

# Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Israel End-of-Term Report 2015-2017

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## Overview: Israel

Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) End-of-Term Report 2015-2017

Israel's second action plan focused on improving the Freedom of Information (FOI) law and access to information, as well as the use of technology to increase public participation. Implementation of the action plan saw improvements to the consultation process compared to the previous plan, notably an increased level of engagement with civil society. However, some completed commitments were unambitious and only vaguely relevant to OGP values. Moving forward, the government should continue to engage stakeholders during the development of the third action plan and set more ambitious goals for commitments.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) carries out a review of the activities of each OGP-participating country. This report summarizes the results of the period of July 2015 to June 2017 and includes some relevant developments up to September 2017.

Israel began participating in OGP in August 2011. The OGP operation is based on a cabinet resolution dated 1 April 2012, which is binding within the executive branch.

The office of the Government's Chief Information Officer (CIO) is the leading office responsible for Israel's OGP commitments. The office of the CIO was transferred from the treasury to the Prime Minister's office in early 2015. However, it does not have any binding powers over agencies outside governmental ICT departments. The responsibility for implementation of specific commitments is spread between the Justice Ministry, the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) and sections of the Prime Minister's Office. Development of Israel's second action plan was delayed due to general elections and the establishment of a new government, as well as the transfer of the CIO office from the Treasury to the Prime Minister's Office.

Israel's second action plan, reviewed in this report, has yielded mixed results. Some commitments have led to clear, tangible and significant improvements in open government, such as a new and impressive legislation website within the Knesset website, and the proactive publication of government contracts. Other commitments, however, were limited in their impact, such as the unified government website, or failed to be fully implemented, such

<b>Table 1: At a Glance</b>		
	<i>Mid-term</i>	<i>End of term</i>
Number of Commitments:	9	
<b>Level of Completion</b>		
Completed:	4	6
Substantial:	4	2
Limited:	0	1
Not Started:	1	0
<b>Number of Commitments with...</b>		
Clear Relevance to OGP Values:	8	8
Transformative Potential Impact:	0	0
Substantial or Complete Implementation:	8	8
<b>All Three (👍)</b>	0	0
<b>Did It Open government?</b>		
Major:	3	
Outstanding:	1	
<b>Moving Forward</b>		
Number of Commitments Carried Over to Next Action Plan:	4	

as the commitment to regularize the authorities of the governmental Freedom of Information Unit.

Israel submitted its third action plan in December 2017 and launched a public participation process. According to the government, half of the commitments were changed based on public comments. However, changes are not detailed in the report on the consultation process, and are hence difficult to assess.

## Consultation with Civil Society during Implementation

Countries participating in OGP follow a process for consultation during development and implementation of their action plan.

The government did not maintain a regular forum for consultation with civil society during the implementation of the second action plan in general. The Open Government Forum that met once during the development of the action plan did not meet during implementation. However, specific commitments involved different levels of consultation with specific civil society organizations (CSOs) during their implementation. The government approached some organizations directly, while others contacted the government on their own initiative asking to offer their insights. These consultations were mostly informal and did not follow a specific schedule. Some CSOs described these consultations as meaningful and felt they had an opportunity to influence the implementation process, while others said the process was more informative than consultative. Overall, most of the CSOs interviewed for this report stated that they saw a marked improvement in the standards of consultation during the second year of implementation, and that the government became more genuinely interested in their inputs. While many described the first year's consultation as the government paying lip-service to the duty to consult, they felt the second year brought more in-depth consultations and a more serious opportunity to impact government activities. For instance, members of the Citizens Empowerment Center were consulted on the government resolution to open government databases, and the Movement for Freedom of Information was engaged during the preparation of the resolution on the release of information on government contracts.

Table 2: Consultation during Implementation

Regular Multistakeholder Forum	Midterm	End of Term
1. Did a forum exist?	No	No
2. Did it meet regularly?	No	No

Table 3: Level of Public Influence during Implementation

IAP2: Level of Public Influence during Implementation of Action Plan		Midterm	End of Term
<b>Empower</b>	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.		
<b>Collaborate</b>	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.		
<b>Involve</b>	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.		X
<b>Consult</b>	The public could give inputs.	X	
<b>Inform</b>	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.		
<b>No Consultation</b>	No consultation		

## About the Assessment

The indicators and method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual.<sup>1</sup> One measure, the “starred commitment” (★), deserves further explanation due to its particular interest to readers and usefulness for encouraging a race to the top among OGP-participating countries. Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

- Starred commitments will have “medium” or “high” specificity. A commitment must lay out clearly defined activities and steps to make a judgment about its potential impact.
- The commitment’s language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability.
- The commitment would have a “transformative” potential impact if completely implemented.<sup>2</sup>
- The government must make significant progress on this commitment during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of “substantial” or “complete” implementation.

Starred commitments can lose their starred status if their completion falls short of substantial or full completion at the end of the action plan implementation period.

Israel’s action plan did not contain any starred commitments.

Finally, the tables in this section present an excerpt of the wealth of data the IRM collects during its reporting process. For the full dataset for Israel see the OGP Explorer at [www.opengovpartnership.org/explorer](http://www.opengovpartnership.org/explorer).

### About “Did It Open Government?”

To capture changes in government practice the IRM introduced a new variable “Did It Open Government?” in end-of-term reports. This variable attempts to move beyond measuring outputs and deliverables to looking at how the government practice has changed as a result of the commitment’s implementation.

As written, some OGP commitments are vague and/or not clearly relevant to OGP values but achieve significant policy reforms. In other cases, commitments as written appear relevant and ambitious, but fail to open government as implemented. The “Did It Open Government” variable attempts to capture these subtleties.

The “Did It Open Government?” variable assesses changes in government practice using the following spectrum:

- Worsened: Government openness worsens as a result of the commitment.
- Did not change: No changes in government practice.
- Marginal: Some change, but minor in terms of its effect on level of openness.
- Major: A step forward for government openness in the relevant policy area, but remains limited in scope or scale.
- Outstanding: A reform that has transformed “business as usual” in the relevant policy area by opening government.

To assess this variable, researchers establish the status quo at the outset of the action plan. They then assess outcomes *as implemented* for changes in government openness.

Readers should keep in mind limitations. IRM end-of-term reports are prepared only a few months after the implementation cycle is completed. The variable focuses on outcomes that can be observed in government openness practices at the end of the two-year implementation period. The report and the variable do not intend to assess impact because of the complex methodological implications and the time frame of the report.

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<sup>1</sup> IRM Procedures Manual, <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/about-irm>.

<sup>2</sup> The International Experts Panel changed this criterion in 2015. For more information, visit: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/node/5919>.

# Commitment Implementation

## General Overview of Commitments

As part of OGP, countries are required to make commitments in a two-year action plan. The tables below summarize the completion level at the end of term and progress on the “Did It Open Government?” metric. For commitments that were complete at the midterm, the report will provide a summary of the progress report findings but focus on analysis of the ‘Did It Open Government?’ variable. For further details on these commitments, please see the Israel IRM progress report 2016.

Israel’s second action plan was not organized under thematic areas. However, there are two main fields that correspond with the specific government agencies involved. The first deals with implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) law and access to information more broadly, which corresponds with the involvement of the FOI Unit in the Ministry of Justice in OGP. The second is the use of technology to increase public participation, which can be partly attributed to the predominant role of the Chief Information Officer in overseeing OGP activities in Israel. Most commitments were derived from various open government initiatives that were already being implemented before the beginning of the action plan’s two-year cycle (all commitments except no. 2 and, to some extent, no. 7).

**Table 4: Assessment of Progress by Commitment**

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm	Did It Open Government?						
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial		Completed	End of Term				
1. Regularizing the Status and Authorities of the Governmental FOI Unit		✓			✓					✓			✓					Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
2. Increasing Use of Central FOI Website			✓		✓						✓			✓							✓	
3. Increasing Transparency Regarding		✓			✓					✓						✓						✓

Contracts between the State and Private Bodies																			
4. Establishing a Unified Website for Government Offices			✓		✓	✓			✓					✓				✓	
5. Data.gov			✓		✓	✓		✓		✓				✓					✓
6. To Measure the Public's Satisfaction with Government Services and the Quality of Service in the Various Channels			✓		Unclear				✓				✓		✓				
7. Increasing Transparency of Information Regarding Legislation			✓		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓					✓	
8. Developing a Governmental 'Tool Box' for Public Participation in the Government's Work			✓			✓		✓	✓					✓				✓	
9. Continued Integration of Public Participation in Government Work		✓				✓			✓				✓				✓		



# 1. Regularizing the Status and Authorities of the Governmental Freedom of Information Unit

**Commitment Text:**

To adapt the Governmental Freedom of Information Unit's authorities to the enforcement challenges related to freedom of information.

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: Currently the authorities of the Governmental Freedom of Information Unit are outlined in a Government Resolution rather than by law. Its authority is limited solely to government offices and only to those subjects covered by the Freedom of Information Law.

It was determined in the Government Resolution that two years from the establishment of the Governmental Unit, the Ministry of Justice would be required to examine the unit's methods of operation.

Main Objective: To increase the implementation and enforcement of the Freedom of Information Law

**Milestones:**

- 1.1. To have the Ministry of Justice determine a fundamental position on this subject.
- 1.2. To implement the steps needed to regularize the status of the Governmental Freedom of Information Unit in accordance with the government's position.

Responsible institution: Ministry of Justice

Supporting institution(s): NA

Start date: 1 June 2015

End date: 1 October 2017

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did It Open Government?					
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding	
1. Overall		✓			✓					✓			✓					✓				

## **Commitment Aim**

This commitment aimed to increase the effectiveness of the governmental Freedom of Information (FOI) Unit in its efforts to promote proper implementation of the FOI law. The FOI Unit was created in 2011 to promote implementation of the FOI law, but was given limited authority. The Government committed to review the FOI Unit's mandate two years after its creation, but to date, it has failed to do so. The current Unit's mandate limits its ability to promote the implementation of the FOI law. For instance, the Unit has no authority over local government even though the FOI law covers local government. Also, if a government ministry determines to have "substantial" reason to turn down an information request (i.e. for purposes of national security and commercial interests), the FOI Unit cannot review this ministry's decision. It can only exercise review where the ministry fails to meet deadlines set out in the law, or misinterprets the fees regulations, and other such technicalities.<sup>1</sup> This commitment calls on the Ministry of Justice to achieve this review of the Unit's methods and indicates that further authority would be given to the Unit.

## **Midterm: Not Started**

At the time of writing the midterm report, the Ministry of Justice was still deliberating whether to expand the Unit's mandate, and there were no decisions to report. The Ministry's Director General informally expressed a commitment to conduct a review of the Unit's existing authority and to discuss the possibility of extending this authority. However, this commitment did not materialize in practice. For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>2</sup>

## **End of term: Limited**

Implementation of this commitment at the end of term was limited. According to an interview with the head of the FOI Unit, the Minister of Justice decided not to grant the Unit any binding authorities or to expand the scope of authorities under its supervision due to objections from the Ministry of Interior.<sup>3</sup> The head of the Unit also informed the IRM researcher that it was decided (but not implemented) that the Unit will be allowed to initiate its own investigations into alleged breaches of the FOI law in those limited procedural aspects which it has authority over (in contrast to the current situation where the Unit may only act upon a complaint received from an information requestor). The Ministry of Justice also decided to work with the Ministry of Interior to encourage it to supervise implementation of the law at the local level, but this is not to become part of the governmental Unit's authority.

## **Did It Open Government?**

### **Access to Information: Did Not Change**

The limited implementation of this commitment has yet to improve access to information. The commitment was designed to increase the effectiveness of the governmental FOI Unit on government authorities and to help it have a greater impact on its conduct. The failure to give the Unit any binding authorities or investigative tools, or to allow it to consider failures to disclose information when based on substantive reasons (rather than merely procedural) for shortcomings in the conduct of other government authorities restricts the potential to achieve its goals. However, as it eventually unfolded, there were only limited authorities granted to the Unit (to initiate investigations on procedural failures) and these did not have an impact on opening up government.

## **Carried Forward?**

This commitment has not been carried forward to Israel's third action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> See report on the objection by the interior ministry to allow the Unit to supervise FOI matters in local authorities, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politi/.premium-1.3068627> [in Hebrew].

<sup>2</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with the head of the FOI Unit, Adv. Rivki Dvash, 7 September 2017.

## 2. Increasing Use of Central Website for Freedom of Information

### Commitment Text:

To expand the information on the central freedom of information website and increase awareness and use of the site.

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: The main Freedom of Information website went online in January 2014 (foi.gov.il), and allows people to contact many authorities on one website. In addition to contact information of authorities and department heads, the website serves as the main platform on which information already provided by the authorities, as well as information about agreements and contracts with private parties on matters as outlined in Government Resolution No. 1116 of December 29, 2013, is consolidated.<sup>1</sup>

Now that the website is online, the challenge is to increase awareness of its existence and to encourage its use both by the public and by the public authorities.

Main Objective: To make it easier for the public to find information and submit requests in accordance with the Freedom of Information Law.

### Milestones:

2.1. To create a continuous practice of uploading information (answers, agreements and permits) to the website.

2.2. To expand the information base on the website and improve access.

Responsible institution: Ministry of Justice – Freedom of Information Unit

Supporting institution: E-Government Unit

Start date: 1 January 2015

End date: 1 January 2016

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did It Open Government?					
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding	
2. Overall			✓		✓					✓					✓						✓	

## **Commitment Aim**

This commitment aimed to simplify the process for the public to find information and submit requests in accordance with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Law by reducing "red tape" for individuals that request information under the FOI framework. Currently, filing an FOI request requires paying a "request fee", which complicated the filing procedure for many requestors. More specifically, this commitment looks to make the information requested and disclosed in the past under the FOI Law more readily available to other information requestors.

## **Status**

### **Midterm: Substantial**

At the midterm, the IRM researchers reported on a media public awareness campaign conducted mainly through radio advertisements and sponsored Facebook posts. The aim was to raise awareness of the existence of the website, which generated a 100 percent increase in traffic to the website and 67 percent in the filing of FOI requests using the website. The IRM researchers also reported that 620 documents released in response to FOI requests were uploaded to the website, but from a limited number of ministries.<sup>2</sup> For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>3</sup>

### **End of term: Complete**

The commitment in the government's action plan was described as ending in January 2016. However, for the purposes of this report, the IRM researcher looked at the ongoing efforts which are largely a result of activities that took place during the declared implementation period and continued afterwards.

The publication of documents released through FOI requests has increased significantly in the previous months. The head of the FOI Unit admitted that they have been motivated to do so following FOI requests from civil society activists that asked for the full list of documents released, thus incentivizing the Unit to proactively publish the information on their website. At the time of writing, the website consists of 1,700 documents, compared to 620 at the time of the midterm report.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the head of the FOI Unit informed the IRM researcher that they plan to install a system that will automatically present every document released because of an FOI request filed through the site (unless the FOI officer specifically orders the system not to do so). The system was expected to become operative in December 2017.

## **Did It Open Government?**

### **Access to Information: Major**

For many years, the volume of FOI requests filed under Israel's FOI law was low. The request fee and the cumbersome procedures to request information hindered or dissuaded many citizens from fulfilling their right. The centralized FOI website aimed to ease the complexity of filing a request and create a unified standard and online form for many different authorities. It has proven to be a success, and implementation of this commitment has led to more information requests being filed. In terms of the volume of requests filed through the website, the first seven months of 2017 saw 2,048 requests filed compared to 1,246 in the first seven months of 2016.<sup>5</sup> In total, 4,074 FOI request were filed during 2017. While it is likely that some of these requests replace ones that would have otherwise been filed offline, it is nevertheless reasonable to assume that many of them would have not (as people avoided filing requests due to the technical barriers that existed).

The information released is accessible to the public at large, allowing others who have an interest, but are not engaged enough to file a request by themselves, to access this information. Therefore, more information has become available, and the available information is more widely used by the public. An indirect impact of these two progressions is that civil society is empowered with information upon which it may, if it chooses to, act in the public arena, increasing public participation.

## Carried Forward?

This commitment has not been carried forward to Israel's third action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> The resolution titled "Publication of Permits and Contracts between the State and Private Bodies" orders the proactive publication of such contracts in all government ministries.

<sup>2</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 27.

<sup>4</sup> The FOI Unit website, [https://foi.gov.il/he/search/site/?ff0=im\\_field\\_mmdtypes%3A15](https://foi.gov.il/he/search/site/?ff0=im_field_mmdtypes%3A15).

<sup>5</sup> For volume of FOI requests, see (in Hebrew), <http://www.justice.gov.il/Units/YechidatChofeshHameyda/GlobalDocs/%D7%98%D7%A4%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%9D%20%D7%9E%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%9D%20%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%99%202017%20%281%29.pdf>.

### 3. Increasing Transparency Regarding Contracts between the State and Private Bodies

**Commitment Text:**

To expand the information accessible to the public in the area of contracts and state expenditures.

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: On June 1, 2014, a Government Resolution took effect obligating government offices to publish contracts and permits made regarding the use of public resources or the provision of services to the public on the main freedom of information website. The Governmental Freedom of Information Unit must confirm that the Government Resolution is optimally implemented.

In addition, the Unit works in conjunction with the Accountant General's division in the Ministry of Finance to improve the quality of information made accessible to the public in the area of State expenditures.

Main Objective: To increase transparency

**Milestones:**

- 3.1. To supervise the implementation of the Government Resolution;
- 3.2. To help implement changes in the reporting system for State expenditures (Merkavah);
- 3.3. To set standards for reporting State expenditures on an ongoing basis.

Responsible institution: Ministry of Justice – Freedom of Information Unit

Supporting institutions: The Accountant General, Ministry of Finance

Start date: 1 June 2014

End date: 1 June 2015

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
3. Overall		✓			✓					✓						✓					✓

## **Commitment Aim**

The aim of this commitment was to increase transparency in government use of public resources by making available to the public contracts between state agencies and private contractors. It also aimed to make this information available proactively, without people having to file Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, as was the case in the past. Due to the vagueness of this commitment's text and milestones, the IRM researcher looked beyond the text of the original commitment to the actions that took place following implementation during the second year of the action plan.

## **Status**

### **Midterm: Complete**

This commitment was reported as fully implemented in the midterm report, despite its limited goals as defined in the action plan. By the time of the midterm report, the government had provided instructions to ministries on how to change their reporting of expenses to better fit the needs of a central information system, to make information about contracts available.<sup>1</sup> The midterm report laid out the cooperation between the Prime Minister's office and the Ministry of Finance to bring about the publication of government contracts, and the changes made in the computation systems required to do so. It also reported on the initial outcomes, which have since significantly grown. For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of writing this end-of-term report (September 2017), the publication of information on government contracts (rather than the contracts themselves) has increased dramatically. The governmental Freedom of Information (FOI) Unit published a quarterly report on its website, detailing tens of thousands of such contracts.<sup>3</sup> Compliance with the government resolution on this matter is also improving. While the midterm report stated that the Prime Minister's office and the Office for Strategic Affairs and Propaganda initially refused to partake in these publications, this has since changed. The Office of Strategic Affairs and Propaganda has joined the online report and releases the information for its quarterly government contracts.<sup>4</sup> The Prime Minister's office has released the information on its own contracts following an FOI request<sup>5</sup> and has committed to join the regular online publication in November 2017.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that this was also a result of actions taken by the FOI Unit and the Knesset to require compliance from the Prime Minister's office (20 March 2017).<sup>7</sup>

## **Did It Open Government?**

### **Access to Information: Outstanding**

Before the contracts information was published online, such information could only be obtained through FOI requests. This created a legal battle over each contract, as different agencies had different policies and interpretations of their legal obligations. The commitment aimed to create a unified standard of proactive online publication for all government authorities and many other agencies, and has succeeded in doing so. The commitment made a plethora of valuable information available to the public and to CSOs dealing with good governance and anti-corruption issues. While use of the information is still in its initial stages, it is fair to assume that merely knowing that all contract information is openly available online will generate more caution among government agencies.

Interviewed CSO representatives, such as the legal advisor of the Freedom of Information Movement, expressed their satisfaction with the website's presentation of the contracts, and said that it serves them well in their work with journalists and in search of further information they plan to request.<sup>8</sup> Because of this, the IRM researcher evaluates the eventual impact of this commitment on access to information as outstanding.

According to the report on the FOI Unit website, 75 percent of ministries published their report in due time for the third quarter of 2017, the highest percentage since the resolution

was implemented in early 2016.<sup>9</sup> For one quarter in 2016, the total volume of contracts released was 26,604. This was with a lower compliance rate than today.

### **Carried Forward?**

This commitment has not been carried forward to Israel's third action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pmo.gov.il/Secretary/GovDecisions/2013/Pages/des1116.aspx>.

<sup>2</sup> Israel, IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 30.

<sup>3</sup> The FOI Unit quarterly report, <http://www.justice.gov.il/Units/YechidatChofeshHameyda/PeilotHayehida/DohotHayhida/ReportsPro/Pages/reports.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> The reports can be seen on the Unit's website, Id.

<sup>5</sup> The information was requested by the Movement for Freedom of Information in Israel and can be seen on their website, <https://www.meida.org.il/?p=6886>.

<sup>6</sup> As informed in the interview with the head of the FOI Unit.

<sup>7</sup> [http://fs.knesset.gov.il/20/Committees/20\\_ptv\\_390374.doc](http://fs.knesset.gov.il/20/Committees/20_ptv_390374.doc).

<sup>8</sup> Stakeholders' meeting, Tel-Aviv, 13 September 2017.

<sup>9</sup> For the FOI Unit report see,

<http://www.justice.gov.il/Units/YechidatChofeshHameyda/PeilotHayehida/DohotHayhida/ReportsPro/Pages/hitkas/hrout2016.aspx>.



## 4. Establishing a Unified Website for Government Offices

**Commitment Text:**

*To establish a unified website for government offices, provide a complete user experience and standardized service.*

*Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: Currently in Israel there are many government websites. Various countries around the world have worked to unify government websites, a step that will improve the accessibility of information and services to citizens in an optimal manner, while at the same time leading to considerable savings.*

*Main Objective: To make government information and services more accessible through a unified government website*

**Milestones:**

4.1. To formulate a plan to establish the website and get the public to participate

4.2. To upload a preliminary version of the unified website

**Responsible institutions:** E-Government Unit, Government ICT Authority, Prime Minister's Office

**Supporting institutions:** Digital Israel Bureau, Government offices and auxiliary units

**Start date:** 1 January 2015

**End date:** 1 June 2016

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
4. Overall			✓		✓	✓			✓						✓			✓			

**Commitment Aim**

This commitment aimed to solve problems with the quality of online government services to the public, and to address the fact that different ministries had different online platforms to provide services, with some outdated and others incompatible with popular browsers. To solve these problems, the commitment set out to create a unified government website in order to: 1) meet common standards for service delivery, including compatibility with popular web browsers, regular updates, and accessibility standards, and 2) indirectly make

information more accessible as already-open information would be available without practical and technical difficulties that were characteristic of many government websites.

## **Status**

### **Midterm: Complete**

As reported in the IRM midterm report, both of the commitment's milestones were fully implemented during the first year of the action plan, though this was largely due to their vague and limited reach (anticipating only the "formulation of a plan" and a "preliminary version" of the site).<sup>1</sup> The IRM midterm report found that many ministries find the conceptual shift required to join the unified website difficult and hence avoided joining, opting to remain with their own separate website. For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>2</sup>

Substantial activities in the focus of the commitment continued to be promoted and developed during the second year of the action plan cycle. More government ministries have joined the unified website, and the website offers more information from those ministries already part of it. However, only nine of the 25 government ministries and 15 of 44 other government agencies expected to join the website, or have joined at the time of writing (by the time of the midterm report, the numbers ministries and agencies that had joined were four and five respectively). According to government in the first nine months of 2017, almost 7 million online actions were performed by citizens, with over 17 million page views.

## **Did It Open Government?**

### **Access to Information: Marginal**

### **Civic Participation: Did not Change**

As stated in the midterm report, the creation of a unified website for government ministries does not, in itself, promote access to government information.<sup>3</sup> The improvement of such access hinges on how government ministries choose to make use of this new platform. This commitment does not require the opening up of any information previously withheld from the public. It does, however, make information already available more easily accessible, hence its marginal impact on improving public access to government information. Thus, on one hand it is limited (rather than non-existent) due to the wider implementation of the commitment beyond what was expected in the action plan (since the commitment originally only referred to "formulating a plan" and reaching a "preliminary version" of the website, but eventually the site was fully launched). On the other hand, the scope of ministries that joined the website is limited, and hence the scope of more easily accessible information is also limited. It should be noted that government ministry websites not part of the unified website often neglect the Arabic sections of their websites,<sup>4</sup> making the information less accessible to more than 20 percent of the population that speak Arabic as their first language.<sup>5</sup> The situation is better with government websites that are included in the unified website, but many of these have limited information available in Arabic. The Government ICT Authority clarified that it held a public consultation with the Israeli-Arab society in order to understand specific needs and specifications for websites and services provided in Arabic, and that the current scope of Arabic content in the unified website is limited because it is being rewritten, as opposed to being translated. The quantity of information in Arabic is expected to increase in the future.

It should also be noted that several of the ministries present on the unified website still maintain a separate website of their own. These separate websites are older and better known to the public and appear first on popular online search engines. Two interviewees, the former head of the Center for Empowerment of Citizens in Israel and a technology activist<sup>6</sup> told the IRM researcher that this limits public use of the unified website, as the scope of its data is still limited. The government official in charge of the unified website says the separate websites are gradually becoming obsolete as they will no longer be updated, thus traffic to the unified website will continue to increase.<sup>7</sup>

An Israeli NGO offering online information on government services and citizen's rights vis-à-vis government agencies told the IRM researcher that, while the website is "a step in the right direction," its implementation was not in line with the declared objective of the commitment to focus on the informational needs of citizens. However, the NGO also said that they recently sensed a sincere change in the way the government is approaching the issue - becoming more open to learn from the experience of civil society and cooperate with them to bring information to the public.<sup>8</sup>

### **Carried Forward?**

This commitment was not carried forward to Israel's third action plan as the government has assessed it to be in the advanced stages of completion.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel, IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pg. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Arabic sections of websites can be neglected, <https://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m03772.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Information is less accessible for Arabic speakers,

[http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa\\_template.html?hodaa=201711113](http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa_template.html?hodaa=201711113).

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Mr. Tomer Lotan, former head of CECl, 17 September 2017; Interview with Mary Loitzker of the Public Knowledge Workshop, 13 September 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mr. Yogev Shamni, head of "Accessible Government" unit, 18 September 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mr. Amitai Koren, head of "Kol Zchut" (Hebrew for "Every Right") website, 18 September 2017.

## 5. Data.gov

### Commitment Text:

To map existing databases, improve the technological platform to make them more accessible and encourage the public to use the databases.

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: The goal of the project is to improve public service and encourage the creative use by the public, academia and the Government of government databases. To date, more than 240 databases have been published as a result of the joint activity of more than 30 government offices. Based on these databases, dozens of applications for the public's benefit have been developed.

Main Objective: To increase exposure of government databases for public use.

### Milestones:

5.1. To encourage offices to publish new government databases

5.2. To improve the quality of published databases

5.3. To conduct a dialogue with the public of developers and set requirements for the databases

5.4. To map main databases in government offices

**Responsible institutions:** E-Government Unit, Government ICT Authority, Prime Minister's Office

**Supporting institutions:** Government offices and auxiliary units

**Start date:** 1 January 2011

**End date:** 1 June 2015

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did It Open Government?					
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding	
5. Overall			✓		✓	✓		✓			✓					✓					✓	

## Commitment Aim

While Israel's data.gov website was launched in 2011, it contained only limited amounts of datasets and did not generate much public interest. This commitment, as described in the action plan, aimed to increase the public use of government-held information by expanding the data.gov website to include more databases. More specifically, the expansion of the data.gov website is meant to:

- Promote the publication of a significant volume of government databases that were previously not publicly available;
- Publish government databases in an open format that allows non-governmental entities (for-profits and not-for-profits) to reuse this information to offer new services to the public.

It should be noted, however, that some of the commitment's milestones contain vague language such as "conducting a dialogue to promote" the uploading of datasets, and "encouraging" officials to do so.

## Status

### Midterm: Complete

Despite the vague and unambitious milestones set for this commitment, the IRM researchers reported in the midterm report that the commitment has been completed. However, the end date set by the government was in fact 1 June 2015, putting the commitment outside the timeframe of the action plan. Beyond what was described and expected in the commitment, the midterm report found that during the first year of the action plan, the number of datasets available on the site increased by 50 percent, bringing the total number to more than 200. For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>1</sup>

There are two main developments that took place during the second year of the action plan cycle. The first was the expansion of the data.gov website and the number of datasets available on it. The website has expanded to contain 510 datasets at the time of this report, more than double the number of datasets at the midterm.<sup>2</sup> The second is the adoption of government resolution 1933 on 30 August 2016.<sup>3</sup> This resolution orders the opening of all government websites by the year 2022, the mapping of them by 2017, and a release of 100 datasets during this year, which was achieved (as can be seen from the above information). The government allocated a 15 million NIS budget to promote the mapping of government databases and incentivizing government agencies to make datasets public by supporting required efforts to do so.

## Did It Open Government?

**Access to Information: Major**

**Civic Participation: Marginal**

This commitment aimed to make more government-held information available to the public. In the past, government agencies refrained from releasing databases to the public but the data.gov website is changing this approach. Implementation of this commitment went significantly beyond what was envisioned in the action plan, with the opening of more than 400 datasets during the action plan period. More importantly, many of these are datasets of public significance, in contrast to earlier versions of the data.gov website where many datasets with minimal public demand were added. Interviewed NGO officials, who were consulted during the process, expressed satisfaction with the nature of the datasets released, although they pointed out that often the datasets are not regularly updated or maintained, lead to broken links or contain missing information.<sup>4</sup> According to the government, this issue is addressed in the new CIO guidelines as of February 2018.

The government resolution 1933 has the potential to create more transformative change in this field, but civil society activists involved in the field argue that implementation at this stage has been unsatisfactory. The former head of the Center for Citizens' Empowerment says the data.gov website is not well maintained and datasets are not regularly updated. He believes

this is a result of a lack of human resources.<sup>5</sup> This problem should be solved by the budget allocated to this effort. In this sense, it should be noted that while 15 million NIS were allocated for fiscal year 2017, less than 30 percent of this was used by August 2017.<sup>6</sup> The resolution includes standards on the process and format for disclosure of datasets and most importantly encourages a disclosure "state of mind" which is the most important condition for achieving actual, long lasting and significant change.

### **Carried Forward?**

The continued expansion of the data.gov.il website has been carried forward to Israel's third action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Expansion of the data.gov website, <https://data.gov.il/>.

<sup>3</sup> Adoption of the government resolution 1933, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/Secretary/GovDecisions/2016/Pages/dec1933.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Shevy Kerzon, head of Public Knowledge Workshop" and other activists from the organization, 13 September 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Mr. Tomer Lotan, former head of CECl, 17 September 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Information provided by government official in confidence.

## 6. To Measure the Public's Satisfaction with Government Services and the Quality of Service in the Various Channels

**Commitment Text:**

To measure the quality of services provided to the public by government offices

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: The Government has yet to conduct a broad examination of the quality of services provided to the public. Only a small portion of the bodies examined themselves with regard to this aspect and each in a different manner.

Main Objective: To improve service to the public by creating standardization, while defining reference points to provide excellent government services and using them as an administrative tool to focus resources and for learning.

**Milestones:**

- 6.1. To measure ten large bodies that provide service to the public.
- 6.2. To publish the annual report for 2014.
- 6.3. To expand the assessment to all bodies that provide extensive face-to-face services (excluding hospitals).
- 6.4. To examine the methods used by various countries to expand the assessment to additional bodies and to increase the assessment of existing ones beginning in 2017.

**Responsible institutions:** Unit for the Improvement of Government Public Services, Government ICT Authority, Prime Minister's Office

**Supporting institution(s):** NA

**Start date:** 1 January 2014

**End date:** 31 December 2015

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did It Open Government?					
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding	
6. Overall			✓		Unclear					✓					✓			✓				

**Commitment Aim**

This commitment aimed to offer decision makers statistically viable information to assess the levels of public satisfaction with government services. Decision makers would thus have a

tool to identify problems in public services and work towards their solutions. More specifically the commitment called for:

- Measuring public satisfaction from the services of 10 large government agencies;
- Publishing a report presenting survey findings;
- Expanding the scope of the assessment surveys;
- Learning from the experience of other countries in such activities.

Since this commitment focuses on collecting statistical data on services from the public and internally documents government activity without making any new category of information available to the public, the IRM researcher assessed it as not relevant to any OGP values.<sup>1</sup> The survey's results were published online in August 2017.<sup>2</sup>

## Status

### Midterm: Substantial

The end date for this commitment was set at December 2015, before the preparation of the IRM midterm report, which listed the commitment as substantially implemented. The government surveyed more agencies than planned in the first milestone but came short of "expanding the assessment to all bodies that provide extensive face-to-face services (excluding hospitals) as anticipated for the third milestone." Nevertheless, more than 80 percent of such bodies were surveyed. For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>3</sup>

### End of term: Substantial

The head of the Unit for the Improvement of Government Public Services which oversees the implementation of this commitment replaced his predecessor in March 2017. After some delay (in February 2018), the incoming head of the Unit informed the IRM researcher that during the implementation period, the scope of this activity was widened to include 20 leading government agencies. According to him, this covers all large-scale face to face service providers in government except for one. In regard to milestone 6.4 (examine the methods used by various countries) the head of the Unit informed the IRM researcher that this is planned as part of the next stage of the project in 2019.

From discussions with CSOs involved in OGP in Israel, the IRM researcher learned that the implementation of this commitment, including in its later stages, did not bring any engagement with CSOs, and that the officials involved in the commitment were not active members in the OGP forum that met twice to bring together CSOs and the relevant government officials.<sup>4</sup> The government's midterm self-assessment report did not provide additional information on the progress in implementation of milestones 6.3 and 6.4 that were yet to be completed when it was published.

## Did It Open Government?

**Access to Information: Did not Change**

**Civic Participation: Did not Change**

**Public Accountability: Did not Change**

This commitment was designed to improve government services to the public. As mentioned above, it aimed to offer decision makers (and the public at large, since its findings are published online) tools to assess the level of public satisfaction with governmental services. It largely succeeded in doing so, as described in the IRM midterm report.<sup>5</sup> However, as was also stated in the midterm report, the commitment is not relevant in any significant measure to the three main OGP values.<sup>6</sup> The Government ICT Authority believes that the consistent annual evaluation and publication of government services performance plays a key role in government accountability. However, this commitment did not bring upon change in this respect – neither with disclosure of previously undisclosed information, nor opportunities for the public to influence decisions, nor any measures to increase public accountability after the survey findings.



## Carried Forward?

This commitment has not been carried forward to Israel's third action plan due to preference for a new initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 40.

<sup>2</sup> <http://cio-shipur.gov.il/Lobby/MeasurementAndControl/Pages/%D7%93%D7%95%D7%97-%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%99%D7%93%D7%AA-%D7%90%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA-2016.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. Tomer Lotan, former head of CECI, 17 September 2017; Meeting with CSO representatives, 13 September 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 41. Details can also be found on, <https://www.gov.il/exfiles/dochtikshuv/2015/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 40.

## 7. Increasing Transparency of Information Regarding Legislation

### Commitment Text:

To consolidate all the State laws and relevant documents on the Knesset website.

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: The Knesset resolved to act to increase transparency of information regarding legislation and the relevant documents – drafts of proposed legislation and protocols of the plenary and the committees, as well as to prepare an up-to-date draft of the laws of the State of Israel.

Main Objective: To increase transparency of the process and documents related to legislation

### Milestones:

7.1. To expand the Knesset website so that it includes all the State laws and relevant documents (earlier versions of the law, relevant amendments, plenary protocols)

7.2. To hold meetings with civil society organizations to hear requests and ideas to expand the information presented and how it is made accessible to the public.

7.3. To expand the Knesset website and present proposed legislation in the legislative process.

7.4. To develop an integrated system for presenting the totality of all legislation.

Responsible institution: Israeli Knesset

Supporting institution: Ministry of Justice

Start date: 1 July 2013

End date: 30 June 2017

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm End of Term		Did It Open Government?					
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding	
7. Overall			✓		✓	✓		✓			✓				✓						✓	

### Commitment Aim

Prior to the implementation of the second OGP action plan, there was no central website or database with information on Israeli legislation that was open and free to the public. This commitment intended to make such legislative documents more accessible and less

restricted to the public by expanding the Knesset website to include all State laws and their relevant documents. In addition, the commitment called on the Knesset to meet with civil society to receive requests and ideas on what information should be included on the website.

## Status

### Midterm: Substantial

The commitment was substantially implemented by the time of the IRM midterm report. The Knesset had, by then, developed its free and open website to present all Israeli legislation, and an ongoing dialogue was taking place between the Knesset and civil society. As stated in the midterm report, there was no structured consultation process and no documentation of such consultations.<sup>1</sup> Consultations did take place, but in a somewhat informal and sporadic fashion. While the commitment was technically completed in that all milestones were implemented, there were some issues with updating the database. As the specific wording of the milestones were largely met – for instance "to develop an integrated system for presenting the consolidated version of legislation"- the commitment was marked as substantially completed. The IRM researchers, however, did point out that the Knesset's plan for actually presenting the totality of legislation (rather than merely creating a system to do so) was not completed. According to the government, completion is on schedule for December 2018. For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>2</sup>

### End of term: Complete

Since the midterm, the Knesset has continued to develop this website in line with the commitment. As stated above, the commitment was substantially implemented when compared with the narrow wording in the action plan but has since gone beyond the commitment milestones to come closer to realizing its full potential. All bills are now available online, including those rejected by parliament. The full history of each bill and the status of the pending bills are also available on the website.<sup>3</sup> There is an ongoing dialogue with CSOs. They were approached again in early 2017 with a call for comments on the website. Comments were received from the "Public Knowledge Workshop" and Center for Empowerment of Citizens in Israel (CECI) and were integrated into the website.<sup>4</sup>

The head of the website informed the IRM researcher that the Knesset's intensive "marketing" efforts through CSOs, government officials, online new agencies, law school deans and more, have enabled them to increase traffic to the website, which currently gets more than 100,000 page views a month.<sup>5</sup> The website is still short of presenting all laws in their "integrated form", i.e. with all amendments incorporated into the text. The website director believes this will take place during 2018. The website director also hopes to be able to present all secondary legislation soon, but this requires the cooperation of the Ministry of Justice, so it could be difficult to obtain the necessary information.

## Did It Open Government?

### Access to Information: Major

### Civic Participation: Marginal

Open access to legislative information without additional charges allows citizens to more easily learn about their rights and duties, to better understand the laws controlling their lives and society, and to more easily engage in the highly-legalized Israeli public discourse. Before the implementation of this commitment, citizens of Israel had no access to a free online source to familiarize themselves with the country's laws, the legislative process, or the status of bills. Implementation of this commitment has made this information open and easily accessible to the Israeli public. There is still room for improvement in that the full text of laws as they exist, with all amendments incorporated, is still not available, and laypersons can still find it difficult to understand the current legal situation. But the Knesset officials in charge of the commitment are aware of this shortcoming and are working to solve it. In general, it can confidently be said that the commitment's implementation is a major contribution to the

public's access to important information. The ongoing dialogue with CSOs and the incorporation of CSO comments into the website has improved civic participation, though only marginally. It cannot be said, however, that it presented a significant contribution to increasing civic participation in the democratic decision-making process.

### **Carried Forward?**

This commitment has been carried forward to Israel's third action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Id, pg. 44.

<sup>3</sup> The history and status of each bill, <http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawAboutSite.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ms. Gali Ben-Or, director of legislation website, 21 September 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Gali Ben-Or, head of the legislation website, 17 September 2017.

## 8. Developing a Governmental 'Tool Box' for Public Participation in the Government's Work

**Commitment Text:**

*To develop online tools to serve government offices in public participation processes.*

*Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: To date the Government has provided a range of platforms and tools for public participation, including cooperation with organizations, whether online (the Gov Share platform, based on web 2.0 technology) and in other ways, such as establishing tri-sectoral round tables. More investment is planned in order to expand the 'tool box' for public participation in government offices' activities.*

*Main Objective: In order to realize the vision of public participation and improve the offices' ability to administer effective participation processes, the Government plans to develop and improve tools and practical and technological applications to integrate participation processes in offices in various forms:*

*A. To continue developing and operating tools and technological applications to integrate participation processes in offices by E-Government.*

*B. To establish a pool of operators across the Government, led by the Governance and Social Affairs Department, through the Procurement Administration, which will assist government offices conduct practical and online processes for public participation by purchasing services and making them accessible to the offices.*

**Milestones:**

*8.1. To develop five tools/online applications.*

*8.2. To establish and operate a pool of suppliers that will assist in administering and implementing online and physical public participation processes by the offices.*

**Responsible institutions:** Governance and Social Affairs Department, Prime Minister's Office

**Supporting institutions:** E-Government unit, Prime Minister's Office; Director of Procurement, Ministry of Finance; Government units that comprise the group of potential operators for public participation processes

**Start date:** 1 April 2012

**End date:** 30 June 2016

Commitment Overview	Specificity	OGP Value Relevance (as written)	Potential Impact	Completion	Midterm	Did It Open Government?
					End of Term	

	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
8. Overall			✓			✓		✓		✓						✓			✓		

**Commitment Aim**

This commitment aimed to offer public agencies technological tools that can support their efforts to run public participation initiatives and extract conclusions from the views and voices of the many expected to partake. It is hoped that the development of such tools might encourage government agencies to engage more readily in public participation initiatives. Specifically, the commitment seeks to:

- Develop five online tools for public participation to be used by government agencies;
- Establish and operate a pool of suppliers to help agencies integrate such tools in their work.

**Status**

**Midterm: Complete**

The commitment was assessed as fully implemented by the time of the midterm report.<sup>1</sup> The government had by then presented its five tools: an online polling tool, a community knowledge management tool, a roundtable/forum platform, a blogging platform, and a service provider's database. In addition, several providers (commercial entities such as "Tovanot", "Kimron" and others) had already begun working with government ministries on public participation processes engaging with these five new tools.<sup>2</sup>

**Did It Open Government?**

**Civic Participation: Marginal**

Government agencies lack the tools to manage regular large-scale public participation activities, and therefore providing them with such tools is necessary to enable such processes. While the availability of such tools might encourage government authorities to more readily engage in public participation activities, the IRM researchers expressed doubts in the midterm report whether this was an important component in achieving increased public participation.<sup>3</sup> According to the IRM midterm report, the lack of technological tools themselves is not a major impediment to public participation and the commitment did not stipulate how the tools should be utilized, only that they should be created. While the commitment did not create new opportunities for the public to participate, it has changed the way such opportunities, if created, can be managed. Therefore, the IRM researcher has assessed the commitment as having a marginal impact on civic participation.

One example of the use of the tools has been the government consultation during the development of the third OGP action plan. The government is managing this process while relying heavily on the "forums' platform" tool developed as part of this commitment. But the

process still suffers from shortcomings (described in more detail in Commitment 9). It is worth noting that the tendency to focus on technology may have to do with the decision to put the Chief Technology Officer's office as the authority in charge of OGP in Israel.

### **Carried Forward?**

Parts of this commitment have been carried forward to a new civic participation commitment in Israel's third action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Providers working on public participation, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/policyplanning/shituf/Pages/dafrashishituf.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 46.

# 9. Continued Integration of Public Participation in Government Work

**Commitment Text:**

*To formulate a central outlook for public participation processes in the government and advance specific processes.*

*Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: There are currently processes for public participation in the Government of Israel and the efforts and capabilities to advance additional participation processes should be increased.*

**Main Objective:**

- A. To formulate a policy for public participation in Government work.
- B. To formulate an institutionalized outlook for implementing public participation processes in Government work.
- C. To conduct activities to integrate the culture of public participation in the work of offices by developing tools for guidance, training and lectures.

**Milestones:**

- 9.1. To publish a guide for public participation in government work.
- 9.2. To formulate a central outlook for public participation processes in government Work.
- 9.3. To hold meetings to integrate public participation in the government.
- 9.4. To accompany or lead the four significant processes for participation in the Government.
- 9.5. To accompany and encourage the establishment of round tables.

**Responsible institutions:** Governance and Social Affairs Department, Prime Minister's Office

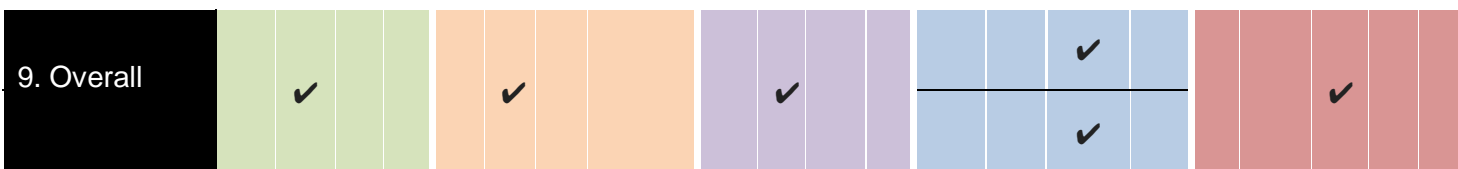
**Supporting institutions:** Policy planning departments in government offices, Ministry of Justice, Unit for the Improvement of Government Public Services, information systems administrators

**Start date:** 1 April 2014

**End date:** 30 June 2016

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		End of Term		Did It Open Government?			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding	





### Commitment Aim

This commitment aimed to address an unsatisfactory culture of public participation among government agencies. While there is a growing tendency among public authorities to initiate processes for public participation, the existing processes remain largely undocumented and unknown to public circles beyond NGO activists. Specifically, this commitment set out to achieve a better culture of public participation by:

- Standardizing the protocols for such processes;
- Working with government officials on initiating such processes;
- Encouraging the establishment of “round tables” bringing together the governmental sector and civil society.

### Status

#### Midterm: Substantial

This commitment was described in the midterm report as “substantial” in its level of implementation. However, the vague wording of the commitment made the proper level of implementation difficult to determine, even though government activities for some milestones went beyond what was described in the action plan and others were completed after its planned end date. As described in the midterm report, some processes were launched, including an online public consultation regarding regulation of Google Street View, an open public consultation in a governmental public commission following the 2011 social protests, and a consultation process regarding the integration of immigrants from Ethiopia into society. For more information, see the IRM midterm report.<sup>1</sup>

#### End of term: Substantial

The government has taken some additional steps in this field since the midterm report, and reports others taken after the end of date for the commitment, including a national public participation conference used to disseminate the public participation tools. A public participation guide was published in December 2017.

For milestone 9.5, the government held a roundtable session that the government initiated to discuss Israel’s third OGP action plan due to be presented to OGP on 12 July 2017.<sup>2</sup> Unlike during the development of the second action plan, the government invited a variety of CSOs and commercial entities to partake in a day-long roundtable to develop the third action plan. It also made use of one of the technological tools developed for public participation and gathered comments which it clustered as “insights”. Furthermore, unlike the second action plan, the government did not present a ready and full set of commitments; it spent the first half of the day holding a general discussion on the overall goals of open government, and then held subject-specific discussions on ideas for the third action plan. However, organizers did not get back to participants to report on how the roundtable impacted the decision-making process. It did not present actual commitments or a draft of the action plan, and the discussion was held in general terms, leaving the CSO representatives interviewed for this report with a feeling that they were not actual participants with an invitation to leave a concrete mark on the action plan.

The government reports that based on comments collected during the July 2017 consultation, it developed suggestions for public participation impact indicators. However, a concrete policy regarding the evaluation framework for open government has yet to be developed. The government claims that consultations and public comments effected the

commitments for the third action plan prior to its publication in December 2017. These changes are not documented in the online consultation website.

Several interviewed CSOs said they sense a greater willingness of government officials to receive inputs and ideas from them.<sup>3</sup> The head of one CSO told the IRM researcher that the relationship with the government, while still far from what it should be in their eyes, is gradually becoming less one-directional.<sup>4</sup> The government also reports it is making efforts to bring in the public, not just CSOs, into such processes. In the framework of working on Israel's third OGP action plan, the government contact reported, for instance, on a Facebook campaign inviting citizens to offer their insights for the action plan. In addition, an internal governmental Public Participation Guide has been published to improve practice.

## **Did It Open Government?**

### **Civic Participation: Marginal**

As described in the IRM midterm report, the government has engaged in significant public participation processes following the 2006 Lebanon War when problems in government-civil society relations and coordination were exposed.<sup>5</sup> At first, public participation mostly centered around coordination, but has recently expanded to allow for greater public participation in the decision-making process. This commitment aimed to eventually widen the scope of such public participation processes, though the goals were vague and modest such as “to create a central outlook”, “to hold meetings to integrate...”, “to publish a guide...”, to encourage the establishment of...” etc.

Looking at the processes that have taken place as part of this commitment, and especially since the midterm report, it can be said that the “next steps” suggested in the midterm report were largely implemented. For instance, public participation processes are now much better documented and one can look back at the process using also the technological tools mentioned in Commitment 8, and the processes occur from an initial stage of the government decision-making process. As described above, there is little evidence of the public having an actual impact on the decisions reached, even if they are more involved in the process. The IRM researcher recommends providing more accountability in the form of reports summarizing consultation processes and offering evidence to its actual impact outcomes. In addition, public consultations should be expanded in fields currently left out of public participation circles, such as budgeting.

As mentioned above, the government published a Public Participation Guide and convened a public participation conference which it says will become an annual event. The IRM researcher recommends that these tools be used to create best practices, to stress the importance of ongoing public participation processes held at several different stages of each decision-making process, to include several rounds of consultation and updates, and to determine the actual impact of public participation on the outcomes of the process. This has yet to be realized in most public participation processes, though, as mentioned in the midterm report, the integrating process of immigrants from Ethiopia into society has exhibited some of these principles.<sup>6</sup>

## **Carried Forward?**

Parts of this commitment have been carried forward to a new public participation commitment in Israel's third action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Roundtable for the third action plan, <https://www.the7eye.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8-%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9D-%D7%A1%D7%95%D7%A4%D7%99-060717.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Stakeholders' meeting, 13 September 2017.

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<sup>4</sup> Shevy Kirzon, Head of Public Knowledge Workshop, interview on 17 September 2017, Tel-Aviv.

<sup>5</sup> See fn. 1, p. 48, Israel IRM Midterm Report,

[https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Israel IRM Midterm Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel\\_MidTerm-Progress\\_2015-2017\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_MidTerm-Progress_2015-2017_ENG.pdf), pg. 50.

## Methodological Note

The end-of-term report is based on desk research and interviews with governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders. The IRM report builds on the findings of the government's self-assessment report; other assessments of progress put out by civil society, the private sector, or international organizations; and the previous IRM progress report.

For purposes of this report, the IRM researcher looked into activities carried out during the second year of Israel's second OGP action plan. The IRM researcher searched for and surveyed written evidence for such progress in government documents and other documentation produced during implementation of the various commitments. The IRM researcher then conducted interviews with both government officials and CSO representatives involved in the planning and implementation of the action plan, and observed the meeting of the Israeli Open Government Forum in July 2017,<sup>1</sup> where discussions regarding the third action plan were launched. Lastly, the IRM researcher analyzed some of the outcomes of the commitments, such as the Knesset legislation website, sites documenting public participation processes (Commitment 9) using public participation tools developed for this purpose (Commitment 8), the unified government services website (Commitment 4), the legislation website (Commitment 7), the data.gov website (Commitment 5), the satisfaction survey report (Commitment 6), the central FOI site (Commitment 2) and the government contract tables published online (Commitment 3).

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The Open Government Partnership (OGP) aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, to empower citizens, to fight corruption, and to harness new technologies to strengthen governance. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and to improve accountability.



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<sup>1</sup> The forum met in Neve-Ilan on 10 July 2017.