OPENDATABOT – ACCESS TO OPEN DATA PROTECTS UKRAINIAN BUSINESSES AGAINST CORRUPTION

"*Your company's director was changed and you are no longer in control of it.*" Receiving such an unexpected message is feared by all business owners in Ukraine. It signals a probable *raider attack*. Raider attacks, which occur often in Ukraine, are illegal takeovers by (illegal, criminal entities) of a company or its corporate assets through a series of illegal transactions such as juridical manipulations or the counterfeiting of documents. Dnipro-based programmer Oleksiy Ivankin, his business partner and their company were also victims of an illegal *raiding attack.* However, after launching criminal proceedings against unknown perpetrators, Ivankin and his partner have never received any police resolve nor details about the investigation. With such criminal cases numbering in the hundreds each year and majority of them remaining 'unresolved' points to the rampant corruption in the Ukrainian court system with significant implications for the secure and sustainable development Ukraine's economy.

Although the Ministry of Justice introduced series of procedural improvements on how businesses are registered several years ago, these developments generated a schism in the legal system as notaries received the right to rewrite real estate, corporate rights as well as the entitled beneficiaries related to companies hence a window of opportunity for illegal *business raiding* activities.

To promote social innovation in Ukraine through the use of new information and communication technologies and e-democracy instr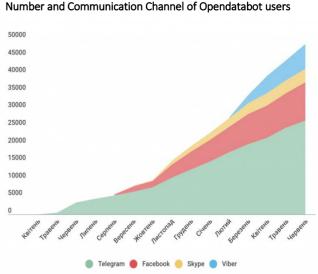uments, in 2016, the first nation-wide Ukrainian *EGAP Challenge* competition was launched by the Swiss-Ukrainian EGAP Program. Over 40 teams from different regions in Ukraine competed in the *EGAP Challenge*. One of the winning teams, the *908.vc* developed an innovative *Opendatabot* solution. *Opendatabot* enables Ukrainian companies to self-monitor business registration data and court registers in order to protect companies from fraudulent data manipulations and raider attacks. Applying a special software, the *Opendatabot* service aggregates information from public registers and

other data sources and sends 'update' messages or notifications via Telegram, Facebook, Skype or Viber messenger when fraudulent data manipulations occurred linked to a particular company.

In the context of the EGAP Challenge initiative, the project received technical and financial support from the EGAP Program as well as expert support from the State Agency for E-Governance, a partnership that has proven to be fruitful as the *908.vc* team is now successfully cooperating with the State Agency for E-governance on several open-data projects in Ukraine.

Impact. Today *Opendatabot* has over 70,000 users, mostly lawyers and entrepreneurs who monitor more than 40 thousand companies in Ukraine. The bot has also become a daily working instrument for Ukrainian lawyers. A year ago, the *Opendatabot solution* was only used by a small group of business owners – the 'early adopters', however, today *Opendatabot'*s 'professional subscriptions' have expanded exponentially. A professional account for 270 UAH (10 USD) per month provides daily monitoring of all existing company registration data and provides unlimited access to all of *Opendatabot'*s services.

Number and Communication Channel of Opendatabot users

Lawyers are among the most common subscribers and usually sign up for information related to court sessions and court decisions. Accountants are interested in changes in tax debt and companies' VAT status while police and tax officers are also using the service in their everyday work. In its blog and social networks, the project regularly publishes very accurate and sharp analyses about corruption and is one of the main resources for regional and national advocacy campaigns on anti-corruption. Overall, the main goal of the project and solution is to make open data accessible, simple to use and available to the greatest proportion of the public to curb corruption in Ukraine.