



## Public Procurement Office needs a trustworthy Vice Chairman

Trust in independent public institutions is one of the basic preconditions for the stability of democracy. Public procurement is one of the areas in which it is essential to actively work on improving the trust of the business community as well as the general public. The Public Procurement Office (PPO) as an institution should, of course, be at the forefront of such activities.

In 2017, the wider business community was actively promoting a more transparent selection process of the PPO Chairman as well as members of the PPO Council. A coalition of business associations and chambers of commerce associated with the Rule of Law Initiative called for a selection process in which independence and expertise will be among the main factors when selecting representatives of these institutions. This public pressure resulted in generally better setting of the selection process in comparison with the past.

So far we can speak positively of the efforts of the new PPO Chairman M. Hlivák aiming to strengthen the expertise and improve reputation of the institution. Creation of the Institute for Public Procurement and active cooperation with relevant international organizations and academic and not-for-profit institutions are definitely positive steps. However, consistency of decisions of the PPO Council, which serves as the appellate body, is the key in order to improve credibility of the institution.

Therefore we believe the selection process of the new Vice Chairman of the Public Procurement Office should be as transparent as possible and expertise and independence of the candidates should be among the most important criteria for selection. As we are witnessing declining trust in public institutions, it is important today more than ever to eliminate political influence from the selection of the new PPO Vice Chair. This is even more important when taking into consideration the important role of the Vice Chair in the PPO Council. Otherwise there is a high risk that the recent positive steps from the current PPO leadership will fail to deliver positive changes.

We, business associations and chambers of commerce who care much about improving the credibility of the public procurement system in Slovakia, therefore jointly call for a selection process of the new PPO Vice Chair that will be based on the principles of **transparency, expertise and independence**.