

## **Editorial: Transparency is the key to new governance**

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For many years, the obscurity was useful for the governments to derail the public assets, until provoking the current financial crisis. When the time comes to get back in track, it is up to all the public entities and the Board to assume and shape transparency, as an unavoidable duty.

Transparency is inherent to a healthy public administration. One of its main elements is the proactive publication, timely and approachable of the whole information needed to know and comprehend the government acts. There are also substantial elements, the opening for citizens to participate in the decision making process; and the accountability to the people regarding all the government actions.

Transparency prevents corruption, a knack that has stripped the Island of millions of dollars and important services. Access to public information, essential for transparency, is crucial for the economic and social development that urges. It is so important that it is distinguished as a fundamental human right.

As reported by the Global Open Data Index from 2016, published by the nonprofit entity Open Knowledge, Puerto Rico is in the 38th position among 94 participating countries. The result is not quite flattering. Its rates are low in indispensable lines for a healthy public administration. For instance, it totally violates the access to information regarding the government expenses. And it

also has a 45% of compliance in areas such as governmental budget and contracts.

These measurements match the repeated comments of prominent sectors of the population. There are gaps related to vital issues, such as the public debt and the restructuring process, among others.

The Board is not exempt of related questionings. Entities like the Open Spaces organization have denounced that this entity does not comply with PROMESA, that creates it, because its members do not disclose information related to their personal finances, which could help to clear doubts related to potential conflicts of interest.

In order to route a brand new governance, which has credibility in the eyes of the contributors and the markets, it is decisive that the ones who rule the finances of people honor the transparency principles and the citizens right to be informed. It is not a grant made by the state.

To achieve that, they count on a series of principles acknowledged in an international level. Among them, that the access to that information is enabled in an explicit way, detailed, updated and through different means. The new digital technologies make that task easier. Two examples are the platforms [data.pr.gov](http://data.pr.gov) and financial transparency ([transparenciainanciera.pr](http://transparenciainanciera.pr)), developed by the Puerto Rican Institute of Statistics.

Governor Ricardo Rosselló administration has taken steps towards attending to that matter. There is a bill in the Legislature that has recommendations done by organizations from different sectors with interest in the issue. However, it is needed to go further in the aspiration to have an open public management.

The Fiscal Oversight Board has also put in the right path some of its actions. It has enough space to open the curtains. Aligning its actions with its mission of ensuring the responsible management of the finances of people will legitimate its management facing sectors of the citizenship that still remain skeptical. After all, it is about the contributors money.

All the public agencies, including the entities emerged from PROMESA, have the legal and moral obligation of honoring the transparency principles. They have to produce uniform and precise reports about the governmental expenses, current laws, contracts and other indicators that are essential for an adequate planning and implementation of development plans.

Above all, they have an unprecedented chance to establish the foundations of an open and transparent government that will benefit all. That information is vital in order to stop this stagnated era and to make the evolution of Puerto Rico possible.