to Information	Civic Participation	Accountability	Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.	None
Relevance	**OGP Values**			√		

Ambition	
New vs. pre-existing	**Potential impact**
New	Transformative (The commitment entails a reform that could potentially transform "business as usual" in the relevant policy area.)

Level of completion			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** June 2013	Actual completion	Limited
		Projected completion	Complete

Next steps
Further work on basic implementation

What happened?

The government did not meet this commitment to prepare the Whistle-Blowers Protection Act. Instead it postponed the deadline and formed a new expert group currently working on a draft. Civil society organisation (CSO) representatives interviewed by the IRM researcher voiced concerns about the government's limited progress on this law, which was scheduled to come into effect by end of 2013. However, they also seemed to be cognizant of their limited power to hasten progress. It remains to be seen if the current draft will be acceptable to the Ministry of Interior formally responsible for the draft.[1]

The government postponed the deadline to present a Whistle-Blowers Protection Act several times.[2] It set the first deadline for June 2012, a deadline it moved several times, and it set the last one for March 2013 when the Ministry of Interior was given the responsibility to prepare the act by the end of 2013.[3]

Officials formed a working group composed of the government officials panel and watchdog organisations in August 2012. This working group was facilitated by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society and was responsible for analysing the current legislation and suggesting necessary changes.[4] One of the

stakeholders pointed out the process was more of a "learning experience for the civil servants about the whistle-blowing than an effective working group" to review the issue and draft a law. Eventually, when pressed to state their positions, ministries stated they were satisfied with the current status.[5]

Roughly around the same time, the locus of activities shifted to a new, but narrower, working group at the Ministry of Interior. The ministry set up a new group without disbanding the earlier one, or providing its members with feedback on their inputs.[6] According to one of the working group members, a lawyer, the group took action according to its mandate. However, he also noted that without a higher ranking political representative of the ministry in the working group, it remains to be seen whether the group's proposal will be accepted.[7]

Did it matter?
The researcher can report only limited progress with this commitment and little actual impact at this stage with the Whistle-Blower Act not being passed or even a drafted. The implementation of the commitment could be tranformative, especially as Transparency International Slovakia and Oorganization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports Whistle-Blowers Protection Act is a critical public governance infrastructure missing in Slovakia.[8]

Moving forward
The IRM researcher recommends the adoption of a strong Whistle-Blowers Protection Act, and subsequent efforts to effectively monitor its compliance and create incentive to report corruption should be government priorities for the upcoming period.

In particular the government should

- publicly recognise the importance of enacting a law to protect whistle-blowers;
- intensify its efforts on drafting the Whistle-Blowers Protection Act;
- provide regular feedback on submitted suggestions to the working group members; and
- create incentive schemes for whistle-blowers.

[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[2] Úrad splnomocnenca vlády pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. „II. Zabezpečenie a koordinácia implementácie Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie na roky 2012-2013". Unpublished;
rad splnomocnenca vlády pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. „Vyhodnotenie termínovaných úloh splatných v mesiaci jún 2013". Unpublished.
[3] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Hodnotiaca správa Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v Slovenskej republike za roky 2011-2013". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4135_hodnotiaca-sprava-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-sr-final.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.
[4] Ibid
[5] Ibid
[6] Nechala, Pavel. 2013. Transparency International Slovensko. Interview. 25 October 2013.
[7] ibid
[8] Transparency International Slovensko. 2012. "Protikorupčné minimum 2012.". http://www.transparency.sk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/2012_Protikorupcne_minimum.pdf, accessed 4 November 2013; OECD. 2013. "Slovak Republic: Fostering an Inclusive Job-Rich Recovery". http://www.oecd.org/slovakia/BrochureSlovakRepublicapril2013.pdf, accessed 4 November 2013

22. 2014–2015 Action Plan Development

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

Commitment Description		
Answerability	**Lead institution**	Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society.
	Supporting institutions	N/A
	Point of contact specified?	No
Specificity and measurability		High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)
Relevance	**OGP grand challenges**	None

	OGP Values	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Accountability	Tech & Innovation for Trans. & Acc.	None
		√	√			

Ambition	
New vs. pre-existing	**Potential impact**
New	Minor (The commitment is an incremental but positive step in the relevant policy area.)

Level of completion			
Start date: N/A	**End date:** December 2013	Actual completion	Not started
		Projected completion	Not started

Next steps
Further work on basic implementation

What happened?

The assessment of commitment completion is valid for the end of the assessment period (i.e., June 2013). The Office of the Plenipotentiary submitted the 2014–2015 action plan draft for the public discussion after this period at the end of September 2013,[1] with the intention to meet the year-end deadline.

The draft is published online and available for public comment.[2] The Office of the Plenipotentiary also presented the draft action plan at three regional meetings to solicit comments for further refinements.[3] The draft includes and builds on few withdrawn commitments from 2012-2013 period – Electronic Petitions (commitments 15 and 16) as well as Subsidies Portal (commitments 8 and 10).

Did it matter?

As written, this commitment is potentially relevant to all core OGP values, that of transparency, participation, and accountability, in particular public participation,

provided the government incorporates the recommendations of the civil society stakeholders in the next action plan.

At the time of writing of this report, the researcher found the development process was still under way, and it remains to be seen whether and how the recommendations of the civil society stakeholders will be incorporated into the next action plan. The available proposal for the 2014–2015 action plan includes several commitments whose due dates were postponed, and it continues to develop works on the open data.[4]

Moving forward
The IRM researcher recommends that during the upcoming drafting period the government should

- include expectations on resources (human and capital) per actor and per individual activity;
- promote and solicit feedback from previously omitted constituencies such as businesses and academia;
- consider ways in which municipalities could be involved in the action plan; and
- publish members of the advisory group and expert groups online.

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[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Návrh akčného plánu pre roky 2014-15". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/navrh-akcneho-planu-pre-roky-2014-15/, accessed 1 November 2013

[2] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Pozvánka na regionálne stretnutia k tvorbe Akčného plánu Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie v SR na roky 2014-2015" http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/pozvanka-na-regionalne-stretnutia-k-tvorbe-akcneho-planu-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie-v-sr-na-roky-2014-2015/, accessed 1 November 2013

[3] Ibid

[4] Úrad splnomocnenca pre rozvoj občianskej spoločnosti. 2013. "Návrh akčného plánu pre roky 2014-15". http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/navrh-akcneho-planu-pre-roky-2014-15/, accessed on Nov 1, 2013

V. SELF-ASSESSMENT

While the Office of the Plenipotentiary has welcomed feedback on the self-assessment report and on its implementation of the original action plan, it provided no information about how it would accommodate the comments in the final report.

The government published its self-assessment report in October 2013.[1] With a few exceptions, the report provides a balanced, detailed, and well-documented summary of the action plan implementation according to stakeholders. The draft report was available for comment throughout September 2013, online or in person at the stakeholder meeting, which took place on 19 September 2013 in the capital and was facilitated by an external partner. In the view of the interviewed stakeholders, this public meeting was adequate.[2]

The stakeholders felt that the report failed to portray the action plan in a wider context of political developments[3] and that government provided explanations for postponed commitments (see commitments 13, 15, and16), were too technical, cursory, and unpersuasive.[4] A majority of the stakeholders attended the meeting, and the government received only a few comments through the official review website. It also produced and made available on its national OGP website a report summarising the main discussion points.[5] While the Office of the Plenipotentiary welcomed feedback on the report the implementation of the original action plan, it provided no information about how it would accommodate comments in the final report.

Finally, the short time span between the end of the first action plan following immediate consultation on the second action plan raised questions on if the office had time to reflect on the stakeholders' comments.

Table 2: Self-Assessment Checklist

Was annual progress report published?	Yes
Was it done according to schedule?	Yes
Is the report available in the local language?	Yes
According to stakeholders, was this adequate?	Yes
Is the report available in English?	Yes
Did the government provide a two-week public comment period on draft self-assessment reports?	Yes
Were any public comments received?	Yes
Is the report deposited in the OGP portal?	Yes
Did the self-assessment report include review of the consultation efforts?	Yes
Did the report cover all of the commitments?	Yes
Did it assess completion according to schedule?	Yes
Did the report reaffirm responsibility for openness?	Yes

Does the report describe the relationship of the action plan with grand challenge areas?	Yes

[1] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Akčný plán Iniciatívy pre otvorené v Slovenskej republike pre roky 2011-2013." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/1878_akcny-plan-otvorene-vladnutie+uznesenie-vlady.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013.

[2] Stakeholders Meetings

[3] Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia. 2013. "Správa z hodnotiaceho workshop Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4137_sprava-z-hodnotiaceho-workshopu-ap-ogp.pdf, accessed 3 November, 2013

[4] Ibid

[5] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Uskutočnil sa hodnotiaci workshop Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie," http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/uskutocnil-sa-hodnotiaci-workshop-iniciativy-pre-otvorene-vladnutie/, accessed 3 November 2013

VI: MOVING FORWARD

This section puts the OGP action plan into a broader context and highlights potential next steps, as reflected in the preceding sections, as well as stakeholder-identified priorities.

Country Context

At the same time that it is implementing the OGP action plan, the Slovak government is implementing several measures that will possibly lead to more efficient and transparent politics—such as the creation of political finance supervisory body or e-Government services. However, at the same time, several developments with a detrimental impact on open and good governance are under way in Slovakia, causing stakeholders to question the strength of the government's commitment to the OGP initiative's values. One of the stakeholders interviewed by the IRM researcher called the OGP "a PR stunt for the government" with no meaningful impact.[1]

This situation reflects not only unmet OGP commitments but also the review of the Freedom of Information Act.[2] This review is considered by many CSOs as a way to curb non-parliamentary oversight of the government and is intended to reduce the scope of the act and introduce processing payments,[3] while failing to address issues of enforcement and compliance monitoring.[4] Similarly, a government-backed amendment of the Petitions Act sought to extend the period to provide answers from 30 to 60 days.[5] The government has postponed the intent to change the Petitions Act until 2015 citing the need for a wider public consultation.

Additionally, two important oversight institutions were impaired for the bulk of the action plan implementation period. The Parliament, unable to elect a new head of the Supreme Audit Office,[6] and the post of General Prosecutor were in a political and constitutional gridlock,[7] with the government showing little interest in solving the situation.

Finally, it has to be reiterated that the lead of the institution for the OGP, the Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Civil Society, resigned shortly after the review period, citing as reasons an inability to push through his agenda and the government's poor co-operation with the civil society.[8] At the time the researcher wrote this report, the post was left vacant, with Vice Prime Minister Kaliňák claimed that there was no need to appoint a new head of department.[9]

Current Stakeholder Priorities

The fact that there were very few stakeholders were interested in more than one thematic area is the result of a lack of agreement among the stakeholders on what should be the priorities in the action plan.

When asked to list the most important commitment, stakeholders often mentioned the commitment to create "Transparency and Open Government Council" that was supposed to monitor governmental transparency and accountability issues beyond the scope of the action plan, but it was withdrawn during the implementation period.[10]

Consulted experts also voiced strong concerns regarding the e-Democracy and Open Government project. The project with expected cost of € 42 million contains several sub-components fulfilling commitments of the action plan (see commitments 8, 9, and 10). Currently available documentation provides little information to dispel concerns that the project will turn into something "nobody will be happy with it for too much money."

Neither the National Agency for Network and Electronic Services (NASES) responsible for tendering the project and future operations, nor the Office of the Plenipotentiary that contributed to specification of the portals were able to provide satisfactory explanations concerning both cost and future features of this project.

Future Stakeholder Priorities

The recent resignation of the most senior officer responsible for the OGP (Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society) combined with discussed law changes on petitions and freedom of information,[11] subsided stakeholders' interest in the new Action Plan development.

While civil society organisations welcome the OGP, their top priority is protecting the already established standard of transparency and accountability tools.[12] A few stakeholders interviewed by the IRM researcher stated that the OGP is becoming a "PR activity" for the government, an approach that actively diminishes transparency standards.[13]

Locally active groups see involving municipal governments in the development and implementation of the action plan as important.[14]

Recommendations

The IRM researcher recommends the government take the following steps to ensure sincere, meaningful, and co-operative participation in the OGP:

- Tracking preservation and performance of the key accountability tools— especially the Freedom of Information Act.
- Ensuring that the Office of the Plenipotentiary receives appropriate resources (both human and political) to get necessary co-operation from other bodies.
- Continuing and developing existing efforts, especially in the area of open data.
- Providing satisfactory explanations of the costs and functionality of the planned e-Democracy and Open Government Project.
- Identifying additional target groups—the OGP is generally unknown to many potentially relevant target groups that should be consulted—especially municipalities, businesses, and academia.

[1] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[2] Sme.sk. 2013. " Úrady sa sťažujú na šikanu podľa infozákona. Chcú ho zmeniť'" http://www.sme.sk/c/6698110/urady-sa-stazuju-na-sikanu-podla-infozakona-chcu-ho-zmenit.html. accessed 6 November 2013
[3] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Open Data #2, 23 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology
[4] Transparency International Slovensko. 2012. "Protikorupčné minimum 2012." http://www.transparency.sk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/2012_Protikorupcne_minimum.pdf, accessed 4 November 2013.
[5] Sme.sk. 2013." Vybavovanie petícií plánujú predĺžiť o tridsať dní". http://www.sme.sk/c/6963545/vybavovanie-peticii-planuju-predlzit-o-tridsat-dni.html, accessed 6 November 2013
[6] Transparency International Slovensko. 2012. "Protikorupčné minimum 2012.". http://www.transparency.sk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/2012_Protikorupcne_minimum.pdf, accessed 4 November 2013.
[7] Slovak Spectator. 2013. " President appoints Čižnár as top prosecutor", http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/50741/10/president_appoints_ciznar_as_top_prosecutor.html, accessed 9 November 2013.
[8] SME.sk. 2013." Splnomocnenec pre tretí sektor končí, neprešli mu návrhy". http://www.sme.sk/c/6988256/splnomocnenec-pre-treti-sektor-konci-nepresli-mu-navrhy.html, accessed 6 November 2013
[9] Ibid

[10] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology;
Sme.sk. 2013. " Úrady sa sťažujú na šikanu podľa infozákona. Chcú ho zmeniť"
http://www.sme.sk/c/6698110/urady-sa-stazuju-na-sikanu-podla-infozakona-chcu-ho-zmenit.html. accessed 6 November 2013
[11] Slovak Spectator. 2013. "No chairman for NKÚ, Šulaj and Tóth to become vice chairs" ,
http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/51207/10/no_chairman_for_nku_sulaj_and_toth_to_become_vice_chairs.html, accessed 9 November 2013.
[12] IRM Stakeholder Meeting – Participation, 24 October 2013. See Annex: Methodology for details.
Sme.sk. 2013. " Úrady sa sťažujú na šikanu podľa infozákona. Chcú ho zmeniť"
http://www.sme.sk/c/6698110/urady-sa-stazuju-na-sikanu-podla-infozakona-chcu-ho-zmenit.html. accessed 6 November 2013
[13] Sme.sk. 2013. " Úrady sa sťažujú na šikanu podľa infozákona. Chcú ho zmeniť"
http://www.sme.sk/c/6698110/urady-sa-stazuju-na-sikanu-podla-infozakona-chcu-ho-zmenit.html. accessed 6 November 2013
[14] Slovak Spectator. 2013. " President appoints Čižnár as top prosecutor",
http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/50741/10/president_appoints_ciznar_as_top_prosecutor.html, accessed 9 November 2013.

ANNEX: METHODOLOGY

As a complement to the government self-assessment, well-respected governance researchers write an independent assessment report, preferably from each OGP participating country.

The experts use a common OGP independent report questionnaire and guidelines,[1] based on a combination of interviews with local OGP stakeholders as well as desk-based analysis. This report is shared with a small International Expert Panel (appointed by the OGP Steering Committee) for peer review to ensure that the highest standards of research and due diligence have been applied. Analysis of progress on OGP action plans is a combination of interviews, desk research, and feedback from nongovernmental stakeholder meetings. The IRM report builds on the findings of the government's own self-assessment report and any other assessments of progress put out by civil society, the private sector, or international organisations. Each local researcher carries out stakeholder meetings to ensure an accurate portrayal of events. Given budgetary and calendar constraints, the IRM cannot consult all interested or affected parties. Consequently, the IRM strives for methodological transparency, and therefore where possible, makes public the process of stakeholder engagement in research (detailed later in this section.) In those national contexts where anonymity of informants—governmental or nongovernmental—is required, the IRM reserves the ability to protect the anonymity of informants. Additionally, because of the necessary limitations of the method, the IRM strongly encourages commentary on public drafts of each national document.

Introduction

Stakeholders' consultations were focused around two large topical areas covered in the Slovak action plan—Public Participation in Policy Making (Government Open to Dialogue) and Open Data (Open Information). The government discussed with stakeholders the third topic (Transparent Government), which concerns accountability mechanisms and whistle-blower protection.

Slovakia, with its small population and post-communist heritage has a rather small number of professionalised civil society organisations, which have limited resources. The CSOs have a rather narrow scope of interest, which reflected in the number of stakeholders who actively participated in the review process.

In addition, some of the respected organisations that the government invited to take part in the review, such as Transparency International Slovakia or Slovak Governance Institute, did not respond to the invitation, arguably feeling that the initiative was of less importance than their other engagements.

Finally, several of the stakeholders interviewed were initially reluctant to provide their insights, citing possible conflicts of interest due to their prior involvement in planning and implementation of OGP, for example by taking part in a working group. This issue was resolved when the researcher would include a variety of views in the report.

Stakeholder Selection

The IRM researcher drew up the list of potential stakeholders from

• members of the OGP Advisory Board for the first OGP action plan;[2]

• the list of participants taking part in the first action plan public consultations;[3]

• the list of participants in the first action plan evaluation workshop;[4] and

• peer recommendations.

Most of the stakeholders come from civil society organisations; a few of these members have crossed over from the government. The review did not engage significantly with target groups untapped by the action plan, such as academia or business—even if some of their representatives were invited to the meetings.

Most of the potential attendees were based in the capitol Bratislava. Based on the researcher's consultations with several potential stakeholders, it became evident that they were not involved enough in the OGP initiative to warrant travel to Bratislava, and their numbers were too small to organise additional workshops outside of the capital.

To alleviate the issue, stakeholders had the option to participate via Internet, especially for Public Participation in Policy-Making in which two stakeholders initially expressing interest. Ultimately, these two stakeholders did not join. The researcher arranged individual interviews with key actors who unable to attend meetings.

Stakeholder Meeting One

This meeting became two separate meetings on open data, since participants were unavailable at the same time. Both of the meetings followed the same structure: there was a general discussion of the initiative and action plan, of the quality of participation and following, and a discussion of individual commitments concerning the field of open data

• Meeting 1: 17 October, 09.00–11.00, Bratislava

• Meeting 2: 23 October, 15.00-16.30, Bratislava

Following experts took part in the consultation and are referred to as "consulted":

• Mr. Peter Hanečák, Opendata.sk

• Mr. Gabriel Lachmann, Utopia.sk

• Mr. Jakub Kapuš, Data.gov.sk administrator, Office of the Government,

• Mr. Ján Suchal, business owner, open-data activist

• Mr. Peter Kunder, analyst, Fair-Play Alliance

In addition, individual interviews with the following experts took place. Their observations are referenced directly:

• Interview with Mr. Lubomir Illek, 28 October, 12.00–13.00, Bratislava

• Interview with Mr. Boris Miškovič, 28 October, 11.00–11.45, Bratislava

Most of the civil society attendees had very good insight into the activities related to open data, having contributed to its implementation. They had little knowledge of the other parts of the initiative and no observations concerning the development of the action plan.

Stakeholders were very cognizant of the limited resources at the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society and the delicate political situation of the initiative itself. When asked about the groups involved, participants said they see room for improvement, especially concerning business and academia.

In general, attendees were satisfied that the government took initial steps to open and release datasets, calling it a "paradigm shift." Yet, they were quick to point out numerous technical problems related to releasing and publishing datasets—including broken links, which were token efforts in publishing easy or poor quality datasets. The participants

were more interested in having institutions release high value, quality datasets even on their own site, expressing dissatisfaction with data.gov.sk.

The participants were very happy to be able to contribute to the definition of open data standards, calling the co-operation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary and the Ministry of the Finance exemplary.

The stakeholders' main open data concern at the stakeholder meetings was the lack of appropriate licenses. Participants also listed a number of problems concerned the contracts register, suggesting that the government addressed almost none of the public users' needs.

A major issue for the participants was the e-Democracy project's ability to deliver

- improved data.gov.sk;

- subsidies portal; and

- e-petitions that raised explicit reservations concerning the project's scope and costs, calling the project "way too expensive" and outright "fraudulent."

Stakeholders' main worry is that the portal will result in something "nobody will be happy with for too much money."

The stakeholders were unaware of consultations regarding the functionality, the deliverables, or the cost breakdown for the individual parts.

Stakeholder Meeting Two

A single meeting on "Public Participation in Policy-Making" took place on October 24, followed by several side meetings with key actors unable to attend. The researcher originally planned for roughly eight participants, but only four attended, and one participant sent her notes by e-mail.

The first meeting offered general discussion of the initiative, current development in the field, and quality of the participation and oversight of the OGP. It then moved into a discussion of individual commitments within the theme. The following experts took part in the consultation, being referred to as "consulted."

• Mr. Laco Oravec, Milan Simecka Foundation, policy director

• Mr. Marcel D Zajac, Government Council for Non-Profit Organisations—NGO Chamber, chairperson

• Mrs Milada Dobrotkova, Association of Social Services Providers, chairperson

• Mr. Radovan Gumulak, Slovak Catholic Charity

In addition, individual interviews with the following experts took place. Their observations are referenced directly.

• Mrs Helena Wolekova, Socioforum, chairperson

• Mrs Lubica Trubiniova, Obcan, demokracia a zodpovednost, representative

• Mrs Karolina Mikova, Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia, previously employee of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society, facilitator

• Mr. Kalman Petocz, expert on national minority rights at Governmental Council for Human Rights.

Compared to the open data stakeholders, participants at this meeting had limited knowledge of the Open Government Partnership.

At the same time, participants were very cognizant of the government's actions to revise and potentially reduce current standards guaranteed by the Petitions Act and the Freedom of Information Act. One of the participants repeatedly voiced his concerns about the initiative "providing cover-up and being misused for public relations purposes" with the keystones of the accountability tools being in danger. Stakeholders perceived the government's withdrawal of commitments related to the creation of the Transparency Council and the Openness Barometer in the similar light.

None of the attendees considered the envisioned participatory processes as successful. However, the government's lack of accomplishment was notably different with processes at the Ministry of the Environment, which were considered a failure even by established standards. Stakeholders observed a minor, yet procedurally unsatisfactory, improvement for the processes at the Ministry of Social Affairs. Another participant described the situation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as "making a virtue out of necessity." While this stakeholder recognised the government's efforts to open up the policy-making process, he also noted the rushed, hands-off nature of the process.

Participants who dealt especially with the Ministries of Environment and Social Affairs felt that the government had little genuine interest since it imposed the task from the action plan that was passed by the previous administration.

Discussing the future of participatory policy-making, interviewed stakeholders expressed strong concerns about the capacity of civil society to take part in the process, stressing civil society's lack of resources to take part and actively contribute in policy-making. As already mentioned, stakeholders' raised concerns repeatedly about the government's actions possibly threatening established standards. They saw these concerns as crucial ones to consider for the upcoming period.

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[1] Full research guidance can be found at http://bit.ly/120SROu
[2] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2013. "Poradná rada OGP," http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/poradna-rada-ogp/, accessed 13 November 2013
[3] Úrad splnomocnenca pre občiansku spoločnosť. 2012. List of participants, unpublished
[4] Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia. 2013. "Správa z hodnotiaceho workshop Iniciatívy pre otvorené vládnutie." http://www.otvorenavlada.gov.sk/data/files/4137_sprava-z-hodnotiaceho-workshopu-ap-ogp.pdf, accessed 3 November 2013

About the Independent Reporting Mechanism
The IRM is a key means by which government, civil society, and the private sector can track government development and implementation of OGP action plans on a bi-annual basis. The design of research and quality control of such reports is carried out by the International Experts' Panel, comprised of experts in transparency, participation, accountability, and social science research methods.
The current membership of the International Experts' Panel is:

- Yamini Aiyar
- Debbie Budlender
- Jonathan Fox
- Rosemary McGee
- Gerardo Munck

A small staff based in Washington, DC shepherds reports through the IRM process in close co-ordination with the researcher. Questions and comments about this report can be directed to the staff at irm@opengovpartnership.org