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Městská část Praha - Suchdol

Suchdolské nám. 3/734 Suchdol **165 00 Prague** Czech Republic

# Ref: North-Western Segment of Prague Ring Road - Sections 518 and 519 TEN-T and Part of the Trans-European Multimodal Corridor IV

Your Excellency,

As elected representatives of the thousands of citizens of northern districts of Prague and also on behalf of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) we are writing to you to request your assistance and involvement in the following issue.

The Czech Republic accepted to build a ring road around its capital city Prague as a part of the Trans-European Network (TEN-T) specified in the Amendment of the Decision No 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and Council on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network approved along with the Treaty of Accession to the European Union 2003.

The North-Western Segment of the Prague Ring Road (NWPRR) poses a serious problem. There have been two alternatives under consideration:

- Alternative "Ss" fully bypassing the densely inhabited part of the Prague agglomeration
- Alternative "J" passing through residential districts of Prague

The city of Prague and the Ministry of Transport are determined to build "J" alternative arguing that EU funds allocated to the TEN-T are permitted by EU to be utilized to build a motorway inside of the town. They ignore the fact that bringing long-distance freight traffic into the densely populated districts of the capital city of the Czech Republic would create a serious traffic bottleneck. They also maintain that the negative appraisals resulting from environment impact assessment (EIA) studies completed under the jurisdiction of the Czech Ministry for Environment can be easily ignored as they are not legally binding for the planning and building stages. They maintain that their selection of the far more expensive and therefore far less economical alternative "J" does not represent any obstacle for funding to be approved by the EU.

We believe that such an approach is not only against the requirements for TEN-T roads, as specified in the EU binding Decision No 1692/96/EC (amended in the EU Accession Treaty of 2003 which entered into force on 1 May 2004), but also against correct application of EU Directive no 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and No 85/337/EEC as amended by No 97/11/EC and No 2003/35/EC (EIA Directive). Further, "J" alternative does not comply with the Directive No 2004/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on minimum safety requirements for tunnels in the trans-European road network.

The White Paper COM(2001) 370 "European transport policy for 2010: time to decide" calls in many chapters again and again for removing "bottlenecks". In this case a new major bottleneck is being proposed to be built by the Czech authorities. The White Paper also points out that congestion in urban areas should be avoided and highlights noble goals to reduce the negative impact of urban traffic on human health. In this case a solution for a NEW part of TEN-T is being proposed in Prague goes contrary to all the key principles and identified best practices.

The 6th Environment Action Programme (6th EAP) called for the development of a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment with the objective of 'contributing to a better quality of life through an integrated approach concentrating on urban areas' and to contribute 'to a high level of quality of life and social well-being for citizens by providing an environment where the level of pollution does not give rise to harmful effects on human health and the environment and by encouraging sustainable urban development'. In Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament

COM(2005) 718 dated 11 Jan 2006 the Commission strongly recommends local authorities to develop and implement **Sustainable Urban Transport Plans** and argues for application of the best practices. The proposal to lead one new major TEN-T arteries in the heart of Europe into perimeter of the densely inhabited area of the capital city of Prague is, in our opinion, a direct violation of all best practices in landuse and traffic planning and it is not in conformity with the EU requested approach to improve the quality of life in cities with over 100.000 inhabitants by working for improvement with help of Sustainable Urban Transport Plans. The approach proposed in Prague by the Ministry of Transport would further increase in unnecessary way the air pollution inevitably coming from the long-distance traffic newly introduced by the TEN-T artery into the northern part of Prague instead taking measures requested by law and EU decisions to decrease the PM10 concentration. We believe that all this happening in Prague is a direct misuse of power of authorities in a country which should become democratic and environment friendly EU country.

We are writing to you because we have exhausted every possible means within the Czech Republic to resolve the issue.

We believe that the EU is interested in building a fully functional TEN-T network without bottlenecks and we also believe that the EU does not want to see any 2007–2013 EU funds diverted (or any European Investment Bank project misused).

- Therefore we would like to ask you to enter into consultations with the Government of the Czech Republic on this issue and use all your vehicles in seeking appropriate clarifications.
- Please acknowledge the receipt of this request and kindly advise us on the progress and outcomes of your consultations with the Government of the Czech Republic.

# IN SUPPORT OF YOUR CONSULTATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC WE ARE PROVIDING SOME **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**:

The Prague Ring Road (PRR) is not only of national, but also of major European significance. Its purpose is to interconnect a network of Czech motorways and high-quality roads in the Prague region and thus to protect over one million of Prague inhabitants from a heavy long-distance traffic as well as to avoid a serious bottleneck which would occur for the long-distance traffic if the urban traffic of the country capital would get mixed with the long-distance traffic.

The PRR is part of the trans-European multimodal corridor IV Berlin - Dresden - Prague - Bratislava - Györ - Arad - Craiova - Sofia - Plovdiv – Istanbul and of the trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). It was also previously identified as part of the backbone road network for the Czech Republic in the Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment (TINA).

The PRR construction is currently funded by the EU, the EIB, and the Czech Republic.

Some parts of the PRR have already been built or are under different stages of construction. The North-Western Segment of PRR (NWPRR) now comes into focus and the issue is very serious.

All the steps concerning the NWPRR taken by the local authorities so far make us believe that there is a danger of misuse of billions of Czech crowns (CZK) and possibly diversion hundreds of millions of Euros of EU funds, if expended towards an utterly improper transport solution, which would create an undesirable **traffic bottleneck** by mixing the long-distance trans-European transit traffic with the Prague urban traffic. All this is, in our opinion, in a clear conflict with the objectives and characteristics of the TEN-T, as specified by the EU documents, e.g. in the binding Decision No 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and Council on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport

network. We understand that the TEN-T, by definition, should allow a smooth long-distance transport and avoid any traffic bottlenecks on the TEN-T.

The building of "J" alternative of the NWPRR would result not only in entirely unnecessary and irreversible damage of the environment, but also in a serious damage to the health of local population, as well as in serious safety threats.

The main cause of the current unsatisfactory situation is, in our opinion, a long-term purposeful effort of the Ministry of Transport (MT) and of the Road and Motorway Directorate of the Czech Republic (RMD – "Ředitelství silnic a dálnic - ŘSD") to promote the "J" alternative of the NWPRR and to entirely ignore the other alternatives.

The disturbing activities of the MT, the RMD, and the City of Prague, going on since the second half of the 1990's, strikingly contrast with all the basic principles and the best practices of land-use planning. There is abundant evidence that the authorities are not informing the public in an honest way, that they utilize all kinds of brainwashing and manipulation schemes, obscure key facts, bluntly ignore objections and protests of citizens and their elected representatives, ignore valid arguments of local authorities, NGOs, and experts.

It is documented that views of expert institutions are ignored and/or twisted by the MT and the RMD, including the views of the top national institutions, such as the Ministry of Environment, the Czech Environmental Inspectorate, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Chief of the General Staff of Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, and the Czech Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The MT and the RMD repeatedly respond to all our letters and communications in a stereotyped manner to the effect that alternative "J" is the only possible alternative because it is included in the Land-use Plan of Prague. However, as early as in 1998 the RMD wilfully and without the support of the law ordered the preparation of the documentation for land-use decision for "J" alternative. The capital city of Prague readily put "J" alternative into its land-use plan in 1999, which means 3 years before the assessment of any alternatives in the frame of the EIA and without any SEA done.

The motivation for this action was obviously the fact that the highway bridge in "J" alternative is situated deeply within the territory of the city of Prague and therefore it can be used by the City of Prague instead of the currently absent intra-Prague connection of its two northern districts separated by the river Vltava.

It has to be understood that by supporting the alternative "J" the city of Prague can "save" on a separate bridge some CZK 2.5 billion (*EUR 85 mil.*). In such a situation the state or the EU will not only pay for this bridge, but the state or the EU will have to pay at least CZK 6 billion (*EUR 203 mil.*) more compared to the cost of the substantially cheaper alternative "Ss".

It is very likely that the MT and the RMD would like to see the project for the NWPRR to be co-financed from EU funds or from an EIB loan with support of the EU. Now, the MT and the RMD are in process of preparing the list of main projects for the 2007 - 2013 and the deadlines for approval of the Czech documents for this programmatic period is coming in these months. The list of projects and the way of their funding has been kept in extreme secrecy by the MT. Thus citizens and NGOs had no chance to comment on them. It is no doubt the MT is planning to request the EU authorities to co-finance the PRR project again in one or another way.

The MT was repeatedly reminded of the facts, that "J" alternative, when compared with "Ss" alternative, is an uneconomical, problematic and an environment unfriendly one. It was stressed to the MT that "J" alternative is obviously inconsistent with the several EU regulations. All this was ignored by the MT.

#### "J" alternative:

"J" alternative runs through a very broken terrain with complicated geological conditions and through densely populated residential areas of several northern districts of Prague. In other words, the NW segment of the PRR does not by-pass the city of Prague, but it cuts through it.

"J" alternative of the NWPRR entails the construction of 3 sophisticated tunnels and 3 major bridges, thus making the construction of the "J" expensive.

"J" alternative of the NWPRR is also crossing several natural sanctuaries protected by law.

It is worth mentioning that the "J" alternative of the NWPRR was included into the Prague Land-use Plan only in September 1999 and we believe that this process was flawed as it used a hole in the law and thus this Land-use Plan of the town of Prague was not made compatible with the valid the higher-order plan of the area – i.e. the Master Land-use Plan of the Prague Region. The issue was pointed out to authorities repeatedly, but without success.

#### "Ss" alternative:

The northern alternative "Ss" was introduced by NGOs in the frame of the EIA process. It leads predominantly through fields and meadows, in a plain terrain, some 3 km northward of "J" alternative and requires only one bridge. The alternative "Ss" is located farther from the densely populated districts and, at the same time, maintains a sufficient distance from all the villages in the area.

It is worth mentioning that the "Ss" alternative is situated not on the territory of the capital city of Prague but on the territory of the Central Bohemian District and, as such, it is included as one of the approved alternatives in the Master Land-use Plan of the Prague Region.

To the best of our knowledge, "Ss" alternative, recommended by the EIA, appears to be less expensive. The reason for lower costs is that the civil engineering works are substantially less complicated. Further, the operational maintenance costs are estimated to be lower. Based on an expert opinion the "Ss" alternative also appears to be safer for all traffic.

#### **SEA** missing, **EIA** ignored:

In regards to the environmental impact assessment it is a very annoying fact that the PRR has not yet been submitted to the SEA process and thus the alternatives of the NWPRR have not yet been evaluated from the point of view of their connection to the regional road network and their importance in terms of the TEN-T.

On the lower level of EIA, in April 2002, the Czech Ministry of Environment, in accordance with an applicable national law, issued its final, EIA-related statement, which stated:

"With regard to environmental impact, we recommend the implementation of the 'Ss' alternative, which we consider more appropriate in the long-term perspective. The 'J' alternative is an extreme solution, the implementation of which might only be accepted if the negotiations about the Area Development Plan for the larger area of the Prague Region ruled out the possibility of implementation of the 'Ss' alternative."

#### **Comparative analysis of alternatives refused:**

The MT and the RMD have repeatedly refused to undertake a thorough comparative analysis of the alternatives "Ss" and "J despite the fact that they had been appealed to undertake this analysis by the Senate's (the CR Parliament's Upper House) Committee for Regional Development and Environmental and Land Protection and by the deputies of the Subcommittee for Environmental Protection of the CR Parliament's Lower House. We are convinced that the demonstrated practices of the MT and the RMD present a serious obstacle in identification of the optimal alternative for the NWPRR.

## **Supreme Audit Office:**

It is worth mentioning that the above described approach of the MT and the RMD was sharply criticized by the Supreme Audit Office (SAO - "Nejvyšší kontrolní úřad" – "NKÚ") in their Audit Report No. 04/26 of May 2005. It states:

"... It needs to be stated that the comparison of the alternatives "J" and "Ss", from the economical point of view, was carried out in March 2003. The results of the social–economic assessments were twisted in favour of "J" alternative, in particular, by not including the proper data about traffic intensities and by not including all relevant costs for "J" alternative.

It is also worth mentioning that in a letter from a Member of the Advisory Board of SAO to Mayor of the Municipal District Prague-Suchdol dated 31 August 2005 it is stated:

"... The substance of the SAO findings in the given case is that the alternative of the NWPRR prepared by the RMD is not based on the results of the social-economic assessments of possible solution alternatives. The RMD should prove that they have selected the optimal alternative and that they have tried to include it into the respective land-use plans. In this case, as also stated in the final report, this did not happen. In 1998, one year before the approval of the land-use plan, the RMD ordered the preparation of the documentation for land-use decision for "J" alternative only, although there were other alternatives available at that time."

#### **Ombudsman:**

We have repeatedly approached the Ombudsman of the Czech Republic in this matter. In his last written response of 19 October 2005 he states:

"...my observations made during investigations of large investment projects provide evidence of problematic practices of the state administration and, to a certain extent, of the chaos, which prevails in the approval procedures. I concluded that such findings are a signal for me that is also related to the present plans and practices of authorities of the state administration in the matter of the NWPRR. In particular, I found out that there may be very serious impacts caused by inconsistencies in the preparation of factual investment projects, such as the drawing out of administrative procedures (in which the public represented by NGOs take advantage of all legal options) or the possibilities of financing projects from the European cohesion funds or the funds of the EIB (requirements of transparency of all procedures in the selection and approval of infrastructure projects). In that connection I have expressed my fears that this very situation may happen in the case of NWPRR."

#### **Cost of the alternatives:**

In order to illustrate the practices of the MT and the RMD with respect to social effectiveness and financial costs a graph showing the development of the cost estimates for the southern alternative "J" of the NWPRR for the period 1998 until now (based on information provided by the MT and the RMD) is attached. The increase of the initial estimate of CZK 4.6 billion (*EUR 156 mil.*) to today's estimate of CZK 28 billion (*EUR 950 mil.*) is almost unbelievable. Still possibly not all costs are transparently included for "J" alternative.

The costs of "Ss" alternative, as communicated by the RMD, should be around CZK 21.8 billion (*EUR 740 mil.*). This, however, also includes the cost of additional local connection between the northern districts of Prague by building a new additional local bridge and additional connecting roads (so called alternative "Ssb").

#### Non-compliance with EU Directive No 2004/54/EC:

We believe that "J" alternative does not also comply with Directive No 2004/54/EC of the European Parliament and Council "Minimum safety requirements for tunnels in the trans-European Road network". This finding is based on the expert evaluation by Prof. Lehovec (Czech Technical University (CTU), Prague, School of Civil Engineering) named "Evaluation of the compliance of the designed objects with the valid legislation, technical regulations and standards incl. consistency with the EU" and published in December 2004.

Regarding the traffic arrangement for the "J" alternative in Prague-Suchdol it states:

"... the grouping of two-level tunnels and the bridge is from the operational and users' points of view very inappropriate (for a distance of 3,2 km it is not possible to change opposing lanes)..."

The evaluation by Prof. Lehovec also brought attention to other inconsistencies in relation to EU Directive No 2004/54/EC, such as absence of easy-access escape areas from tunnels and from the double-levelled bridge, bi-directional traffic in the single-tube access tunnel, unsatisfactory fire resistance of the proposed steel bridge structure, etc..

#### Other risks and environmental loads:

Another risk factor is a possible mistaking of the "J" alternative of the NWPRR for the runway of the nearby Prague International Airport. This risk was recognized by local authorities as a serious one. In order to lower this risk, "J" alternative is led through some 6 km long deep earth cutting, the result of which would be a huge amount of extracted soil exceeding 4 mil. m<sup>3</sup>. This would result in an unbelievable number of approximately 2 x 500 000 heavy truck transports through the densely inhabited northern districts of Prague.

# Non-compliance with EU Decision No 1692/96/EC:

The key drawback of the more expensive alternative "J" is the very undesirable mixing of transit and urban traffic, creating a serious traffic bottleneck not only for long-distance freight and other long-distance traffic, but also for the urban traffic. It is obvious that the basic requirements of the Decision No 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and Council , considered from the point of view of smooth flow of long-distance traffic and operational safety, will not be met.

#### Submission of incomplete documentation by the RMD:

After many delays, the RMD initiated, in the very last days of 2005, a formal process to obtain the respective land-use decision for the so-called Sections 518 and 519 of the NWPRR (J alternative). In spite of the fact that the land-use documentation submitted in December 2005 has been under preparation for many years since 1998, the authority had to interrupt the process, after just a few days, for the period of 6 and 12 months respectively, claiming the submitted documentation insufficient and incomplete.

This not only documents the flaws in the process, but first and foremost this trick of early submission of incomplete documentation was utilized by the RMD to take advantage of the laws of 2005 (changed in 2006) to get rid of "Ss" alternative and to enforce the implementation of "J" alternative, claiming this as the only possible one, regardless of the issue of elevated costs, documented engineering difficulties, operational safety problems and negative impacts on the environment.

It can be assumed that this trick is also expected to be used in the context of request for EU funding claiming that EIA process is completed and the project is ripe for EU and/or EIB funding.

To conclude, we would like to stress that the process of the project preparation and the decision making process has been conducted with

- no respect for basic principles of transparency and citizen rights,
- ignoring the accepted practices for the land-use planning,
- ignoring SEA and EIA procedures,
- demonstrating non-economical behaviour with regard to expending the public funds and, above all.
- demonstrating an irresponsible approach to the healthy environment of tens of thousands of local people.

### It is documented that

- relevant laws and regulations have been circumvented and/or violated,
- principles of good business practices ignored,
- expert opinions and documented truth were strongly twisted and/or ignored, obviously under pressure from some political parties or groupings, and
- economical studies have not been respected and/or have been manipulated.

Also it is good to refer to the Final Report "Assessment of the contribution of the TEN-T and other transport policy measures to the midterm implementation of the White Paper on the European Transport Policy for 2010" completed in October 2005. It states:

"The White Paper argues that unless infrastructure is interconnected and free of bottlenecks, to allow the physical movement of goods and persons, the internal market and the territorial cohesion of the Union will not be fully realised. Even though the European Union has adopted an ambitious policy on the trans-European network a number of bottlenecks remain on the main international routes. Therefore, the White Paper aims to unblock the major routes ..."

In the case of the NWPRR just a new bottleneck in the very heart of Europe is being proposed.

We are ready to provide any additional documents and/or any further information you might need. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you in advance for your support and for your assistance in promoting open and democratic approaches in meeting the EU standards.

Yours faithfully, Municipal District Prague-Suchdol Václav Čížek, Mayor Municipal District Prague-Lysolaje Marcela Jandová, Mayor Municipal District Prague-Dolní Chabry Jaroslava Plevová, Mayor Civic associations: **EKOFORUM** PŘISO - Občanské sdružení za přijatelné řešení silničního okruhu na severozápadě Prahy Společnost Šáreckého údolí / Šárecké Valley) SPOLECHOST

Nad Drahaňským údolí (Drahaňské Valley)

Větrolam (Windbreak)

Francos

#### **Attachments:**

#### economy - documents, studies, analyses:

- diagram and graph showing the costs of the sections 518, 519 in the variant "J" 1998 2005
- diagram and graph of the costs of the sections 518,519 in the variant "Ss" or "Ssb.
- Before investment study Pragoprojekt, joint-stock company 05/2000
- letter from RMD to MT 29/11/2002 No.: 27184/02-21330
- Economic feasibility study Pragoprojekt, joint-stock company 03/2003
- Rejection of the Economic feasibility study letter from MDP Suchdol to RMD 07/2004
- Decision No. 36 of The Committee for regional development, public administration and environment, 9 of september 2003, Senate
- Decision No. 20 of the Subcommittee for the environmental and landscape protection, 25 of September 2003, Chamber of deputies
- Estimation of costs for the sections 518, 519, "J" and "Ss" SUDOP Prague, joint-stock company. 10/2004
- Economic evaluation of the construction sections 518, 519 of PRR Babtie Ltd. 11/2004
- Bulletin of SAO part 2/2005 Auditing report on the auditing task No. 04/26 03/2005
- letter from SAO (Ing. Adámek) to the mayor of MDP Suchdol No. 04/26-30/99/05 08/2005
- letter from MT (Vice-minister Kubínek) to the mayor of MDP Suchdol No. 22/2005-120-INF/2 25.10.2005
- letter from RMD (Ing. Laušman) to the mayor of MDP Suchdol No. 14311/21/05-21013 25.11.2005

#### maps, route schemes, technical description of the routes

- orthophotographs of the routes "J" and "Ss"
- schemes of the routes "J" and "Ss"
- map of the variants of PRR northwestern segment
- map of the routes "J" mixing of long-distance trans-European transit traffic and Prague urban traffic
- map of the routes "Ss" and "Ssb" separate river crossing for Prague urban traffic and trans-European transit traffic and transport

#### safety - analyses, studies:

- Evaluation Prague Ring Road section 518 prof. Lehovec CTU 12/2004
- Evaluation Prague Ring Road section 519 prof. Lehovec CTU 12/2004
- Expert opinion regarding the problem of safety and risk analysis of the project of PRR prof. Milík Tichý 04/2005
- line scheme of a part of the sections 518 and 519 which constitutes a integral unit from the point of view of operational safety
- Safety study and risk analysis CityPlan Ltd. 09/2005 (parts)
- Opinion of the Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Czech republic Chief General Lieutenant Ing. Šedivý 12/2001
- Opinion regarding the safety of the levelled bridge crossing Vltava Ing. Tvrzník, CSc. 02/2005
- reaction of the authors of the levelled bridge across Vltava project prof. Studnička, Doc. Rotter 05/2005
- Letter to the mayor of MDP Suchdol Ing. Böhm State Office for Nuclear Safety, No. 20608/3, 2/2005 9/2005
- map of the protected area of the Nuclear research institute in Rež
- river crossing alternative "Ss"
- Security risks NWPRR 03/2006

# ecology - opinions of the state authorities

- EIA based Final Statement of the Ministry of Environment of 30.4.2002 No. NM700/1327/2020/OPVŽP/02 e.o.
- Statement of the Ministry of Environment regarding the draft conception of the Superior Zoning plan of the Prague region of 27.5.2002 No. 710b/OPVŽP/02MS (parts)
- Opinion on EIA documentation Sanitation officer of the Middle Bohemia District No.3924-215/00/1287 02/2001
- Opinion on EIA documentation Czech Inspection of Environment No. 500/3007/50310/00 01/2001
- Opinion on EIA documentation Dept. of environment of the Prague Magistrate No. 082378/OŽP/VI/2000/2001-01/2001
- Opinion on EIA documentation Ministry of Environment Dept. of air protection No.727/740/01 -12.3.2001
- letter from the Czech Inspection of Environment to RMD inconsistency between the route "J" in the EIA documentation and the route "J" in the documentation for zoning decision No. č.j.1/OP/8346/04/Kuf-31.5.010005

#### others - letters, ....

- Government decision No. 631/1993
- Architectonic competition of tenders for a "Bridge over Vltava", final memorandum RMD 02/1999
- Public Announcement of the competition for the Zoning Decision Documentation Commercial Bulletin 05/1998
- letter from RMD (Ing. Lichnovský) to the mayor of MDP Suchdol No. 22675/2003-21013
  9.10.2003 The best offer Pragoprojekt, joint-stock company and PUDIS Prague, joint-stock company
- Bridge over Vltava Architectonic competition and the Zoning Decision Documentation

#### **Index to abbreviations:**

CTU - Czech technical university

CZK - Czech crowns

EIA - environment impact assessment EIB - the European Investment Bank MDP - Municipal District Prague

MT - Ministry of Transport Czech Republic

NWRPP - North-Western Segment of the Prague Ring Road

PRR - the Prague Ring Road

*RMD* - the Road and Motorway Directorate of the Czech Republic

SAO - Supreme Audit Office

SEA - strategic environment assessment TEN-T - the trans-European Transport Network TINA - Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment

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- o.s. PŘISO, CSc., Suchdolská 4, 160 00 Praha 6 -Sedlec
- o.s. Společnost Šáreckého údolí, V Šáreckém údolí 98, 160 00 Praha 6
- o.s. Větrolam, K Mlýnu 16, 181 00 Praha 8
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