

Information for media, 15 Sept 2015

House to vote on more transparent state

By Wednesday, the Chamber of Deputies could go through the third reading of the Bill on the Register of Contracts. Its purpose is to enforce the publication of the contracts concluded the State and municipalities, concerning the management of public assets. The contents of such contracts that until now have been only theoretically accessible to the general public would be automatically revealed. This is the biggest step towards the State's openness since the passing the Freedom of Information Act, promulgated in 1999.

The approval process is to be based on a comprehensive government draft amendment to a text put forward by Deputy Jan Farský (STAN). The government draft honours the basic principles of the legislation, suggests certain improvements, but at the same time ushers in a number of softening provisions, including a one-year stay on the imposition of sanctions. Reconstruction of the State considers the government draft a functional, albeit minimalist reflection of the original plan. However, it still tallies with the politicians' commitments undertaken before the last elections.

The risk hides in a succession of draft amendments, put forth mainly by ČSSD lawmakers, which could effectively block the bill. This includes, for example, amendments sponsored by, Deputies Milan Urban (in a draft presented by Deputy Zemánek) and Jaroslav Foldyna, proposing that private entities (firms and non-profits) disclose all their contracts (including private contracts) in the course of the entire calendar year in which they receive subsidies over and above a certain amount. This is a legal absurdity which requires entities to estimate in advance if subsidies are granted to them. Moreover, instead of improving oversight of public funds, these drafts also encompass private means (i.e. money not received as subsidies by the entities concerned).

The second hitch has to do with the unnecessary postponement of the implementation of the law. It will not become fully applicable before 1 July 2017, i.e. shortly before the next parliamentary elections, on condition that the Ministry of the Interior has the register of contracts (technically) ready by then.

The current draft envisages the publication of contracts in an electronic form (not scanned copies), in addition to the basic data ("metadata") of most contracts in excess of CZK 50,000. The legislation has an impact on the state administration, self-governing bodies, the firms controlled by them, and funded organizations, bar a few exceptions. Smaller municipalities enjoy a legally sanctioned two year "stay", and state-owned firms capitalize on better protection of their trade secrets. Also exempted are contracts with non-business natural persons, bar contracts on property sale.

We will be happy to provide you with additional information:

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- Brief information on the bill and frequently asked questions are available [here](http://bit.ly/1KjpYp5) (<http://bit.ly/1KjpYp5>).
- Updates from the Chamber of Deputies are available on [Facebook](http://on.fb.me/1QeYXo3) (<http://on.fb.me/1QeYXo3>).
- The Bill Encyclopaedia (in Czech only) can be downloaded [here](http://bit.ly/1KQfTDh) (<http://bit.ly/1KQfTDh>).
- Detailed position of Reconstruction of the State: <http://bit.ly/1USOiRh>.
- The current draft of the bill has already publicly supported by many legislators, whose positions are available on www.odtemneni.cz.
- On Wednesday morning, a happening entitled “*Thank You, Deputies*” is slated to bring attention to the legislative process.
- As a part of the Reconstruction of the State campaign, the bill has been supported by many well-known figures, including economic expert Tomáš Sedláček, actor Jan Budař, rock star Vilém Čok, pop singer and actress Bára Poláková, and many others.
- Your knowledge of the bill can be tested here: <http://bit.ly/1W08Yt6>.