

CIVIC DATA MINING

<http://dane.siecobywatelska.pl/>

Project leader:

Citizens Network Watchdog Poland www.watchdogpoland.pl (Karol Breguła and Przemek Urbański. They both code in Django). Everybody interested in supporting the project is invited.

Citizens Network Watchdog Poland is an independent and apolitical non-governmental organization 'keeping an eye on government' – in order to work for greater openness in public life, good and accountable government. It also supports grassroots watchdog initiatives by offering advice, training and hosting specialist websites including, watchdogportal.pl, informacjapubliczna.org.pl and funduszesoleckie.pl.

Short description:

We need a mechanism that would enable:

- sending multiple inquiries regarding public records to multiple entities automatically,
- automatic reception of responses to these inquiries,
- sharing received responses to be analyzed by involved citizens,
- publishing verified responses and data sheets.

Goals:

1. Quick and joint analysis of data that do not exist in any repositories and do not exist in a form available for digital readout. It can be used in advocacy campaigns or as evidence in the process of passing new law.
2. Mass civic education on public records: What public records are available for citizens? How do public institutions respond to inquiries? How does the correspondence with authorities may look like? How to verify statements emerging in public debates?

Additional expectation, if possible to be fulfilled:

Creating a universal application that will be possible to get adjusted by different organizations in their activities.

Detailed description of the application:

1. A database of public institutions with their contact information, including address and additional data: voivodeship, province, gmina, statistical code - TERYT, etc.
2. Mass email send-out.
3. Answering directly to the system, i.e. importing reply received and attached files assigned to a case (a specific inquiry of a specific institution).
4. Easy registration before analyzing, while ease access for data viewers.
5. Questionnaire i.e. a list of questions that need to be addressed by people who analyze the responses.
 - Comparing responses of two people who analyze the same data entry.

- Automatic publishing, once two people who analyze the same data entry provide identical answers.
 - An “alarm” message to the headquarters once the answers of two people analyzing the same data entry are divergent.
 - Superpower of the headquarters to decide which is the right answer and blocking of a given case for further analyses.
6. View of e-mail exchanges along with files attached between inquiring institution and the public body in a form of a chat
 7. Gamification – possibility to collect points/badges, etc.
 8. A social media component, that would allow to get others involved and to share highlights, e.g. an interesting data available in a specific institution. The social media component should allow anyone networked with authors of shared information to access them effortlessly.
 9. A mechanism that informs the Legal Department of Watchdog Poland, once an institution passes their deadline to provide public record. The Legal Department would then follow up with an official complain.

Possible use of the application:

1. TRANSCRIBING SUMMARIES OF PUBLIC RECORDS AND PROVIDING NUMERIC DATA

In 2012 Citizens’ Network Watchdog Poland joined the campaign against the changes in the law on gatherings. Changes were introduced in reaction to the unrest on the Independence Day in Warsaw. They intended to increase surveillance and to lay a lot of responsibility upon organizers of gatherings in the future. We collected mass data in order to make the members of parliament aware that the legal changes they want to introduce would mainly affect the organizers of gatherings in small towns. We aimed to raise awareness that law should not be changed without a wide perspective on its potential consequences. We also wanted to show that these changes would freeze already small civic activity.

In order to find out about gatherings in little towns, Citizens’ Network Watchdog Poland sent inquiries regarding public record to a number of gmina authorities, asking for:

- scans of all the applications for the approval of gatherings, submitted between 2010 and 2012
- scans of any possible rejections to such applications, between 2010 and 2012.

The responses allowed to obtain mainly qualitative data:

- the types of entities that submit information on their gatherings (individuals, unions, churches, organizations) - possibly one could categorize these groups;
- reasons for these gatherings - possibly one could categorize these groups;
- the number of gatherings submitted annually (especially in small towns).

2. PROVIDING NUMERIC DATA

In 2012 civic activity in inquiring for public record access slightly increased. It was partially a result of the government's mistakes regarding amendments to the bill on Public Records Access (breaching the parliamentary procedures), as well as the media campaign on the subject. Partially it was a result of activity of diverse NGOs, including Watchdog Poland. Last but not least, it was a result of activities of data collection companies, which "learnt" to use the right to information - a particularly indignation among clerks.

The active lobbying, which has been exercised by some clerks, results with more and more respectful individuals repeating in public debate their statements about "abuse of the right to information". As this phenomenon may potentially cause changes in law, Citizens' Network Watchdog Poland sent out an inquiry to all 2,500 gmina local authorities. The inquiry was to verify the actual frequency and number of inquiries. It was also to investigate kinds of data available. The responses proved the actual number of inquiries to be very low - between a few and a few dozens a year (except in the biggest cities or some extreme situations). The increase between 2010 and 2012 is insignificant (in a sample of 10% of gminas - 253, which includes 3 extreme cases, the average increase amounted 7 inquires).

To acquire the information, Citizens' Network Watchdog Poland asked the following questions:

1. *How many inquiries for public records information were received in 2011?*
2. *How many inquiries for public records information were received in 2012?*
3. *How were the inquiries registered in 2011?*

If the registry is available digitally, we demand that it is shared, either in the text document or in spreadsheet format. If the registry is not run electronically, we ask for sharing the information in the form of scan, with important exclusions due to the law on privacy protection of those inquiring.

4. *How were the inquiries registered in 2012?*

If the registry is available digitally, we demand that it is shared, either in the text document or in spreadsheet format. If the registry is not run electronically, we ask for sharing the information in the form of scan, with important exclusions due to the law on privacy protection of those inquiring.

Data that can be acquired thanks to the mass citizenship analysis is:

- How many inquiries were submitted in 2011? NUMBER
- How many inquiries were submitted in 2012? NUMBER
- Was the registry of 2011 inquiries attached? YES/NO
- Was the registry of 2012 inquiries attached? YES/NO
- When was the inquiry responded? DATE's
- Do gmina authorities claim that our inquiry concerns processed information and is thus irrelevant? Y/N
- Would one suggest/demand fee for making the information available? CHECK IF YES
- Has any local authority asked for extension of their response deadline? CHECK IF YES

- Was there a situation where there were scans of the inquiries available, but not the register of inquiries? CHECK IF YES
- Was there a situation where there was no register available, but instead, authorities would describe the inquiries? CHECK IF YES