Open government in Uruguay
Strengthening dialogue to make up for institutional challenges

Aránzazu Guillán Montero

Open government in Uruguay
Strengthening dialogue to make up for institutional challenges

Aránzazu Guillán Montero
Senior Advisor
U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre

Anti-
Corruption
Resource
Centre
www.U4.no

Open
Government
Partnership

Contents

Abstract

In Uruguay, innovative practices of consultation and dialogue between government and civil society
have enlarged the scope of open government reforms. All the actors involved agree on the priority of
access to information commitments as part of the action plans. Strong political support, organizational
capacities of public institutions, the leading role of the coordinating agency, and the innovative
formulation of the second action plan have facilitated the implementation of reforms. However, the open
government commitments have yet failed to articulate an integral transparency policy that addresses
the constraints of the existing access to information law. These limitations result from the complex
institutional framework of transparency in Uruguay, resource constraints, and the limits of civil society
to engage with the government in a balanced partnership.

Keywords: Uruguay; open government; access to information; transparency; OGP.

Acknowledgments

1. Uruguay and the Open Government Partnership

Uruguay was part of the second cohort of 39 countries that joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2011.[1] Joining OGP was a way to complement Uruguay's national strategy of electronic government (e-government).The administration of President José Mujica (2010-2015) saw the OGP initiative as closely aligned with its digital agenda for the period 2011-2015,[2] which aimed to integrate the country into a knowledge-based society and enhance the social appropriation of public information (Porrúa 2013).
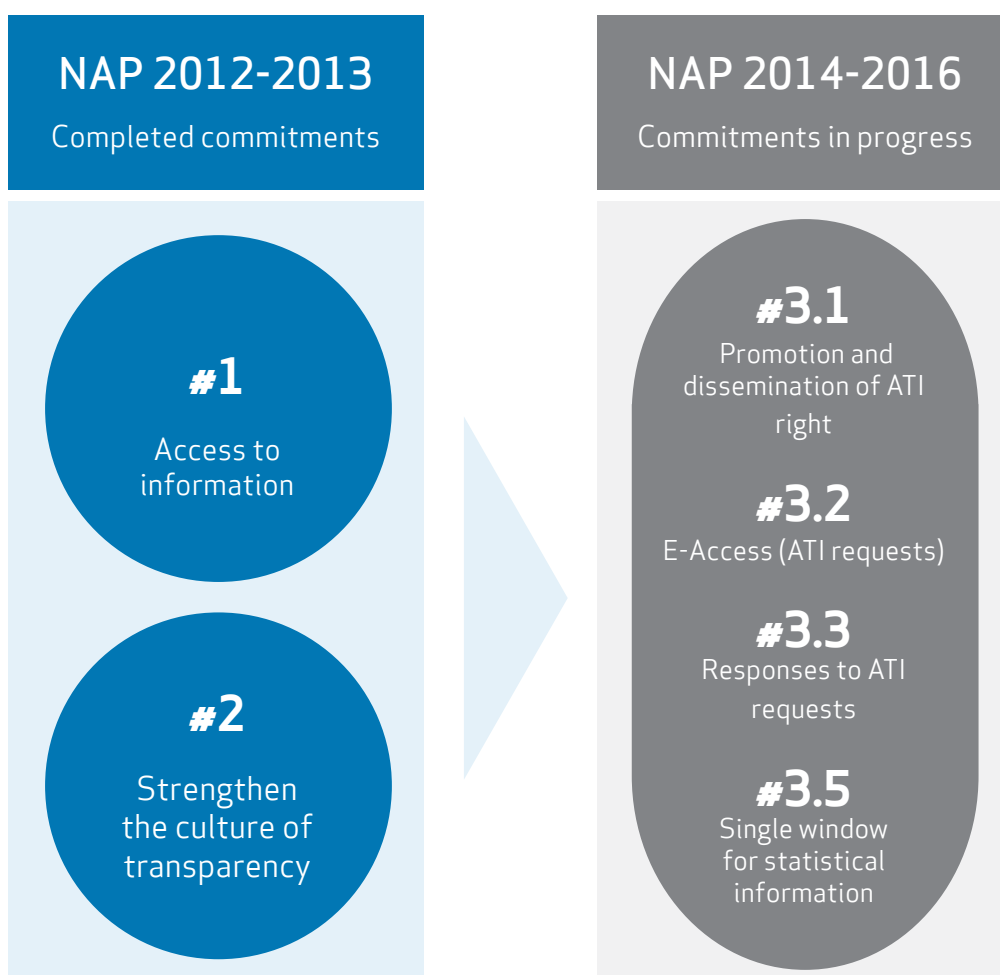
The Agency for E-Government and Information Society (Agencia para el Desarrollo del Gobierno de Gestión Electrónica y la Sociedad de la Información y del Conocimiento, AGESIC), an implementing unit of the Presidency, is responsible for coordinating OGP in Uruguay. An OGP Working Group worked in the development of the first national action plan (NAP). The group included representatives from the Planning and Budgeting Office (OPP), the Ministry of Economic and Financial Affairs (MEF), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRREE), the National Statistics Bureau (INE), the Public Information Access Unit (UAIP), and AGESIC. From civil society, only a representative from the Center for Archives and Access to Public Information (CAinfo) was invited to participate in the process. This first NAP (2012-13) had a strong government drive and limited civil society participation. Learning from this initial experience, Uruguay designed and implemented an innovative consultation process with deep civil society involvement for the development of the second NAP (2014-2016), which is currently under implementation.

Uruguay is a strong implementer of open government reforms. 15 out of 18 of its first NAP's commitments were completed or showed substantial implementation according to the 2012-13 IRM report. The implementation of the second NAP is progressing well, although there have been some implementation delays due to the change in administration in early 2015. The innovative consultation mechanism to define the second NAP created an institutionalized space for dialogue between government and civil society, which broadened the scope and enhanced the legitimacy of the commitments adopted.

Despite good implementation, the access to information (ATI) commitments have not reverted the limitations of the existing access to information law. This situation is a result of a complex institutional framework, the lack of a clear access to information champion, resource constraints, and limited civil society capacity to engage in a balanced partnership with the government. The Uruguayan case provides lessons for improving the adoption of OGP commitments, as well as for understanding the interaction between the local context and the open government reforms' design and implementation at the national level.

---

1   Uruguay fulfilled all requirements for joining OGP and received a score of 10 points over 12 on the indicators of fiscal transparency.

2   http://uruguaydigital.gub.uy/wps/wcm/connect/urudigital/
61332742-beaf-4fe8-b9e3-fcb7f4b30b07/ADU+III+2011-2015.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Figure 1. Sequencing NAPs in Uruguay – Selected commitments

Following this introduction, section 2 introduces the commitments selected for analysis. Section 3 analyzes the process that led to the adoption of these commitments, considering the features of the consultation process and the role of different actors. Section 4 explores the emerging results of these reforms and reflects on the challenges for assessing their impact. The analysis of the implementation process is the focus of Section 5, which highlights several conducive factors and constraints in the implementation. The closing section presents the main lessons of the Uruguayan case.

2. Prioritizing access to information for good governance and social development

Like other countries in the region, Uruguay has focused on transparency policies as the cornerstone of open government reforms (OECD 2014). The 2012-13 NAP placed a strong emphasis on transparency and access to information (11 of 18 commitments), including the use of technology for transparency (12 out of 18 commitments). Under the second NAP, transparency and e-government continue to be core themes, although there is a stronger emphasis on citizen participation. The second NAP contains eight commitments that encompass 40 different initiatives, which are relevant to access to information (4), records management (3), open data (5), e-government (22), citizen participation (8), public procurement (2), service delivery (4), and capacity building (12).[3] Civil society participation contributed to a broader scope in the distribution of commitments, as is borne out by Table 1.

Table 1. Number of commitments / initiatives by thematic area

Area / Theme	NAP 2012-13 18 co ents	NAP 2014-16 8 commitments (40 initiatives)
ATI / Transparency	11	4
Records management	-	3
Participation	-	8
Procurement	-	2
E-government	12	22
Open data	-	5
Service delivery	-	4
Capacity building	-	12

* Each commitment / initiative may be relevant to more than one theme.

The emphasis in these commitments reflects the priority given to information, transparency and e-government in the country. Uruguay's digital agenda (undertaken since the early 2000s) took off during the administration of President Tabaré Vázquez (2005-2010) with the creation of AGESIC (2007) and the approval of the first Digital Agenda 2008-10 (currently in its second version). The government established AGESIC to promote the use of information and communication technologies by public institutions, citizens and the private sector.[4] Uruguay's digital agenda, which soon gained international visibility, identify access to technology, information, and improving electronic services to citizens as critical factors for improving good governance and promoting social development.[5] Uruguay sees

---

3   Based on OGP commitments database beta.

4   Law 18.172.

5   These agendas have helped establish key building blocks of the infrastructure and operational initiatives required for e-government (Porrúa 2013).

transparency as an essential value for enhancing government efficiency and effectiveness, but also for improving citizens' access to the state and public accountability (Decree 450/009).[6]

In order to promote progress towards an information-based society, Uruguay enacted an access to information law in 2008 (Law 18.381). The Access to Information Unit (UAIP) is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the law and for promoting ATI. It is not an autonomous oversight body but a de-concentrated unit within AGESIC. The law acknowledges the right to access information held by state bodies and ensures its protection and effective implementation.[7] While some experts consider the scope of the law to be satisfactory,[8] they also acknowledge significant limitations in the ATI legislation, including the lack of an independent oversight body and the limited appeal mechanisms for denials of information (the country scores 91 over 150 in the right to information rating).[9] Moreover, there have been some attempts to restrict the scope of the ATI law.[10]

In Uruguay, there is an increasing demand for transparency and information mechanisms to acquire a stronger citizen focus, putting technology at the service of the public.[11] Building on a national tradition of participatory decision-making, citizens have opportunities and institutional channels to voice their demands and participate (there are approximately 40 spaces for participation in policy-making). However, these channels and spaces for participation are not always effective. For example, the country shows limited levels of actual citizen participation for the Latin American context (it scored around 9% participation in municipal meetings in 2012).[12] Organized civil society faces the challenge of effectively mobilizing citizens to participate in these open spaces.[13] This limited participation results from historical legacies related to the authoritarian regime (1973-1985), political parties' and unions' role as the main channels for citizen participation, and civil society's constraints in terms of capacity and access to funding.[14]

This case study analyses a selection of OGP commitments in the area of access to public information and transparency. It examines the adoption and implementation of two commitments from the first NAP, which have been followed-up in the second NAP by one related commitment (See Figure 1 and Table

---

6   Cf. http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/v/297/1/agesic/decreto-n%C2%B0-450_009 -de-28-de-setiembre-de-2009.html

7   Cf. http://presidencia.gub.uy/transparencia

8   However, Uruguayan civil society has some concerns about the scope of the law. Currently, there is a debate on the need to include state owned companies among the subjects obligated. I want to thank a peer reviewer for this observation.

9   For example, the scope of the law scores 28 over 30, while the appeals only score 11 over 30. Cf. http://www. rti-rating.org/view_country?country_name=Uruguay.

10   On the attempt to expand the exemptions to the law, see for example http://www.freedominfo.org/2013/09/ uruguay-proposals-on-foi-law-considered-regressive/.

11   In May 2011, at an international e-government event, President Mujica emphasized the principle of putting ICTs at the service of citizens and humanizing technology oriented societies (Porrúa 2013).

12   Barómetro de las Americas LAPOP - Respondents were asked if they had attended a town meeting, a munic-ipal council meeting, or another meeting called by the local government during the previous 12 months.

13   Interviews conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29 and 30, 2015).

14   Interviews conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29 and 30, 2015).

2). The first NAP's Commitments #1 (Access to public information) and #2 (Strengthen the culture of transparency) are complemented with a series of activities under commitment #3 in the second NAP aimed at strengthening access to information and transparency in public institutions. The Central Bank (BCU), the UAIP and AGESIC are the institutions leading the implementation of these commitments.

Table 2. Uruguay's selected commitments on transparency and access to information

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN 2012-13							
Commitment	**Lead Institution**	**Theme**	**Specificity**	**Potential Impact**	**Actual Completion**	**On Schedule**	**Starred**
1. Access to public information: national campaign of public awareness and UAIP's website improvement.	UAIP	Access to information Capacity building	Medium	Moderate	Complete	On schedule	Yes
2. Strengthen the culture of transparency: e-learning training on the ATI law.	UAIP. Support: CAinfo*	Access to information Capacity building	Low	Moderate	Substantial	Behind schedule	Yes

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN 2014-16		
Commitment 3 – Promotion of ATI right	**Lead Institution**	**Theme**
3.1. Promotion and dissemination of the ATI right	UAIP	• Participation • Access to information • Legislation/regulation
3.2. e-Access: National system of ATI requests	UAIP	• Access to information • E-government
3.3. Responses to ATI requests	BCU	• Access to information • E-government
3.5. Single window to access state statistical information	AGESIC	• E-government • Public service delivery

*CAinfo (as a member of the honorary advisory council for the access to information law).
Source: Author based on Uruguay (2012 & 2014).

3. From limited citizen input to innovative dialogue in the adoption of OGP commitments

Two very different processes led to the adoption of transparency and public information commitments in Uruguay's open government action plans. AGESIC headed the development of the first NAP with limited inputs from civil society. The process, however, changed radically for the second NAP, which relied on an innovative process of dialogue between government and civil society. The inclusion of transparency and public information commitments indicates the existence of consensus on these issues as important priorities for open government reforms in the country.

Limited citizen input in the development of the first NAP

In November 2011, Uruguay established an OGP working group to develop the first NAP.[15] The country submitted the plan during the First OGP Global Meeting in Brazil (April 17-18 2012). This NAP was in effect between July 2012 and the end of June 2013. As the main coordinating body of OGP in the country, AGESIC led the development of the first action plan through the working group. Since the group had invited only one civil society representative (CAinfo), which was designated by the government, the development of the NAP received limited input from civil society and other actors (such as the private sector) and focused mainly on government initiatives that were already part of the digital agenda. Ultimately, the adopted NAP followed closely the content of the government's agenda.

Like other countries, Uruguay experienced significant time pressure to develop the first NAP, which affected the quality of the consultation process. Formally, the draft NAP was submitted to an online one-week consultation process through AGESIC website (March 12-19, 2012). However, limited dissemination of the consultation process resulted in the reception of only 32 proposals, most of which were not relevant to the NAP. Moreover, participants in the consultation process did not receive any feedback about whether the working group adopted their proposals (Bettoni et al 2014, 2).

Civil society highlighted the limits of the consultation process in terms of scope as well as of the incorporation of substantive contributions. Although CAinfo presented specific proposals to widen the representation of civil society, strengthen citizen participation and enhance OGP values, the NAP did not incorporate any of these proposals (Bettoni et al 2014, 12).

Such a consultation process reduced the potential of the NAP and reinforced the inclusion of pre-existing initiatives, discouraging the introduction of more innovative participatory commitments (Bettoni et al 2014, 13). For example, UAIP's membership on the working group facilitated the adoption of already existing ATI and transparency initiatives. For the UAIP, the commitments strengthened the implementation of ATI in Uruguay while also enhancing its institutional role.[16]

Despite these limitations, the development of the first NAP was a major learning process for Uruguay. One of the turning points was the articulation of civil society organizations (CSOs) into a network (the Open Government Network). The network sought to widen civil society's representation and to engage the government collectively, which would increase the legitimacy of OGP processes (Scrollini

---

15   Resolución Presidencia 1186 (Nov. 22, 2011). http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/file/2048/1/resolucion_presidencia_gobierno_abierto.pdf
16   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 28, 2015).

and Durand-Ochoa 2015). In addition, the IRM Report, which explicitly reflected on the limitations of the first consultation process, provided important inputs for changing the consultation strategy in the development of the second NAP.

Table 3. OGP consultation in Uruguay: An innovative learning process

First consultation	Second consultation

• Government driven --strong role of AGESIC through the working group.
 	
• Based on ongoing government initiatives and with limited citizen focus.
 	
• Limited consultation and participation: online one-week consultation -- 32 proposals, most not relevant to OGP.
 	
• Only 1 CSO represented in the working group.
	• Innovative methodology for consultation.
	
	• Guidelines and information for public agencies to submit initial proposals.
	
	• Third party international observer (UNESCO).
	
	• Wider participation:
	
	   • Expanded composition of working group – academia, local government, 2 CSOs.
	
	   • Open government network articulated CSO participation in OGP processes.
	
	   • Widely disseminated, thematically organized online consultation.
	
	   • Three roundtables (mesas de diálogo) as externally facilitated institutionalized spaces for engagement and inputs from civil society.
	
	   • All proposals considered and classified as: commitments (relevant and feasible), agreements (relevant but unclear leadership, goal or impact), and proposals (of interest but no consensus on their relevance or implementation criteria).

Innovative consultation and dialogue processes in the development of the second NAP

To address the limitations of the first NAP, AGESIC undertook several initiatives for improving the consultation process. These included:

- enlarging the OGP working group,

- enhancing the collaboration with public agencies for the identification of proposals,

- improving the public consultation for the submission and review of proposals, and

- widening the consultation with civil society through an innovative participatory methodology.

The membership of the initial working group expanded to include one representative from academia, one representative from a local government association (Congreso de Intendentes Departamentales, the Uruguayan association of majors), and two representatives from civil society. The government also

granted civil society autonomy to select their own representatives (Resolution 36/2013).[17] As a result, the Open Government Network, which brings together 14 CSOs, played an important role articulating civil society efforts in the process.

Moreover, the government invited UNESCO to act as an independent international observer.[18] UNESCO facilitated the dialogue between different actors, shared international good practices for the development of the action plan (e.g., regarding criteria for the inclusion of proposals), and assisted the working group in addressing challenges in the development of the NAP in order to make it more feasible. It also provided a neutral institutional space for convening meetings.[19]

Better coordination with public agencies in the identification of proposals also helped improve the NAP's formulation. AGESIC shared information with the agencies about OGP and about the type of proposals that they could submit. Then, it sent a formal invitation to encourage them to submit proposals, including specific guidelines and supporting documentation. Finally, AGESIC provided comments to help improve those proposals (NAP 2014-16).

A two-month online public consultation (through AGESIC's website) provided citizens with the opportunity to give feedback on the pre-selected initiatives and on the NAP's final draft.[20] AGESIC disseminated widely the public consultation through institutional websites, media, workshops and a direct mail campaign. The agency structured the online consultation thematically, around specific pre-selected projects. The projects received 34 comments, although only four of them included specific recommendations for improving the proposals. The online consultation for the draft NAP did not receive any comments (NAP 2014-16, 15).

The most innovative aspect of the consultation process was the implementation of a new methodology for selecting proposals in collaboration with civil society (including the private sector and academia). Three roundtables (mesas de diálogo)[21] provided civil society with an institutionalized space to advocate for specific commitments and to provide inputs to the elaboration of the NAP.[22] An external facilitator helped ensure a safe space for constructive engagement and dialogue between civil society and government institutions.[23] The roundtables allowed civil society to suggest proposals that had not been included among the pre-selected government projects.

---

17   Initially the government had appointed a second CSO (ANONG) to join the working group together with CAinfo.

18   Resolución Consejo Directivo Honorario de AGESIC, Resolución Nº 022/013.

19   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

20   From October 14 to December 15. Results available at http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/file/3801/1/informe_consulta_publica.pdf.

21   One roundtable focused on access to information and the second one on electronic government. See AGESIC n.d.-e.

22   Inputs to the NAP were received from 13 CSOs, 1 private sector association, and 4 representatives from academia, in addition to 27 public institutions. Cf. AGESIC's open government webpage (in Spanish) at: http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/v/3813/1/agesic/gobierno-abierto.html?idPadre=3930.

23   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 27, 2015).

Civil society and the government institutions sustained a fluid dialogue and adopted the final commitments by consensus.[24] The criteria to select proposals as OGP commitments included the existence of real implementation leadership by public entities, and the feasibility and potential impact of the initiatives. The non-adopted proposals were included in a back-up list for follow up action. Part of the proposals were classified as "agreements," instead of commitments, because there was consensus about their relevance but they had failed to fulfill some of the criteria (e.g., specific and measurable goals). The working group is responsible for following up on these ideas and eventually include them in a revised NAP or in future action plans. Finally, another group of proposals was included in a last list for proposals that did not fulfill the criteria but were interesting initiatives to explore in the future.[25]

Civil society presented 27 proposals at the roundtable on access to information (38 people participated at the roundtable, including representatives from 11 CSOs and academia). 11 proposals were adopted as specific goals under six OGP commitments, one was agreed on, and 15 remained as proposals for future consideration (NAP 2014-16, 18). (See Table 4). For example, a civil society suggestion presented by CAinfo in the roundtables was included in the NAP as commitment #3.5 (cf. Table 1).[26]

Table 4. Civil society proposals in the development of the second NAP

Civil society proposals	First roundtable	Second roundtable
Adopted in NAP	11 (under six commitments)	14
Agreements	1	4
Proposals	15	17
Under evaluation	0	1
Total	27	36

(*) 10 of the 40 commitments in the NAP integrate totally or partially 25 proposals from civil society.

(**) The third roundtable was delayed and took place after the fieldwork and during the implementation of the NAP

Source: Author based on Uruguay (2014)

The feedback from monitoring the implementation of the first NAP and the results of the independent assessment mechanism also contributed to the formulation of the second NAP. The IRM showed that key stakeholder priorities for the second NAP included ATI and transparency reforms, in particular specific goals for improving the implementation of the law (Bettoni et al. 2014, 7). Moreover, the assessment revealed specific constraints in the first NAP. For commitment #2, concerned with fostering a culture of transparency, the IRM noted that future actions should foster the proactive publication of information by

---

24   For example, the participants never had to submit a proposal to vote on whether it was included into the NAP. Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 28, 2015).

25   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 27, 2015).

26   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

state institutions. Similarly, regarding commitment #1, the independent assessment of the IRM Report 2012-13 (Bettoni et al. 2014) indicated that:

> Although progress was made in terms of public officials' knowledge of the law, the result for citizens is yet unknown. Wider knowledge of the law will make it possible to consolidate a new paradigm that considers public information a citizen's asset. The institutions' principal challenge is to rethink the information from a citizen approach, publicizing information of special interest to the population in accessible, reusable formats.

Commitment #3 responded to these findings and aimed to enhance the citizens' use of ATI legislation. For example, activity 3.1 seeks to raise citizen awareness about this right by providing specific examples of how ATI is instrumental for ensuring other fundamental rights, such as health or housing.[27] Activities 3.2 and 3.5 would eventually transform the way citizens may access to information in Uruguay by providing an integrated system to submit ATI requests and an integrated portal to access all statistical information held by state institutions. UAIP's clear interest in their implementation and its leadership, as well as civil society's inputs and support, made these commitments highly feasible.

Uruguay's civil society agrees on the need of strengthening ATI implementation. However, despite increased collaboration, civil society does not see the commitments as necessarily articulating a long-term agenda that addresses the main challenges of ATI implementation and that contributes to change the behavior of public officials and citizens in relation to public information.[28]

Building on lessons learned from the first NAP, Uruguay undertook an innovative consultation process for the formulation of the second NAP. The process allowed the adoption of more innovative commitments by providing an institutionalized space for civil society to suggest and include specific commitments, beyond government proposals. For the transparency and ATI commitments, this consultation process resulted in commitments and activities that aim to strengthen the implementation of ATI legislation in an integral way. However, how effectively these ambitious commitments translate into reforms that transform the way the state relates to its citizens depends on the success of the implementation process.

---

27   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015).
28   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 28, 2015).

4. Is OGP contributing to improve transparency in Uruguay? Understanding emerging results and the uptake of reform

In contrast with the first one, Uruguay's second NAP incorporated a plan for systematically monitoring the implementation and results of OGP commitments. All the stakeholders participating at the working group and at the roundtables agreed on monitoring the implementation of OGP commitments every six months. AGESIC coordinates and leads these monitoring efforts. The focal point of each leading institution fills in the information in a standard template and AGESIC brings it together in the government's self-assessment report to OGP. Moreover, AGESIC uses its own internal project management and monitoring system to monitor implementation. The agency plans to publish the six-month reports through its website and to develop a public interface for the internal project management system in order to facilitate citizen access to information on OGP as well as citizen monitoring of the implementation process.[29]

It is still early to analyze the results and potential impact of the ATI commitments, particularly those under the second NAP, given the implementation delays and the revised timeline for some of the commitments. However, we can highlight some positive results, and indicate the expected impacts of some commitments still under implementation.

Training activities

Among the UAIP's major undertakings was the design and delivery of training contents for public officials. Training has focused on strengthening public officials' understanding of the ATI law and on enhancing their capacity to fulfill active and passive transparency obligations. In 2013, the UAIP trained 435 public officials on classification of public information, including 58 ATI focal points and 377 public officials from the sub-national level.[30] The training resulted in the development of a virtual community of ATI focal points. This community focuses on the administrative criteria adopted by the UAIP for handling secret, reserved and confidential information and the exceptions established in Art. 8 of the law.

In 2014, the UAIP trained 364 public officials on active transparency. This included 46 ATI focal points and 318 public officials from the sub-national level.[31] The sessions focused on normative changes introduced to the ATI legislation in 2013, and included theoretical and practical sessions on active transparency obligations. Additionally, the UAIP developed an e-learning course for both public officials and organizations working with citizens. 156 people have taken the course as of September 2015.

---

29   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

30   Tacuarembó (Rivera y Cerro Largo); Artigas (Salto y Paysandú); Durazno (Flores y Florida); Treinta y Tres (Lavalleja, Rocha y Maldonado); Río Negro (Soriano y Colonia); San José (Canelones y Montevideo). This list shows first the department where the event had place and other participating departments in parenthesis.

31   Rivera (Tacuarembó and Cerro Largo), Maldonado (Lavalleja, Rocha, Treinta y Tres), Paysandú (Salto, Artigas), Flores (Durazno, Florida), Colonia (Soriano, Río Negro), Canelones (San José, Montevideo). This list shows first the department where the event had place and other participating departments in parenthesis.

Although these efforts are very important, the training activities still reach a limited number of public officials. For example, while the number of ATI focal points is 210, only 58 (around 27.6%) are active members of the virtual community.[32]

Public dissemination

The UAIP and AGESIC have implemented public dissemination and awareness raising activities over the last two years. The activities target public officials and citizens, acquiring a greater emphasis on citizens on the second NAP. These efforts have produced materials for public awareness (e.g., videos and brochures), media campaigns and activities in public spaces (such as "movida ciudadana," cf. AGESIC n.d.-a). The agencies also supported the launching of the citizen portal "quesabes.org" to submit ATI requests.[33]

Furthermore, the UAIP supports public sector innovation in transparency and ATI through a transparency award. This award recognizes innovative initiatives in the areas of active transparency, archives, information systems, and transparency culture. Approximately 30 public institutions have submitted projects to the competition in 2012-14 (10 submitted 14 projects in 2012, 14 presented 24 projects in 2013, and 6 presented one project each in 2014).[34] The award has recognized significant long-term transparency reform efforts in the public sector that contribute to transform public institutions' operation. The transparency initiatives implemented in the BCU are a good example. See Box 1.

The results of awareness-raising efforts are difficult to assess without systematic measures of public officials and citizens' perceptions and knowledge of ATI legislation. The annual survey data available indicates that citizen knowledge of the ATI legislation is still low (26% of the 18 year old and over population) and remained stable in 2013-2014 (AGESIC 2015b). Citizens with higher education levels are more aware of the existence of the law. Public perception of the enforcement of law is high, and 62% of the population perceive the ATI legislation to be always or almost always enforced.

Online platforms

The most potentially transformative commitments included under the second NAP are the national system for ATI requests and the single window for access to statistical information. Due to delays in the implementation process, we cannot yet assess the results of these initiatives. However, both systems have the potential to transform significantly how citizens request and use public information, the internal procedures for public institutions to manage information and to respond citizens' requests, as well as the institutional and civil society capacity to oversee and monitor the implementation of transparency and access to information obligations.

For example, the national system for ATI requests will allow the standardization of the requests and of the internal processes required to respond them, and will enable the citizens to track down in real time the status of their requests. It will also allow the UAIP to monitor how public institutions implement and

---

32   Personal communication with AGESIC (Sept. 29, 2015). https://comunidad.agesic.gub.uy/web/todos/autenticacion.

33   In absence of a state portal to submit and process ATI requests, civil society developed this portal, which AGESIC and the UAIP supported.

34   Cf. UAIP (2012-2014).

enforce ATI legislation, obtaining information about number of requests, response time and other relevant indicators. Finally, the system will automatically generate information regarding the enforcement of the obligations included in the law.[35]

However, creating the incentives for public agencies to join the request system, or making their integration into the system mandatory by law, is a key step for achieving these results. The system will be able to change the behavior of public officials regarding their ATI obligations only if it can integrate a significant number of public agencies.

Transparency in the BCU

The publication of responses to ATI requests submitted to the BCU (commitment #3.3 of the second NAP) is already operational. This commitment is part of a larger and more ambitious process of transparency reforms at the BCU (See Box 1). These initiatives have produced positive impacts on citizens' perception of, and trust in, the institution.

The implementation of these transparency initiatives has paid off in terms of improving the fulfillment of the BCU's transparency obligations as well as of increasing citizen knowledge of the BCU and public perception of the institution. According to CAinfo's online active transparency index, the BCU is among the best autonomous bodies in terms of the implementation of active transparency (ranked third place with 68% of enforcement) and has improved its level of enforcement significantly between 2012 and 2013.[36] In the 2014 BCU Public Opinion Report, 90% of the sample knew the BCU and 2 out of 3 people assessed as good or very good the role of the BCU in terms of prestige, trust and effective fulfillment of its functions.[37] Moreover, citizens perceive the BCU as one of the leading institutions in educating the citizenry on financial issues.[38]

Impact and sustainability

It is difficult to assess the impact of the commitments analyzed in this study without an impact evaluation or a systematic measurement of the changes they are producing in the attitudes and behavior of the different actors and institutions targeted (as indicated above, aside from the BCU's, there is no data available). Moreover, some of the commitments with potential to transform transparency and public information management (like the single portal for ATI requests) are still in the early stages of implementation.

While there is an overall pattern of positive results related to the commitments analyzed, their ultimate transformative impact will depend on their sustainability over time. Also, they will require capacity on the part of the Uruguayan public administration to promote complementary reforms that strengthen transparency and access to information and promote citizens' use of public information for demanding accountability. The existence of this capacity is still uncertain according to relevant actors (see section on implementation below).

---

35   UAIP (2014b). See also UAIP's yearly report for 2013 (UAIP 2008-2013).

36   Cf. The active transparency index for 2013 (CaInfo 2012-2014).

37   BCU (2014). Informe reputación opinión pública y líderes. On file with author.

38   Over 150,000 citizens have visited the BCU's website and/or participated in training delivered by the BCU (Ibid.).

The uptake and sustainability of transparency and public information reforms will depend on a series of conditions. First, the availability of resources for continued implementation. AGESIC has so far fulfilled successfully this condition by resorting to partnerships, own resources and external funds. Second, it will require the continued commitment of the different actors involved. Moreover, it will also depend on the capacity to meet the expectations created by the implementation of these commitments through additional measures and initiatives (e.g., legal changes to make the integration into the ATI national system mandatory). This last step would strengthen the credibility of reforms and its impact in transforming the way the state manages information and interacts with Uruguayan citizens.

5. High level commitment and steady implementation, but no clear champions

The record of open government implementation in Uruguay is relatively strong in both the regional and global contexts. Overall, the implementation of the first NAP was good when the IRM Report was released: seven commitments were complete, eight substantially implemented, and only three showed limited advance. However, rotation of authorities in many leading institutions after the change of administration (following presidential elections in December 2014, the new president took office in March 2015) has slightly delayed the implementation of the second NAP. However, all activities have resumed normally with a revised timeline and AGESIC does not envision major threats to substantial or full implementation.

Steady implementation of transparency and access to information commitments

The implementation of Uruguay's ATI commitments has progressed satisfactorily. By the end of 2013, the IRM reported commitment #1 as complete (Bettoni et al. 2014), since a series of actions for raising awareness about the ATI law had been completed. Although actions under this commitment had a clear bias towards strengthening public institutions, the IRM highlighted three specific initiatives that focused on raising citizen awareness: development and distribution of informational brochures, media campaign explaining the ATI law, and the UAIP's resolution that requires state agencies to respond to ATI requests submitted through the civil society portal quesabes.org.[39] Moreover, under the first NAP, the redesign of the UAIP's transparency portal (transparency.gub.uy) incorporated a citizen interface.[40]

Commitment #2 on strengthening a culture of transparency is also complete.[41] The UAIP created a network of ATI focal points designated as obliged subjects. The network, which had 100 members in 2010 and 150 members by the end of 2012, has reached now 210 members (Memoria UAIP 2013).[42] All information about the network members is available as open data.[43] Some of these focal points (58 of them) also participate in a virtual community to exchange information and knowledge.[44] Further, the UAIP developed contents for both online and face-to-face training of public officials.[45] It organized several workshops and training sessions in 2012 as well as a self-paced online course for members of the focal points network. The training aims to address the ATI focal points' capacity needs (e.g., classification of information and active transparency assessment model).

The activities included under the second NAP's commitment #3 are progressing well. The UAIP and AGESIC have already implemented several dissemination and awareness raising activities, now with

---

39   In absence of a state portal for submitting ATI requests, civil society implemented one portal.

40   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015).

41   The IRM reported substantial implementation by end of 2013. The commitment was complete after releasing the IRM report.

42   Personal communication with AGESIC (September 29, 2015).

43   UAIP (2014a).

44   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015). The virtual space is available at https://comunidad.agesic.gub.uy/web/todos/autenticacion.

45   Contents are developed in collaboration with other units for specific topics.

a clearer citizen focus. These activities include the development of a citizen awareness video,[46] the public launching in October 2014 of a citizen awareness campaign ("the right is yours, the benefit is for everyone"),[47] and an urban intervention pilot.[48]

The implementation of the national system of ATI requests is progressing well, although it has experienced some delays because of the change of administration. The system will develop incrementally, gradually incorporating public agencies into the portal until reaching all obliged subjects. Initially, the UAIP has invited 20 institutions to participate. The implementation will start with a pilot of six institutions, which will expand to include nine to ten public agencies. The UAIP will provide training to the institutions in the pilot. One of the challenges the UAIP faces is how to make the system inter-operational with the mechanisms some agencies are already using. The UAIP has started to address this challenge through some of the projects that received the annual transparency award.[49]

The implementation of a single window to access state statistical information experienced delays due to the difficulty of finding suitable institutional partners to take the lead together with AGESIC. However, the activity is now on track to progress substantially in 2015-16. AGESIC is working with the National Statistics Institute to map the statistical information available in Uruguay. The second phase will involve the development of a statistical data catalogue with a citizen focus. In a third phase, both institutions plan to provide the information in open data format.[50]

The commitment of publishing BCU's responses to ATI requests is complete. The system to publish the responses is operational since January 2015 (BCU n.d.). Through the BCU website, citizens can view the requestor's name, the date of the request and the response provided, including its supporting documentation. The system also shows information on responses not disclosed due to personal data protection considerations.

Analyzing implementation challenges and opportunities

The factors that explain the level and quality of implementation in Uruguay include the strong political commitment with open government principles and processes at the government's highest levels, existing organizational capacities and the leading role of AGESIC, as well as a process of adoption of commitments that contributed to engage multiple actors. However, Uruguay also faces challenges related to the complex institutional framework of transparency and access to information, resource mobilization, lack of champions, and civil society's capacity constraints.

---

46   AGESIC 2015a.

47   AGESIC 2014.

48   UAIP Presentation «Movida ciudadana», on file with the author.

49   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015).

50   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

Political commitment, institutional leadership and civil society participation foster implementation

Uruguay's political context has positively influenced the implementation process. The open government principles are well aligned with state and government priorities related to the digital agenda, and the OGP processes appeal to Uruguay's strong tradition of consensual decision-making. In addition, Uruguay has historically played an active role in international initiatives in the region and elsewhere.

The highest levels of government in Uruguay are strongly committed to the adoption of open government policies. There is an integral vision of open government as a long-term state policy priority.[51] In addition to political support, the proximity and involvement of the presidential office is essential in the day-to-day management of activities (Porrúa 2013). While its formal link to the Presidency ensures leadership and support--for example, the Presidency's General Directorate is actively involved in national OGP processes--, AGESIC's de facto functional independence is instrumental for the effective management of operational OGP processes.

While the change of administration in early 2015 caused some delays in implementation, requiring a revision of the timeline for some commitments, it did not undermine the strong political commitment to the open government agenda. Although the second NAP was in its early stages when the new administration took office, support for its implementation was never at risk.[52] The strategic role of AGESIC (see below) has contributed to ensure continuity and high-level commitment, despite occasional delays due to the renewal of authorities in leading institutions.[53]

The process used to adopt the commitments also contributed to an effective implementation. The roundtables facilitated consensus in the selection of commitments, which enhanced their legitimacy and acceptability. Moreover, the second NAP's innovative process of consultation became an asset for the implementation of the new commitments. Most of the commitments were included in the NAP as proposals from civil society, making the latter co-responsible for their implementation, and strengthening their legitimacy as citizen demands.

In addition, the design and formulation of the NAPs responds to existing public policy needs in the areas of transparency and access to information.[54] Some of the commitments (e.g., national system of ATI requests) are pre-existent projects. While this may limit the plan's transformative potential, the policy continuity gives Uruguay a comparative advantage in the implementation process. For example, it facilitates forging strong partnerships between different actors, as some leading institutions have been implementing related reforms for years. The BCU provides a good example of the value added of this continuity (see Box 1).

---

51   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).
52   This was facilitated by the electoral victory of the same party coalition that was in power in the previous presidential period.
53   In Uruguay, there is continuity of mid-level staff in ministries and public institutions. Renewal affects the higher offices.
54   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

Box 1. Towards transparent and citizen-oriented financial institutions. The Central Bank of Uruguay*

The 2002 financial crisis triggered a strong public reaction against financial institutions in Uruguay. In the midst of the crisis, however, the Central Bank (BCU) saw an opportunity to transform the way it managed information with the aim of reducing risks for the financial system, but also of improving public perception and trust in the institution.

At the end of 2009, the BCU began improving its internal information management systems. From that moment on, its strategic plan, which considers deepening transparency as a permanent goal, includes goals related to information management.

Additional initiatives aimed at strengthening the public disclosure of information and citizens' access to information produced or held by the BCU have complemented these efforts. The BCU saw the enactment of the ATI law as an opportunity to homogenize its document management system. The different initiatives implemented include the publication of all financial reports produced by the BCU, in-house development of software to process ATI requests, internal training on transparency and access to information, and an online complaints and consultation system. Currently the BCU provides access to information beyond its obligations under the ATI law.

The BCU's management committee has set a permanent working group responsible for overseeing responses to ATI requests and for providing advice and guidance in unclear cases. A Document Management Unit helps prepare the documents and materials needed to respond effectively to ATI requests.

In parallel with the improvement of external and internal information management, since 2011 the BCU has also tried to improve relations with citizens through public awareness and participatory mechanisms. These initiatives include visits to local governments, presenting financial information in non-technical language, the development of a teaching guide, and the organization of an Interactive Fair on Economy and Finances, which included activities for children.

Improving transparency and getting closer to citizens presents important challenges for the BCU in terms of training and staff capacity and new internal procedures, as well as of staff concerns about the risks that transparency and information management involve. However, the BCU has satisfactorily addressed these challenges generating significant organizational learning.

* Based on interviews conducted by the author with representative from the BCU (Montevideo, April 2015).

Moreover, ongoing initiatives become stronger through their inclusion in action plans. For example, the UAIP had identified the need of developing an integrated national system for ATI requests, which was part of its strategic plan. By incorporating this action into the OGP action plan, the initiative became a higher policy priority and gained legitimacy (e.g., due to the external assessment process), which facilitated its implementation.

Institutional capacity, good performance and leadership of the responsible institutions have facilitated the implementation process. AGESIC has played a critical role in open government reforms and ensured the sustainability and continuity of open government policies across the NAPs. AGESIC plays a strong coordination[55] and technical advisory role, but it is also an operational unit in charge of implementing specific commitments. AGESIC provides technical support to other agencies but also leads by example through the implementation of its own commitments.[56]

The nature of AGESIC as a specialized de-concentrated unit with transversal technical support competencies facilitates this role. For example, its competencies on both active and passive transparency contributed to identify the need for strengthening them simultaneously and to include in the NAPs initiatives to further that aim.[57] Further, AGESIC's strong leadership capacity has contributed to its political and operational success (Porrúa 2013). Finally, AGESIC's small but dedicated and inter-disciplinary open government team (5 people, who can rely on other specialized staff for specific projects) is highly committed to the OGP agenda.[58] The team has provided strong and sustained leadership to OGP processes in Uruguay and facilitated learning and adaptation based on the first NAP experience.

The role of the permanent OGP working group has also been a conducive factor, although it presents some uncertainties in the way forward. The early establishment and institutionalization of the working group, created by Presidential decree, was a positive development. The group has facilitated the dialogue between the different actors involved in open government processes, and AGESIC has helped articulate the development of the NAPs and has facilitated and provided grounding to the agreements reached within the group.

However, like in other country experiences, the working group is more active in the formulation than in the implementation and monitoring of the NAPs. Civil society actors consider that improving the operation of the working group would require establishing clearer rules of operation (e.g., a regular schedule of meetings)[59] as well as creating incentives for key institutional members (such as the Ministry of Planning and Economy) to actively participate in the meetings.[60] AGESIC seeks to address these

---

55 Although in general, coordination needs in Uruguay are less than in other countries because there is less fragmentation of public sector agencies responsible for the implementation of commitments (Interview conducted by the author, Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

56 Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

57 Against the mistaken idea that by promoting active transparency, passive transparency (ATI requests) will be less important. While strengthening active transparency reduces the transaction costs of providing information, it does not eliminate the policy need of ensuring the implementation of ATI requests as an individual guarantee. Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

58 Although it is not an exclusive competence.

59 At the time of the interviews, the working group had not held any meetings for some time.

60 Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015).

concerns enhancing the institutional capacity of the working group by incorporating members that show a clear commitment to participate and contribute to open government processes.[61]

Complicated institutional framework, scarce resources, lack of champions and limited civil society capacity constrain implementation

The complex institutional setting of transparency and access to information in Uruguay presents a major implementation challenge. The UAIP, responsible for overseeing the implementation of ATI legislation, is a unit within AGESIC, which means it is formally part of the executive branch instead of an autonomous oversight body. Although in principle the lack of an autonomous oversight body implies significant restrictions, these have not emerged in practice due to the technical autonomy of the UAIP and the functional autonomy of AGESIC. However, the UAIP's limited institutional capacity, including the lack of its own budget, has involved actual constraints for the implementation of different initiatives.[62] The unit is composed of only 6 functionaries and 3 directors,[63] and its executive council members do not have exclusive dedication but instead work pro-bono. The UAIP has addressed these challenges through strong leadership from its executive council and through AGESIC's institutional capacity to manage projects and fulfill its mission.[64]

The lack of a clear champion of the ATI agenda within the state, who could take advantage of OGP to strengthen the implementation of the law, is another challenge.[65] The state budget does not reflect a strong commitment to improve ATI implementation. After the initial momentum obtained with the enactment of the law in 2008, ATI does no longer receives significant public attention and is not a topic of interest across party lines.[66] While moving forward valuable initiatives, the OGP process has failed to articulate an integral and ambitious ATI and transparency policy in Uruguay that could address the constraints to the implementation of the law. This contrasts with the positive impact of OGP on promoting open data, which has catalyzed a transformative approach in the country. See Table 5.

---

61   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

62   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015).

63   Personal communication with UAIP (September 29, 2015).

64   According to one interviewee, "AGESIC support is real and has worked in practice for the UAIP." Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015). All supporting functions of administration, human resources, procurement, communications and IT are provided by AGESIC (Personal communication with AGESIC, September 29, 2015).

65   An autonomous body or committed legislators could play this role, as it happens in other countries.

66   Although enacting the law changed public discourse regarding ATI, the implementation of the law has not fulfilled the initial expectations. Moreover, there are still opposing views among public actors regarding ATI legislation, which explains recent attempts to reform the law in restrictive ways. Interviews conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 29, 2015).

Table 5. The added value of OGP reforms in Uruguay: open data vs. access to information

Open Data	Access to public information
OGP	**OGP**
• introduced the issue and helped shape an open data agenda,	• built on existing legal and institutional framework and ATI/transparency policy,
• promoted the opening and publication of data,	• opened advocacy spaces for civil society and
• facilitated the construction of open data sets through contests and awards,	• helped generate a strategic vision around the topic.
• fostered the promotion of legal reforms currently under review,	**But**
• opened advocacy spaces for civil society and	• ATI working group at OGP has not created traction for the topic at the country level,
• helped generate a strategic vision around the topic.	• a legal and bureaucratic logic still prevails,
But	• a complex network of actors is lacking, and
• it is a new issue - no previous experience or legal /institutional framework, and	• it is a more politically sensitive issue.
• still highly informal and lacking concrete goals and targets.	

Limited resources for the implementation of open government policies create an additional challenge. A stronger and more ambitious second NAP, which requires more coordination among different actors, is demanding in terms of resources. However, the budget for the second NAP is similar to the one for the first plan.[67] Although AGESIC's political support has been reflected in the availability of financial resources, the agency has limited funding for OGP related activities (mostly for dissemination) and has to rely on project-specific funding from multilateral and bilateral donors to support the implementation process (competitive funds or "fondos concursables"). Some leading institutions could not implement particular initiatives due to financial constraints. For example, the UAIP in collaboration with civil society designed an online training on ATI but the development and execution is on hold due to lack of resources. Furthermore, the process of consultation and collaboration with civil society was practically run on a voluntary basis. AGESIC had no dedicated budget and civil society participants had no funding. Under such conditions, these innovative practices of engagement are not sustainable without guaranteeing further support.[68]

---

67   Interview conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 30, 2015).

68   I want to thank a peer reviewer for pointing out this issue.

The limits of the Uruguayan civil society capacity--small and with limited access to sustained international funding due to the country's level of economic development--also affect the implementation of OGP commitments. CSOs are unable to have a sustained participation in OGP processes beyond the formulation of the NAP. This is particularly the case in Uruguay, a small country, with only a few-- although very capable and strong--CSOs working on transparency and access to information. Even fewer organizations are working on accountability and participation. Moreover, financial constraints create incentives for CSOs to seek funding from the state (e.g., as providers of services), which may create risks in terms of undermining the independence required to sustain the watchdog role of civil society.[69]

Finally, the most significant challenge for open government to actually transform state-society in Uruguay is the still limited knowledge that both citizens and public officials have of what open government is and of what its principles and processes are. Although the actors involved in OGP in the country have made significant efforts, through dissemination and awareness raising activities, awareness is still a significant challenge in the way forward. It is important to ensure that the emerging results of the implementation of open government policies actually reach citizens.

Table 6. Implementation opportunities and challenges for OGP in Uruguay

Opportunities	Challenges
• Strong political commitment with OGP at the highest levels of government. • Strong organizational capacities. • Leading role of AGESIC. • Innovative formulation of the action plan including dialogue with civil society. • Consensus around reforms that respond to existing public policy needs.	• Complex institutional setting for transparency. • Unclear champion of the transparency agenda. • Limited public awareness about open government. • Capacity and resource limitations among civil society organizations.

---

69   There is civil society demand in Uruguay for the state to establish civil society support channels that are not conceived in terms of service provision, but that are seen as part of a commitment to strengthening citizenship and civil society density as public goods in themselves. Interviews conducted by the author (Montevideo, April 28, 29, and 30, 2015).

6. The lessons of OGP in Uruguay

Open government reforms in Uruguay respond to long-term policy priorities and enjoy strong political support at the highest levels. The inclusion of access to information commitments with a high degree of consensus and legitimacy, and which respond to the implementing institutions' strategic operational plans, have contributed to the policy continuity and sustainability of reforms. Moreover, the strategic role and leadership of AGESIC, both substantive and operational, have also helped ensure this continuity.

The access to information reforms related to OGP are contributing to strengthen the state capacity to implement the access to information law and to raise awareness regarding the exercise of the right to information. However, the strategic long-term impact of these reforms is constrained by the complexity and limits of the access to information institutional and legal framework in Uruguay, which the open government reforms have not addressed. Moreover, the efforts to raise public awareness have not achieved yet the desired results. In these respect, despite an innovative adoption of commitments and a strong implementation record, open government reforms have not substantially transformed the access to information policy in Uruguay.

Uruguay's experience with OGP reform offers several lessons for increasing our understanding of the implementation of open government reforms and their emerging results. First, like other countries, Uruguay has pragmatically prioritized feasible open government reforms that institutions can implement successfully over a two-year period. However, to address the tradeoffs between optimal and feasible reforms, between ambition and viability, Uruguay has adopted a flexible approach to the implementation process--for example in terms of their timeline, actors and approach.

The country's OGP commitments focus on what the actors want to achieve, while providing space for adapting how to do it. The NAP is a flexible document that defines clear and ambitious goals while allowing for pragmatic ways of achieving them. It can be subject to annual revisions in order to reflect changes in approach and strategy. The NAP provides a minimum solution that is feasible and viable within a two-year period, but all commitments can be improved and become more ambitious, for example by incorporating new institutional partners. Moreover, the back-up list of initiatives provides stakeholders with opportunities to continue working in order to define and advocate for new reforms. At the same time, this list promotes continuity between the different NAPs and strengthens the time horizon of open government reforms in the country.

The importance of a good articulation between government and civil society is another significant lesson. These processes are challenging (as they require, for instance, building trust between the parties) and involve costs for the actors involved, but they pay off by enhancing the quality of open government processes and the resulting action plans, and by facilitating the implementation of meaningful reforms.

With the OGP roundtables, Uruguay has undertaken an innovative process of cooperation between government institutions and civil society actors for the development of the second NAP. While this was a very contextual process--which responded to the needs of local actors and built on the Uruguayan tradition of consensual decision-making--, it also provides important lessons that go beyond the specific country setting.

This new space for dialogue and civil society advocacy highlights the importance for CSOs of promoting reforms that have specific and measurable goals that allow mobilizing resources. Moreover, it also

indicates the importance for CSOs working on transparency and ATI issues to coordinate their agendas with other CSOs focusing on different topics (e.g., sector issues) and/or with grassroots presence at different levels of government. Finally, this dialogue mechanism also shows that, while some government actors may refuse to participate, civil society can find suitable partners within government to promote open government reforms.

In Uruguay, OGP has strengthened and institutionalized the dialogue between government institutions and civil society. Wide civil society consultation and participation have provided valuable inputs into the development of the second NAP, shifting the balance from a government driven process to a collaborative definition of the open government reform agenda in the country, including commitments related to access to information.

This collaboration between government and civil society institutions has added strategic value to many--but not all--open government reforms, particularly concerning open data. However, sustaining this strong dialogue and transforming it into real collaboration during the implementation process is a challenge for both government institutions and civil society, given limited resources and capacities for sustained engagement beyond the adoption of the action plans.

The case of Uruguay highlights the importance of critically thinking about the resources required for implementing meaningful open government reforms. While the NAPs identify specific and measurable goals, they do not incorporate a specific allocation of resources for each commitment -- which could also be monitored and externally evaluated through the international assessment mechanism. In some cases, the existence of an international commitment helps ensure a proper mobilization of resources. However, it also provides opportunities to adopt commitments as mere window dressing, without any real political support or allocation of implementation resources. Although this has not been the case in Uruguay, in practice many institutions have problems to ensure the budget allocations required for successfully implementing the commitments they have acquired.

Another important challenge is the asymmetry of resources between government institutions and civil society, which makes it difficult for civil society to be real co-implementers together with leading government institutions. These problems are particularly acute in middle-income countries like Uruguay, where CSOs have limited resources and face serious challenges to access international financing (Scrollini and Durand-Ochoa 2015, 5).

This case also encourages reflection on the significance of communicating the meaning of open government and the value of open government reforms for different audiences. Often decision-makers and public officials lack a common language. While the former embrace the OGP agenda as a valuable international commitment, they fail to convey to the latter (and to citizens) the value of OGP as a transversal public policy that goes beyond the use of technology, and that helps improve transparency and build participation and strong accountability systems. This limited understanding of OGP creates challenges in the implementation of open government reforms. As the role of AGESIC shows, the OGP coordinating bodies at the country level may play a critical role in overcoming some of the resistances and contributing to a better understanding of open government reforms.

The experience of Uruguay illustrates one of the most important challenges for OGP in Latin America and elsewhere: how to show citizens the value of open government reforms as a means to transform the way the state interacts with its citizens. This substantial transformation requires not only the active engagement of civil society and the private sector, but also the commitment and active role of government institutions in undertaking reforms that actually transform how the state operates. Moreover, it is critical

to convince citizens that, beyond the adoption of commitments, what really matters is their actual implementation. Documenting and sharing examples of implementing open government reforms, with their successes and challenges, and showing how these reforms have helped improve citizens' life may be the best approach to strengthening open government.

References

AGESIC. 2015a. "Acceso a la Información Pública – UAIP." YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL4AqPMT6i4&feature=youtu.be.

_____. 2015b. "Estudio de conocimientos, actitudes y practicas de ciudadanía digital." 2nd ed. Observatorio de la ciudadanía digital. Power point presentation on file with author.

_____. 2014. "Intervención urbana sobre Acceso a la Información Pública□." YouTube video.

_____. n.d.-a. "Movida ciudadana." Power point on file with author and video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUekrXVM2Ho&list=PLaatFjpbb1MStKf72xTA1Nw9hJMKOlich&index=1.

_____. n.d.-b. "Participación ciudadana en procesos de gobierno abierto." http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/v/3816/1/agesic/participacion-ciudadana.html.

_____. n.d.-c "Proceso de participación en el Plan. El rol de AGESIC." http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/v/3815/1/agesic/el-rol-de-agesic.html.

_____. n.d.-d. "Report on results of online consultation for the second NAP." In Spanish. http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/file/3801/1/informe_consulta_publica.pdf

_____. n.d.-e. "Mesas de diálogo" (Summary of roundtables). (http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/v/3785/1/agesic/otras-voces-otros-ambitos:-mesas-de-dialogo-de-gobierno-abierto.html

Bettoni, A., A. Cruz and J. Pereira. 2014. *Uruguay Independent Reporting Mechanism IRM. Progress report 2012-2013*. In Spanish. http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Uruguay_final_2012.pdf.

BCU. 2015. *Informe final. Reputación del Banco Central del Uruguay. Resultados de la encuesta de opinión pública, formadores de opinión y actores vinculados a su gestión organizacional*. Montevideo: Mori Equipo consultores asociados, April.

BCU. n.d. Respuestas publicables. http://www.bcu.gub.uy/Acerca-de-BCU/Paginas/Solicitudes_Informacion.aspx.

CaInfo. 2012-2014. Índice de transparencia activa. http://itael.cainfo.org.uy/.

Dassen, N. and J. C. Vieyra. eds. 2012. *Open government and targeted transparency. Trends and challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington DC:* Inter-American Development Bank. http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=37245826.

Herrero, A. 2015. "Access to information commitments in OGP action plans. A report on the progress of reforms worldwide." World Bank Governance Global Practice (GGP)'s Access to Information Program / Red de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información Pública (RTA).

Jans, M. T. 2007. "A framework for public policy analysis and policy evaluation." IES Research Colloquium, Sept. 4.

John, P. 2012. *Analyzing Public Policy*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). Uruguay. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/uruguay.php

Open Government Partnership (OGP). Commitments data sets. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1lR6YcmY48-CZeQbM6wP7htdvfLL69Vxk-UerXEOwuzM/edit?usp=sharing   and   https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ua7HcCbd69HDKqiz7FW2QKr5ExH4cTNmupuVROdBEeU/edit#gid=0.

OECD. 2014. *Open government in Latin America*. OECD Public Governance Reviews. Paris: OECD. http://www.oecd.org/publications/open-government-policies-in-latin-america-9789264223639-en.htm.

Porrúa, M. A. 2013. "e-Government in Latin America: A review of the success in Colombia, Uruguay and Panama" in B. Bilbao-Osorio, S. Dutta and B. Lanvin. The global information technology report 2013, chapter 2.3. Geneva: World Economic Forum. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GITR_Report_2013.pdf.

Sabatier, P. and D. Mazmanian. 1980. "The implementation of public policy: A framework of analysis." *Policy Studies Journal* 8: 538–560.

Scrollini, F. and U. Durand-Ochoa. 2015. "Perspectives on open government in Latin America." LSE Ideas. Strategic update. 15.1. London: London School of Economics-OGP-Hivos-World Bank Group Governance. http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/IDEAS-SU15-1-LatinAmerica.pdf.

Unidad de Acceso a la Información Pública. 2014a. Datos de responsables de transparencia. https://catalogodatos.gub.uy/dataset/datos-de-responsables-de-transparencia

_____. 2014b. Sistema de solicitudes de acceso. Presentación para organismos. Power point presentation on file with author.

_____. 2012-2014. Resúmenes proyectos presentados al Premio de Transparencia. 2012: http://www.uaip.gub.uy/inicio/Premio+a+la+transparencia/Edicion+2012/Proyectos+presentados+2012/; 2013: http://www.uaip.gub.uy/inicio/Premio+a+la+transparencia/Edicion+2013/Proyectos+presentados/; 2014: http://www.uaip.gub.uy/inicio/Premio+a+la+transparencia/Edicion+2014/Proyectos+presentados+2014/.

_____. 2008-2013. Memorias anuales. Multiple years. (http://www.uaip.gub.uy/inicio/institucional/institucional-estadisticas/.

_____. n.d. "Guía para referentes de acceso." Guías y modelos. UAIP. (http://www.uaip.gub.uy/inicio/documentacion/Guias+y+modelos/).

Uruguay. 2014. Alianza para el gobierno abierto. Plan de acción del Gobierno de Uruguay 2014-2016. http://www.opengovpartnership.org/country/uruguay.

_____. 2012. Alianza para el gobierno abierto. Plan de acción del Gobierno de Uruguay 2012-2013. On file with author.

Annex I: List of interviews

Name	Organization
Alfredo Allo	Central Bank of Uruguay (BCU)
Anabel Cruz	Instituto de Comunicación y Desarrollo (ICD)
Analía Bettoni	Instituto de Comunicación y Desarrollo (ICD)
Elizabeth Oria	Central Bank of Uruguay (BCU)
Fabrizio Scrollini	Latin American Open Data Initiative (ILDA)
Gabriel Delpiazzo	Unidad de Acceso a la Información Pública (UAIP)
Guilherme Canela de Souza Godoi	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Gustavo Silveira	Central Bank of Uruguay (BCU)
Mariana Gatti	Unidad de Acceso a la Información Pública (UAIP)
Ninoschka Dante	Agencia para el Desarrollo del Gobierno de Gestión Electrónica y la Sociedad de la Información y del Conocimiento (AGESIC)
Tania Da Rosa	Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información Pública (CaInfo)
Virginia Pardo	Agencia para el Desarrollo del Gobierno de Gestión Electrónica y la Sociedad de la Información y del Conocimiento (AGESIC)

In Uruguay, innovative practices of consultation and dialogue between government and civil society have enlarged the scope of open government reforms. All the actors involved agree on the priority of access to information commitments as part of the action plans. Strong political support, organizational capacities of public institutions, the leading role of the coordinating agency, and the innovative formulation of the second action plan have facilitated the implementation of reforms.

However, the open government commitments have yet failed to articulate an integral transparency policy that addresses the constraints of the existing access to information law. These limitations result from the complex institutional framework of transparency in Uruguay, resource constraints, and the limits of civil society to engage with the government in a balanced partnership.