

# Bulgarian Government To Discuss Open Data Steps

Submitted on 22 May 2012 by

In September 2011 [Bulgaria joined the Open Government Partnership](#). Although 23 years have passed since the fall of communism, many traits of the old mentality still remain embedded in our public administration. Hundreds of millions have been spent on egov solutions to little avail. As a result of that spending, however, our administration has a pretty good information infrastructure, which will allow opening databases and registries that much easier. Although we boast a well written Public Information Act, many institutions find ways to avoid giving away their secrets.

To change this mentality, we need something radical and open data is exactly that. The good news is that some government officials are recognizing this and are pushing our participation in OGP forward. As a result, Bulgaria is one of few, who has delivered commitments. Now the cabinet is looking into transforming these general goals into specific steps. On the cabinet meeting today (22 May 2012), many short- and long-term suggestions were supposed to be discussed. Due to the 5.8 earthquake near Sofia however, this topic will most probably be postponed.

The ideas being suggested fall into 3 categories:

Technical specifications:

- development of a shared term and technology dictionary to be used in the administration
- shared data schemes for static data and near real-time information services. These are also important for eGov service integration, development of future information systems and retrofitting old systems.
- documenting data schemes, specifics about the data and available dataset that can be opened
- developing manuals for identifying datasets fit for open data, limitations due to protected data and how to obscure personal or operational information
- removing captcha-s from government website and fixing the licensing
- creating a government opengov portal

Short-term steps:

- opening budget data in a shared format. This data may include projections, gains and spending, procurement, operational costs, salaries and bonuses, as well as definition of the money flow regulation among institutions.
- public procurement - although most of the information is public, it's not machine readable and public data on companies winning the bids is missing.
- company registry - information is public, but is not available for download and analysis. One suggestion is to open it up similar to [OpenCorporates](#).
- open data in the cabinet - dataset on internal spending, documents, decisions, etc.
- health inspection - opening registries for health institutions, restaurants, drugs, health inspections, viral reports, etc.
- administration registry - there's a public registry for the number of people working in each government institution, the positions being opened and those that are not filled yet. This data, together with regulation and structure of all divisions is well visualized, but not downloadable in any format.

Long term goals:

- opening up all public registries - buildings, hospitals, company data, etc.

- tax gains and budgets - publishing reports on month to month incomes from taxes by regions and sectors. One radical idea is publishing obscured weekly data on money being spent in shops. Since all cash machines are linked to the tax agency anyway, the data is already available.
- defining formally the goals of the cabinet in an open format as well as the progress being done.
- publishing obscured geotaged data on crimes, missing person reports and road incidents
- publishing obscured data on health related spending and procedures across the country. This will allow mining the data for trends and possible optimization in the health system.
- natural resources - opening up a registry for the resources, who is allowed to exploit them, the involved risks, etc.

These are only a few of the ideas being discussed. Most probably a few will be included in the final action plan, and some of the rest will be left for a later stage. Laws need to be changed, in most departments and agencies trainings need to be organized and in some - new information systems need to be developed. Opening up the Bulgarian government data will take much more than several visionaries in the cabinet pushing the agenda. System administrators and public workers - the foot soldiers of this change - need to understand the need for open data, as much as journalists need to learn how to use it.

There's a long road ahead and a lot of walls to knock down. Some of them technological, most of them - physiological. The good news is that the message has been heard and things are moving along.