

Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Portugal Transitional Results Report 2018-2020

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I. Introduction

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a global partnership that brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive, and accountable. Action plan commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete ongoing reforms, or initiate an entirely new area. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) monitors all action plans to ensure governments follow through on commitments. Civil society and government leaders use the evaluations to reflect on their progress and determine if efforts have impacted people's lives.

The IRM Staff carried out this evaluation. The IRM aims to inform ongoing dialogue around the development and implementation of future commitments. For a full description of the IRM's methodology, please visit <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/independent-reporting-mechanism>.

This report covers the implementation of Portugal's 1st action plan for 2018-2020. In 2021, the IRM will implement a new approach to its research process and the scope of its reporting on action plans, approved by the IRM Refresh.¹ The IRM adjusted its Implementation Reports for 2018-2020 action plans to fit the transition process to the new IRM products and enable the IRM to adjust its workflow in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on OGP country processes.

¹ For more information, see: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/accountability/about-the-irm/irm-refresh/>

II. Action Plan Implementation

The IRM Transitional Results Report assesses the status of the action plan's commitments and the results from their implementation at the end of the action plan cycle. This report does not re-visit the assessments for "Verifiability," "Relevance" or "Potential Impact." The IRM assesses those three indicators in IRM Design Reports. For more details on each indicator, please see Annex I in this report.

2.1. General Highlights and Results

Portugal's first action plan included eight commitments in the areas of open data, transparency, digital inclusion, and civic participation. At the end of the 2018-2020 implementation cycle, Commitments 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 were completed; Commitment 5 had substantial implementation and Commitments 7 and 8 recorded limited progress in implementation. Commitments 1 and 6 were part of SIMPLEX+, a government program of administrative and legislative modernization launched in 2006.

According to the self-assessment report, issues with the design of commitments challenged their implementation, monitoring, and involvement from key partners and stakeholders. These issues included a lack of clear scope and/or tasks of the responsible entities, and absence of clear progress indicators. The timeline for implementation was also considered a challenge, as at some point the process felt "rushed".¹ For some civil society organizations, the lack of engagement -or no engagement at all- from some key public sector stakeholders posed a challenge to implementation.² In addition, during the implementation cycle there were changes in management within the Agência para a Modernização Administrativa (Agency for Administrative Modernization, AMA), and the Laboratório de Experimentação da Administração Pública (Experimentation Lab for Public Administration, LabX) is now responsible for following up on OGP activities in the country. These changes contributed positively to the implementation process, as the new team's scope of work is more relevant to the open government agenda.³

In terms of government practice, commitments completed during implementation contributed to the provision of better access to information in different policy areas, such as taxes and personal information management, and to the provision of opportunities for civic participation in the legislation development process. Through Commitment 1, for example, a new app was created to allow citizens to control access to personal information by government and private institutions, while Commitment 6 on the Consulta.Lex website, creates a tool for citizens to provide input on legislation proposals. A civil society representative recognized that Commitment 2 on organizing Open Administration Week saw effective coordination and participation with government.⁴

Commitment 8 on strengthening transparency in public procurement which the IRM Design Report identified as a "noteworthy commitment", achieved limited implementation and did not contribute to change in the status quo. An assessment by Transparency International Portugal (TI Portugal) considers that the information disclosed as part of Commitment 8 does not clearly meet Open Contracting Data Standards.⁵

2.2. COVID-19 Pandemic impact on implementation

In March 2020, the Portuguese Government declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ A more severe state of calamity⁷ was declared in April through resolution 33-

A/2020 by the Council of Ministries,⁸ which was later extended until the end of July.⁹ These declarations established limits and conditions for freedom of movement and the rationalization of use of public services.

According to the self-assessment report, these limitations required changes in activities planned for implementation of commitments, mainly forcing all meetings to be held online. Some of the training and awareness raising activities planned for Commitment 7 on implementing and monitoring administrative and environmental data could not be implemented because of these restrictions as they required in-person participation.

According to a representative from TI Portugal, while technology has allowed the implementation process to continue and engage actors outside the capital, it is also important to consider how it can, at the same time, limit participation from those who do not have access to technological tools, are part of traditionally marginalized groups, or have any type of disability.¹⁰

As part of its initiatives to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government, launched an access to information initiative which included a website, app, and mass media campaign. *Estamos ON*¹¹, a one-stop shop online information service on the government response to COVID-19, provides information on rules of the State of Emergency; government support to companies; civil society initiatives; epidemic status with a graphic visualization option, etc. In terms of public procurement responding to the pandemic, a TI Portugal representative considered that the data published by the government was limited in quality.¹² TI Portugal launched its own public procurement dashboard in May 2020.¹³

¹ Luís Vidigal, Platform of Civil Society, interview with IRM staff, 24 February 2021.

² Karina Carvalho, TI Portugal, comment received during pre-publication review, 12 April 2021.

³ Luís Vidigal, Platform of Civil Society, interview with IRM staff, 24 February 2021.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ TI Portugal, Comments on implementation of Commitment # 7 and #8 of the I National Open Administration Plan, Transparência e Integridade: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EZxU2zvIPBYjGARVuQnn30_14SLKLniB/view

⁶ CNN, Portugal declares state of emergency over coronavirus, https://edition.cnn.com/world/live-news/coronavirus-outbreak-03-18-20-intl-hnk/h_c38629e1d89e56217884d93ed029ed2e

⁷ ICLG.com, 2020, Portugal | State of Calamity and State of Emergency, <https://iclg.com/briefing/12416-state-of-calamity-and-state-of-emergency>

⁸ Diário da República Eletrónico, Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 33-A/2020, <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/132883344/details/maximized>

⁹ Diário da República Eletrónico, Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 53-A/2020, <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/137956081/details/maximized>

¹⁰ Karina Carvalho, TI Portugal, interview with IRM staff, 1 March 2021.

¹¹ Government of Portugal, Estamos ON, <https://covid19estamoson.gov.pt/>

¹² Karina Carvalho, TI Portugal, comment received during pre-publication review, 12 April 2021

¹³ <https://transparencia.pt/dados/>

2.3. Early results

The IRM acknowledges that results may not be visible within the two-year timeframe of the action plan and that at least a substantial level of completion is required to assess early results. For the purpose of the Transitional Results Report, the IRM will use the “*Did it Open Government?*” (DIOG) indicator to highlight early results based on the changes to government practice in areas relevant to OGP values. Moving forward, new IRM Results Report will not continue using DIOG as an indicator.

Section 2.3 focuses on outcomes from the implementation of commitments that had an ambitious or strong design, per the IRM Design Report assessment or that may have lacked clarity and/or ambition but had successful implementation with “major” or “outstanding” changes to government practice.¹ Commitments considered for analysis in this section had at least a “substantial” level of implementation, as assessed by the IRM in Section 2.4.² While this section provides the analysis of the IRM’s findings for the commitments that meet the criteria described above, Section 2.4 includes an overview of the level of completion for all the commitments in the action plan.

Commitment 6: Consulta.Lex	
Aim of the commitment	This commitment aimed to re-design the Consulta.Lex website by providing additional features for citizens and civil society to engage in the policy-making process. These would include tailored notifications for users’ areas of interest, a comments feature, and a wider range of opportunities for public entities to design the consultation process (for example, by using questionnaires rather than open-ended questions). ³
Did it open government? Marginal	<p>This initiative was developed as part of SIMPLEX+2018 and was included in the action plan due to its relevance to the OGP process. Before implementation of the new features, the only option for citizens to participate in legislation development was through a single government-managed email address. The updated website allows citizens to make comments on legislative proposals by different government entities through a comment box. It also includes a FAQ section to inform citizens on use of the website. Citizens can also subscribe to receive alerts when new proposals are published in more than 40 different policy areas.</p> <p>At the time of writing the report (March 2021) Consulta.Lex holds or has held more than 170 public consultations (there were 79 consultations before implementation of the commitment), and while there is no baseline for comparison, Consulta.Lex contains more than 2,770 comments from the public and there are over 5,000 users (registration is required for participation).⁴ It is unclear whether the new platform has increased the frequency of consultations taking place or amount of comments received via this platform than before it was launched.</p> <p>Implementation of this initiative represents a marginal change in government practice regarding civic participation, as it provides an alternative electronic tool to collect citizen input on legislative proposals. However, users can only read their own comments on the platform. It is still up to each government entity to decide how long proposals are available for consultation (although some consultations have a minimum term), how comments are considered to adjust proposals, and if feedback is provided to participants. There is evidence</p>

	<p>of feedback via a report on the public consultation, that is published with the consultation when it has finished, but this does not appear consistent across all consultations.⁵</p> <p>Civil society organizations recognize this platform’s importance to engage citizens, but they also emphasize the need to further improve the website’s functionality to allow direct comments on specific sections of draft legislation and to proactively publish more detailed information about the results of the consultation process.⁶ Although slightly broader in scope than the Consulta.Lex portal, a more ambitious and useful goal in this policy area, they add, would be to establish a legislative footprint to provide better understanding of how legislation is developed from the beginning, and who the relevant public and private actors are that influence the different stages of the process.⁷</p>
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¹ IRM Design Reports identified strong commitments as “**noteworthy commitments**” if they were assessed as verifiable, relevant, and “transformative” potential impact. If no commitments met the potential impact threshold, the IRM selected noteworthy commitments from the commitments with “moderate” potential impact. For the list of Portugal’s noteworthy commitments, see the Executive Summary of the 2018-2020 IRM Design Report, <https://bit.ly/3ba6KHx>

² The following commitment assessed as noteworthy in Portugal’s IRM Design Report is not included in this section because its limited implementation means there is not enough progress to assess results:
Commitment 8: Strengthening transparency in public procurement

³ Open Government Partnership, IRM Design Report Portugal 2018-2020, <https://bit.ly/3ba6KHx>

⁴ Government point of contact, comment provided to IRM during pre-publication, 21 April 2021

⁵ Government point of contact, comment provided to IRM during pre-publication, 21 April 2021

⁶ Luís Vidigal, Platform of Civil Society, interview with IRM staff, 24 February 2021.

⁷ Karina Carvalho, TI Portugal, interview with IRM staff, 1 March 2021.

2.4. Commitment implementation

The table below includes an assessment of the level of completion for each commitment in the action plan.

Commitment	Completion: <i>(no evidence available, not started, limited, substantial or complete)</i>
1. Follow my data	<p>Complete</p> <p>The government developed the <i>Autenticação.gov</i> website and app and launched them in August 2020. They are available for Windows, Mac (OS), Linux, Android, and iOS.¹ By integrating with the Digital Mobile Key, it allows citizens and businesses to monitor and manage which institutions have access to their personal information, and access and print personal data on their citizen card, etc.² In the future, the government aims to develop similar applications with other entities. Although the number of users has been climbing since 2019, the total number of Digital Key Users now stands at more than 2.5 million individuals, of which 1.1 million joined in 2020. There are 1.7 million active Digital Key Users.³</p>
2. Open Administration Week	<p>Complete</p> <p>Open Administration Week was held from 13-15 March 2019. It consisted of three activities: a discussion on open data innovation for SMEs and startups, a workshop on open administration, and a discussion on open administration and its implications to fight corruption. The Platform of Civil Society Associations was responsible for organizing the week.⁴ Its implementation allowed civil society organizations to increase awareness of the OGP process, but also to achieve a level of coordination and participation that they would expect to see in implementation of future commitments.⁵ Information on workshops and discussions was disseminated before and after each event through the OGP Portugal and civil society websites, and social media channels.</p>
3. Disclosure of Tax and Customs Information	<p>Complete</p> <p>The Tax and Customs authority developed and implemented a plan for dissemination of information and administrative instructions. There was one meeting in 2019 and two meetings in 2020 with Portugal's OGP multi-stakeholder forum. As a result, information on the <i>Portal das Finanças</i>⁶ has been reorganized by categories -tax, customs, support - to facilitate navigation; information on legislation and binding information has been published; and an internal governance manual for information update has been adopted.⁷</p>
4. Tutorial videos on the use of open data platforms	<p>Complete</p> <p>Three tutorial videos were developed and are offered as part of a three-module course on Lisbon University Institute's website since July 2019. They focus on extraction, preparation, and visualization of data and are available on www.dados.gov.pt. Users need to register to access the course.⁸</p>

5. Clear State Organization	Substantial <p>The Directorate General for Administration and Public Employment designed a new, more user-friendly interface,⁹ as verified by the IRM through evidence provided by the government. However, this new version could not be launched during the implementation period due to delays from the company responsible for its development. These delays are attributed to the complexity of the process, and the requirement to develop both the private and public interface simultaneously.¹⁰ The new version was not launched by the end of the implementation period.</p>
6. Consulta.Lex	Complete <p>For details regarding implementation and early results see section 2.3</p>
7. Implementation and monitoring of the regime of access to administrative and environmental information	Limited <p>The Committee of Access to Administrative Documents (CADA) developed a model for publication of data on public officials responsible for access to information, but the data will not be published until a data validation mechanism is created. However, the CADA website provides information for 260 public officials responsible for access to information who have registered on the site. The other milestones on availability of metadata, and publication of good access to information practices by public entities, was not started.</p>
8. Strengthening transparency in public procurement	Limited <p>The Institute for Public Markets, Real Estate and Construction (IMPIC) published a database (a .zip file) of public procurement in open contracting data standard format, as well as the Annual Report on Public Procurement in Portugal for 2018. IMPIC has published this report since 2010. There is no information on new tools to stimulate civic participation or monitoring, however, an integrity pact is currently being implemented by TI Portugal and the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage.¹¹ An assessment of this commitment conducted by TI Portugal indicates that the .zip file published is defective and cannot be consulted, and that there is no evidence of a criteria-based publication process or publication of procedural documents.¹²</p>

¹ Agência para a Modernização Administrativa, Identificação, autenticação e assinatura digital do Estado Português, <https://www.autenticacao.gov.pt/web/guest/cc-aplicacao>

² Ibid.

³ Agência Para a Modernização Administrativa, *Estatísticas de Chave Móvel Digital*, Autenticação.gov, 2021, <https://www.autenticacao.gov.pt/estatisticas-de-chave-movel-digital>

⁴ Open Government Portugal, Commitment 2: Open administration week, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/commitment-2>

⁵ Luís Vidigal, Platform of Civil Society, interview with IRM staff, 24 February 2021.

⁶ Portal das Finanças, <https://info.portaldasfinancas.gov.pt/pt/home/Paginas/homepage.aspx>

⁷ Agência Para a Modernização Administrativa, Self-Assessment Final Report, <https://bit.ly/3rQfacB>

⁸ ISCTE Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Curso sobre a utilização de plataformas de dados abertos, <https://online-learning.iscte-iul.pt/courses/plano-nacional-de-acao-de-administracao-aberta-pt>

⁹ Open Government Portugal, Commitment 5: Clear State Organization, <https://bit.ly/2Oq7HIT>

¹⁰ Agência Para a Modernização Administrativa, Self-Assessment Final Report, <https://bit.ly/3rQfacB>

¹¹ TI Portugal, Comments on implementation of Commitment 7 and 8 of the I National Open Administration Plan, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EZxU2zvlPBjYjGARVuQnn30_I4SLKLnIb/view

¹² Ibid.

III. Multi-stakeholder Process

3.1 Multi-stakeholder process throughout action plan implementation

In 2017, OGP adopted the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards intended to support participation and co-creation by civil society at all stages of the OGP cycle. All OGP-participating countries are expected to meet these standards. The standards aim to raise ambition and quality of participation during development, implementation, and review of OGP action plans.

OGP’s Articles of Governance also establish participation and co-creation requirements a country or entity must meet in their action plan development and implementation to act according to the OGP process. Portugal **did not act contrary** to OGP process.¹

Please see Annex I for an overview of Portugal’s performance implementing the Co-Creation and Participation Standards throughout the action plan implementation.

Table [3.2]: Level of Public Influence

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) “Spectrum of Participation” to apply it to OGP.² In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire to “collaborate.”

Level of public influence		During development of action plan	During implementation of action plan
Empower	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.		
Collaborate	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.		
Involve	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.	✓	
Consult	The public could give inputs.		✓
Inform	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.		
No Consultation	No consultation		

The National Network for Open Administration (RNAA) led implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan. It adopted a monitoring methodology based on international project management practices. Each RNAA member was assigned roles and responsibilities for each commitment: responsible, accountable, consulted, informed, verifies and sign-off.³

All members, including civil society organizations (CSOs), were “responsible” for Commitment 2, and the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities was “responsible” and “accountable” for Commitment 4. For all other commitments, CSOs were “informed”.⁴

The RNAA meet bi-monthly during implementation of the action plan for a total of 10 meetings, except between May and September 2019 due to changes in the Agência para a

Modernização Administrativa (AMA) internal team. The AMA also held bilateral meetings with entities responsible for implementation of commitments. Minutes for all RNAA meetings were available on the OGP Portugal website⁵ and a tracking tool was developed to monitor progress on implementation.⁶

The government organized three webinars in May 2020 in relation to OGP's Open Response Open Recovery campaign.

According to CSOs, participation during the implementation period was very limited for commitments in which they were not directly responsible for implementation or monitoring.⁷ As reflected in meeting minutes, CSOs provided input on commitments, action plan implementation, and preparations for the second action plan development. While there is no evidence of how CSO input was considered or led to changes during the implementation period, the government said it integrated four of the 41 comments received on their self-assessment report consultation (which occurred at the end of the action plan cycle).⁸

A TI Portugal representative believes that mapping and engaging all relevant actors for commitment implementation, as well as promoting opportunities for more direct interaction, are key for improving participation in the next action plan cycle.⁹

¹ Acting Contrary to Process - Country did not meet (1) "involve" during the development or "inform" during implementation of the action plan, or (2) the government fails to collect, publish and document a repository on the national OGP website/webpage in line with IRM guidance.

² "IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum," IAP2, 2014,

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf

³ Agência para a Modernização Administrativa, Implementation of the commitments under the 1st Action Plan, p1515, Self-Assessment Final Report, https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/documents/48760/265329/Self-Assessment-Report_1stNAP_2018-20_EN.pdf/49ce4a00-40c4-449a-cd53-2e88fe0e0064

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ OGP Portugal, National Network for Open Administration Documentation, Multi-stakeholder Forums, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/national-open-administratio-network/>

⁶ OGP Portugal, Monitoring of the National Open Administration Action Plan (2018-2020), <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/monitoring>

⁷ Luís Vidigal, Platform of Civil Society, interview with IRM staff, 24 February 2021.

⁸ Comments provided to IRM by government point of contact, 21 April 2021

⁹ Karina Carvalho, TI Portugal, interview with IRM staff, 1 March 2021.

3.2 Overview of Portugal's performance throughout action plan implementation

Key:

Green= Meets standard

Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)

Red= No evidence of action

Multi-stakeholder Forum	During Development	During Implementation
1a. Forum established: The National Network of Public Administration (RNAA) oversees the OGP process. ¹	Green	Green
1b. Regularity: The National Network of Public Administration (RNAA) meets bi-monthly. ²	Green	Green
1c. Collaborative mandate development: This standard was assessed in the IRM Design Report. ³	Green	N/A
1d. Mandate public: Information on the forum's remit, membership, and governance structure is available on the OGP website/page. ⁴	Green	Green
2a. Multi-stakeholder: The forum includes both governmental and non-government representatives. ⁵	Green	Green
2b. Parity: The forum includes 5 governmental and 5 non-governmental representatives ⁶ .	Yellow	Green
2c. Transparent selection: There were no changes to the RNAA but in any case, non-governmental members of the forum are selected through a fair and transparent process.	Yellow	N/A
2d. High-level government representation: The State Secretary takes part in RNAA meetings.	Yellow	Green
3a. Openness: The forum accepts inputs and representation on the action plan process from any civil society or other stakeholders outside the forum. It is not clear how inputs are considered.	Yellow	Yellow
3b. Remote participation: There are opportunities for remote participation in at least some meetings and events.	Green	Green
3c. Minutes: The OGP forum proactively communicates and reports back on its decisions, activities, and results to wider government and civil society stakeholders. ⁷	Yellow	Green

Key:

Green= Meets standard

Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)

Red= No evidence of action

Action Plan Implementation	
4a. Process transparency: Minutes for all RNAA meetings are available on the OGP Portugal website and a tracking tool was developed to monitor progress on implementation, ⁸	Green
4b. Communication channels: The OGP Portugal website includes a feature that allows the public to submit comments or questions, ⁹	Green
4c. Engagement with civil society: CSOs that are part of the RNAA took part in discussions on implementation of the NAP. ¹⁰	Green
4d. Cooperation with the IRM: The IRM 2018-2020 Design Report is available on the OGP Portugal Website. ¹¹	Green
4.e MSF engagement: The RNAA monitors and deliberates on how to improve implementation of the NAP.	Green
4.f MSF engagement with self-assessment report: CSOs and the public can provide feedback and comments on the self-assessment report. ¹²	Green
4.g. Repository: A repository is available on the OGP Portugal website.¹³	Green

¹ OGP Portugal, Statutes of the National Network for Open Administration, https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/documents/48760/55198/AMA_Estatutos_RedeNacionalAdministra%C3%A7%C3%A3oAberta_20181114.pdf/01cc597f-3e1f-03ce-78cf-54310ce22477

² Ibid.

³ Open Government Partnership, IRM Design Report Portugal 2018-2020, <https://bit.ly/3ba6KHx>

⁴ OGP Portugal, National Network for Open Administration Documentation, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/national-open-administratio-network/>

⁵ OGP Portugal, Statutes of the National Network for Open Administration, https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/documents/48760/55198/AMA_Estatutos_RedeNacionalAdministra%C3%A7%C3%A3oAberta_20181114.pdf/01cc597f-3e1f-03ce-78cf-54310ce22477

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ OGP Portugal, National Network for Open Administration Documentation, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/national-open-administratio-network/>

⁹ Open Government Partnership Portugal website, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/inicio>

¹⁰ OGP Portugal, Multistakeholder Forums minutes: <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/national-open-administratio-network/>

¹¹ OGP Portugal, National Network for Open Administration Documentation, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/national-open-administratio-network/>

¹² OGP Portugal, Public Consultation Self-Assessment Report, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/consulta-publica-relatorio-de-autoavaliacao>

¹³ OGP Portugal, National Network for Open Administration Documentation, <https://ogp.eportugal.gov.pt/en/national-open-administratio-network/>

IV. Methodology and Sources

Research for the IRM reports is carried out by national researchers. All IRM reports undergo a process of quality control led by IRM staff to ensure that the highest standards of research and due diligence have been applied.

The International Experts Panel (IEP) of the IRM oversees the quality control of each report. The IEP is composed of experts in transparency, participation, accountability, and social science research methods.

Current membership of the International Experts Panel is

- César Cruz-Rubio
- Mary Francoli
- Brendan Halloran
- Jeff Lovitt
- Juanita Olaya

This review process, including the procedure for incorporating comments received, is outlined in greater detail in Section III of the Procedures Manual¹ and in Portugal's Design Report 2018-2020.

About the IRM

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



¹ IRM Procedures Manual, V.3, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual>

Annex I. IRM Indicators

The indicators and method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual.¹ A summary of key indicators the IRM assesses is below:

- **Verifiability:**
 - Not specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, do the objectives stated and actions proposed lack sufficient clarity and specificity for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
 - Specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, are the objectives stated and actions proposed sufficiently clear and specific to allow for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
- **Relevance:** This variable evaluates the commitment’s relevance to OGP values. Based on a close reading of the commitment text as stated in the action plan, the guiding questions to determine the relevance are:
 - Access to Information: Will the government disclose more information or improve the quality of the information disclosed to the public?
 - Civic Participation: Will the government create or improve opportunities or capabilities for the public to inform or influence decisions or policies?
 - Public Accountability: Will the government create or improve public facing opportunities to hold officials answerable for their actions?
- **Potential impact:** This variable assesses the *potential impact* of the commitment, if completed as written. The IRM researcher uses the text from the action plan to:
 - Identify the social, economic, political, or environmental problem;
 - Establish the status quo at the outset of the action plan; and
 - Assess the degree to which the commitment, if implemented, would impact performance and tackle the problem.
- **Completion:** This variable assesses the commitment’s implementation and progress. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the *IRM Implementation Report*.
- **Did It Open Government?:** This variable attempts to move beyond measuring outputs and deliverables to looking at how the government practice, in areas relevant to OGP values, has changed as a result of the commitment’s implementation. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the IRM Implementation Report.

Results oriented commitments?

A potentially starred commitment has more potential to be ambitious and to be implemented. A good commitment design is one that clearly describes the:

1. **Problem:** What is the economic, social, political, or environmental problem? Rather than describing an administrative issue or tool (e.g., ‘Misallocation of welfare funds’ is more helpful than ‘lacking a website.’).
2. **Status quo:** What is the status quo of the policy issue at the beginning of an action plan (e.g., “26 percent of judicial corruption complaints are not processed currently.”)?
3. **Change:** Rather than stating intermediary outputs, what is the targeted behavior change that is expected from the commitment’s implementation (e.g., “Doubling response rates to information requests” is a stronger goal than “publishing a protocol for response.”)?

Starred commitments

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/entities. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

- The commitment’s design should be **Verifiable, Relevant** to OGP values, and have **Transformative** potential impact. As assessed in the Design Report.
- The commitment’s implementation must be assessed by IRM Implementation Report as **Substantial** or **Complete**.

This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the IRM Implementation Report.

¹ “IRM Procedures Manual,” OGP, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual>