



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Ireland's Third Open Government Partnership National Action Plan

2021 – 2023

Prepared by Department of Public
Expenditure and Reform and co-
developed by the Open Government
Round Table (June 2022)
www.gov.ie

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Foreword from Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

On behalf of the Government, I am pleased to publish Ireland's third Open Government National Action Plan.

This Government is committed to supporting democracy and inclusive growth for our country through open and transparent governance. We want to ensure that transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation are at the heart of everything we do. All Government parties are committed to these principles, and this National Action Plan is one of a number initiatives we are undertaking to realise this vision.

Ireland is a member of the international Open Government Partnership (OGP), a multilateral initiative which supports and monitors member countries to become more open, responsive and accountable to citizens. We have signed the OGP declaration and participate in its processes to advance the key principles of Open Government. In The Programme for Government (2020) we have made a commitment to continue and reinvigorate participation in the OGP, and in 2021, the OGP recognised Ireland's progress in delivering Open Government values, with an international award for Open Government Impact in Citizen Participation.

We have also established a multi-stakeholder forum (the Open Government Round Table) to promote active engagement of citizens and civil society. The Round Table group has been instrumental in co-creating this third Open Government National Action Plan. The Action Plan makes a number of commitments to review key legislation and structures, and to progress civic participation, and the Round Table group will continue to work collaboratively to oversee implementation of the plan. The Round Table group will also co-create the next Action Plan, due for publication in 2023.

I wish to sincerely thank the members of the Round Table and the secretariat for their work to date in ensuring Ireland has exited the OGP procedural review and for co-creating this important action plan. The Government looks forward to continued engagement with citizens and civil society partners on this programme of work.

Foreword from Civil Society Representatives

This National Action Plan represents the results of our work with government to identify concrete steps to develop more transparent, participatory and accountable governance in Ireland. Six representatives from civil society and six representatives from government worked together as a 'Round Table' to co-create this plan. Our shared aim was that this plan would itself be developed in a transparent, participatory way.

Our intent is two-fold. Firstly, we intend that the National Action Plan will have tangible results in terms of promoting open government. Secondly, we want the process by which the National Action Plan is developed to be an example of how progress can be achieved through fair and inclusive dialogue between government and citizens. We believe that it is only through such fair and inclusive dialogue that real progress can be made on solving the many issues Ireland faces.

As representatives elected from civil society after an open nomination process, we worked to champion your proposals for what should be included in the National Action Plan, and to create a plan that addressed the values of public accountability, transparency and participation.

Co-creating with Government is not straightforward. Civil society and government representatives usually have different priorities. The two sides often have very different ideas about how open government can be implemented, and sometimes even about what 'open government' means. Inevitably, the civil society ambition is greater than the Government feels ready to deliver, especially in the short timeframe of the plan.

As a result, not all the commitments which were sought by citizens through the open consultation could be included in the National Action Plan.

The process often did not go as the civil society representatives wanted. But this process does show a way we in civil society can learn to work more effectively with government representatives to achieve concrete change. Conversely, we are hopeful that this process helps the government learn to work with citizens and civil society, so we can all work together to make our communities and society more resilient, sustainable and equitable. We wish to thank our government colleagues on the Round Table and in the Secretariat for their courtesy and engagement throughout.

1. Background to the Open Government Partnership

Open government is “a culture of governance that promotes the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth”.¹ The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a multilateral initiative currently comprising 79 countries, with a process for civil society and the public service to come together to co-create two-year action plans with commitments to enhance transparency, accountability and public participation in government. The OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) reports on how all countries meet the guidelines in co-creating their plans and delivering commitments over the period.

Ireland’s Open Government website has a wealth of further information available on OGP and how it operates in Ireland.²

2. Ireland’s Citizens’ Assembly wins an OGP Impact Award

Ireland won an OGP Impact Award (joint 3rd place in Europe) in December 2021.¹ This award recognises the citizens who participated, all those who enabled the Citizens’ Assembly and its predecessors, and the policy leadership of the Department of the Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister). Citizens recognised the impact of the Citizens’ Assembly by supporting the social media, email and WhatsApp campaign and voting for it to win the OGP Impact Award.

Ireland’s OGP impact award pitch for the Citizens’ Assembly:

Ireland is proud of the momentous changes that deliberative democracy has achieved in our society, including through the Citizens’ Assembly, which places the citizen at the heart of important legal and policy issues facing Irish society. Ireland has had two constitutional amendments passed that originated as proposals put forward by deliberative democracy exercises: advancing marriage equality and replacing the Eighth Amendment, which concerned abortion. The Citizens’ Assembly and its predecessors enabled a mature and informed debate on highly charged topics by citizens chosen at random to represent the views of the people of Ireland. Further details are available on Ireland’s application.²

¹ Source: OECD Recommendation to Council on Open Government at <https://www.oecd.org/gov/oecd-recommendation-of-the-council-on-open-government-en.pdf>

² Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d79a2-open-government-in-ireland/#introduction>

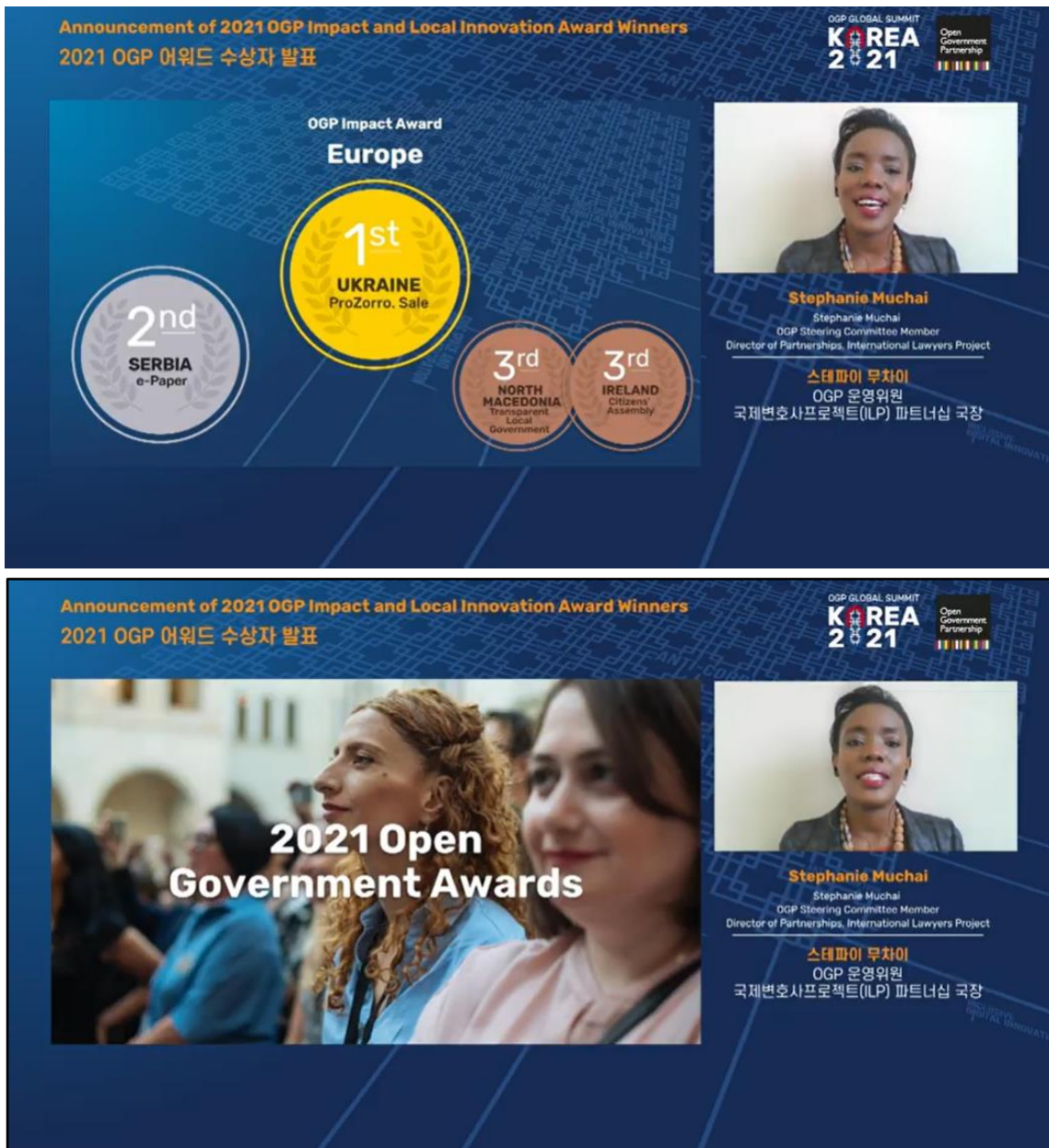


Figure 1 and 2: Open Government Partnership Global Summit Korea 2021 Impact Award announcements (screenshots)

3. Background to Ireland's third OGP National Action Plan

Ireland became a full OGP member in July 2014, when the Government submitted Ireland's first OGP National Action Plan (2014-2016) and signed the Open Government Declaration. Ireland submitted a second OGP National Action Plan (2016-2018), but then did not meet OGP requirements for two consecutive action plan cycles by not submitting an action plan within four months of 31st August 2019 and 31st August 2020. Because of this, the OGP Criteria and Standards Subcommittee placed Ireland under procedural review in February 2020. In 2021, Ireland devised an expedited process to reinvigorate its OGP involvement, working with civil society to establish a multi-stakeholder forum called the OGP Round Table. Ireland submitted its third OGP National Action Plan (2021-2023) and formally exited the OGP procedural review on 10th February 2022.

4. How Ireland reinvigorated its OGP Process

Ireland is committed to the OGP, as shown by the statements of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, in Dáil Éireann (Ireland's national parliament) on 16th November 2021,³ and the written statement of Minister of State, Ossian Smyth, to the OGP Global Conference on 7th December 2021.⁴

Figure 3: Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath Dáil Éireann, 16th November 2021.



Source: Dáil recording at <https://bit.ly/30uTBpE> (start at timeline 7:03:20)

These statements were and continue to be underpinned by actions, outputs and outcomes.

- On 29th November 2021, Ireland established its new Round Table, a multi-stakeholder forum to co-develop and monitor Ireland's OGP National Action Plans, and published its co-created terms of reference.⁵
- The Round Table's process to co-develop the National Action Plan (over five plenary meetings, subgroup meetings and ongoing engagement between November 2021 and May 2022) is publically available.⁶
- On 22nd December 2021, Ireland submitted its interim third OGP National Action Plan to the OGP, with three draft commitments and a list of issues under consideration by the Round Table.⁷ OGP guidelines allow countries to amend their action plans for up to nine months after the submission date.⁸ Ireland's Round Table therefore continued to work on a finalising the national action plan after December 2021.⁹ This enabled Round Table sub-groups led by civil society members to consider three proposals received in the public call and to co-develop two additional commitments for the finalised plan.
- On 10th February 2022, Ireland formally exited the OGP procedural review process.

As 20% of OGP member countries are under procedural review or inactive¹⁰, Ireland is a positive example of what can be achieved in just six months. Key factors in this success included:

- Ireland's Programme for Government (2020) commitment to "continue and reinvigorate participation by the public sector in Open Government Partnership",¹¹ which supported the drive to devise an expedited process from August 2021;
- The OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) 2019 report recommendation that "moving forward, once the third action plan is developed, priority must be given to establish a permanent group to oversee the plan's implementation, something expected since 2014, which has yet to come to fruition";¹² and
- The emergence in 2019 of the Open Government Association Ireland (OGAI), a semi-formal network of individuals with a shared interest in OGP, which facilitated early civil society engagement.¹³

Open Government Ireland

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Ireland – Case study on reinvigorating OGP

How Ireland prepared its third OGP National Action Plan - an expedited process to reinvigorate participation in the OGP national action plan co-creation process to emerge from OGP procedural review in six months. Refer to Annex 2.

5. The commitments in Ireland's third OGP National Action Plan

		Transparency	Civic Participation	Public Accountability
Interim National Action Plan commitments:				
▪	Review of Ireland's Statutory Framework for Ethics in Public Life ¹⁴	√		√
▪	Review of Ireland's Freedom of Information (FOI) regime	√		
▪	Review of the operation of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015	√		√
Finalised National Action Plan further commitments shaped by civic participation:				
▪	Progressing civic participation to enhance people's proactive and meaningful participation and engagement in the decisions that affect them		√	
▪	Strengthening inclusion and civic deliberation in local decision-making		√	

There is also ongoing work following the transposition of the open data directive¹⁵ to support its operation and the development of a new open data strategy is underway.

Annex 3 contains the detail of the commitments, including the ambition, objective(s) and delivery milestones. The Round Table will receive regular updates on the milestones.

Annex 1: Ireland's Open Government Partnership Round Table¹⁶

Civil Society members

Antóin Ó Lachtnáin	Co-Chair; Chair Open Government Association Ireland
Catherine Lawlor ¹⁷	Transparency International Ireland
Shana Cohen	Think-Tank for Action on Social Change (TASC)
Johnny Sheehan	The Wheel
Kathryn McCabe	The Change Agency
Fiona Descoteaux	Innovative Communities

Public Sector members

Philip McGrath ¹⁸	Co-Chair, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (non-voting)
Ciara Morgan	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Kieran Moylan	Department of Rural and Community Development
Barry Vaughan ¹⁹	Department of the Taoiseach
Andrew Patterson	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Diarmuid O'Leary	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Antoinette Doran	Department of Justice

Secretariat

Críona Brassill	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
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Board representation

There is a Government target to achieve 40% representation of each gender in the membership of all State Boards. While the Open Government Partnership Round Table is not a State Board, its terms of reference embraces the spirit of the Government target. The Round Table (excluding the Secretariat) currently has 5 female Board members and 6 male Round Table members, and one vacancy which arose on 20th May 2022. To meet the gender balance target, the permanent Open Government Round Table with 12 members would need to continue to have at least 5 members of each gender.

Annex 2: Case Study: How Ireland prepared its third OGP National Action Plan

An expedited process to foster civic participation in the OGP co-creation process and emerge from procedural review in six months

This case study outlines the expedited process by which Ireland's third OGP National Action Plan was developed. There was extensive discussion and consultation between the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Open Government Association of Ireland (OGAI), to devise the Round Table multi-stakeholder forum terms of reference. Ireland's Round Table members then took on the challenge of the expedited process devised to co-develop this National Action Plan to meet the OGP fixed dates. The approach was by necessity experimental and focused on making best use of the time available. It was intended that insights from this expedited process would be gained to improve future cycles. We hope that this case study will be informative to the public and will be of help to other countries looking to reinvigorate their OGP programmes.

Phase 1: Early civic and state engagement, consultation and participation

As civic participation is at the heart of open government, stakeholders were engaged and their participation sought as follows:

(i) Establishing the Round Table, multi-stakeholder forum

- Terms of reference²⁰ for the Round Table, multi-stakeholder forum, to co-develop and monitor Ireland's OGP National Action Plans were developed with the OGAI²¹ (July 2021).
- The OGAI established an interim group to oversee the selection of civil society members for the Round Table.²² A public call for expressions of interest to join the Round Table as a civil society representative, with the ministerial launch of a social media and email campaign, was made in early November 2021.²³ This was almost four times oversubscribed and the interim group undertook a selection process.
- Secretaries General of relevant Government Departments were asked to nominate a public sector Round Table representative and coordinator (October/November 2021).
- The Round Table, made up of representatives of the public service and civil society, was established on 29th November 2021.

(ii) Public awareness of OGP

- Ministerial statements: The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, recommitted to the OGP principles in Dáil Éireann, Ireland's national parliament (16th November 2021).²⁵ The Minister of State, Ossian Smyth, gave a written statement to the OGP Global Conference (7th December 2021).²⁶
- Ireland's OGP webpages were launched in early October 2021, demonstrating the ethos of civic engagements and an open, transparent and publicly accountable process. The webpages are updated regularly and include information about what open government and the OGP process are; past National Action Plans and related material; and Round Table meeting agenda, actions and outcomes.²⁷
- The Citizens' Assembly was submitted for an OGP Impact Award²⁸ (end of September 2021) which raised public awareness of open government. This was supported by the ministerial launch of a social media, email and WhatsApp campaign to get the public voting for the Citizens' Assembly (intensive one week, end of October 2021).

(iii) Call for proposals from the public for the OGP National Action Plan

- There was an open call²⁹ for submissions from the public for the third and future OGP National Action Plans in early November 2021. This was supported by a ministerial launch and a social media and email campaign.
- The public sent in 18 submissions, consisting of 26 separate proposals (end November 2021).³⁰ The Round Table Secretariat issued personalised acknowledgements of receipt which outlined the next steps of the process (early December 2021).

Phase 2: Expedited process to develop an interim third OGP National Action Plan

On the basis of discussions with the OGP Support Unit and the OGP Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) unit in Q3 2022, Ireland submitted an interim third OGP National Action Plan on the understanding that the Round Table would continue in the spirit of co-creation to work on finalising the plan. OGP rules allow for plans to be amended up to nine months after the due date.

Steps in this phase included:

- The Round Table Secretariat and OGAI identified relevant Programme for Government³¹ commitments and the Secretariat obtained status updates from Government Departments (October / November 2021). The result of this was the three commitments included in the interim National Action Plan approved by the Round Table.
- The Round Table members voted on a shortlist of potential commitments for inclusion in the interim National Action Plan (December 2021). The Round Table members were guided by the criteria that commitments should:
 - be clearly within scope of OGP values;
 - reflect previous Independent Review Mechanism feedback;
 - not just reiterate the high-level commitments given elsewhere but spell out in a tangible way how the actions in the commitments are being/will be moved forward;
 - be drafted and agreed with those who will be implementing the commitments in under one working week; and
 - be possible to develop to publication standard within the tight timeline.
- The interim third National Action Plan³² was submitted to the OGP on 22nd December 2021. Round Table members agree that although the development of the interim plan was open and transparent, it did not have the desired level of deliberative engagement due to the limited time available under the expedited process.
- Ireland formally exited the procedural review process on 10th February 2022.

3.3 Phase 3: Finalised third OGP National Action Plan

In this phase, the Round Table finalised the National Action Plan. Round Table members deliberated together in an iterative process to select and progress proposals from the public call within the time available. Refer to the Round Table plenary and subgroup meeting information³³.

Key steps included:

- The Round Table Secretariat collated the Round Table members' individual evaluations of the proposals from the public call and presented the findings with Departmental observations received to inform the Round Table's decision-making (Meeting 2, January 2022).
- The Round Table identified three proposals to be progressed in sub-groups led by civil society Round Table members (Meeting 2, January 2022).
- The Round Table's journey to the two extra commitments included in the finalised National Action Plan is captured in the Round Table meeting information (December 2021 – May 2022).

- The finalised National Action Plan was made available to the public (May 2022).

3.4 Phase 4: Government consideration, submission and communication of the third OGP National Action Plan

In this phase, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will bring the National Action Plan to Government for its consideration (June 2022). Subject to Government decision, Ireland will submit the National Action Plan to the OGP (early July 2022) and publicise both the plan and the Citizens' Assembly OGP Impact Award widely to raise awareness of open government.

Annex 3: Commitments

Ireland's 3 rd Open Government Partnership National Action Plan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of Ireland's Statutory Framework for Ethics in Public Life 	
Commitment Start and End Date (e.g. 31 August 2021 - 31 August 2023)	
Who do you think would be the lead implementing Government Department(s) / agency (if known and any relevant contact details)	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER).
Commitment Context	
<i>Objective</i>	A fit-for-purpose, easy to understand and user-friendly legislative framework that contributes positively to the quality and effectiveness of our public governance and by so doing enhances trust and confidence in public officials and democratic institutions.
<i>Status Quo</i>	<p>Under the two previous Open Government National Action Plans, the Public Sector Standards Bill 2015 (PSSB) was being progressed. The PSSB commenced Second Stage in January 2016 and Committee Stage commenced in April 2017. However, the Bill's passage had not been completed when the Dáil was dissolved in advance of the 2020 General Election and it lapsed. The new Programme for Government (2020) includes a commitment to 'reform and consolidate the Ethics in Public Office legislation'.</p> <p>The provisions underpinning Ireland's current statutory framework for ethics in public life are contained in a number of statutes, with separate regimes at national and local levels for disclosure of interests, sanctions,</p>

	<p>disclosure of donations, and other ethics requirements. At the national level, the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995, amended by the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 (collectively called the Ethics Acts), and associated statutory instruments, provide a legal basis for the operations of the Standards in Public Office Commission and disclosures of interests by Oireachtas members, office-holders and certain other persons within the civil service. It also provides a prohibition on retention of certain gifts. At the local level, the Local Government Act 2001 - Part 15 - regulates disclosure of interests by local representatives. This legislation is under the auspices of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p>
<p><i>Ambition</i></p>	<p>To review the statutory framework to put forward proposals, including legislative, to further strengthen, modernise, simplify and streamline the statutory framework for ethics in public life with a robust and effective institutional framework for oversight, investigation and enforcement.</p>
<p>Commitment description</p>	
<p>What is the public problem that the commitment will address?</p>	<p>The Annual Reports of the Standard in Public Office Commission (SIPO) detail the Commission's operation of the ethics regime and contain detailed recommendations for reform of the statutory framework and any progress made on its earlier recommendations.</p> <p>The final report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into certain Planning Matters and Payments (Mahon Tribunal), which was issued in 2012, contains a number of recommendations to address perceived weaknesses in the current system in the area of control and oversight of conflicts of interest. The second report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into certain Payments to Politicians and Related Matters (the Moriarty Tribunal) contains a recommendation on the auditing of the financial affairs of Office Holders by SIPO. These recommendations have not yet been</p>

	<p>implemented.</p> <p>In 2014, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) recommended that 'Ireland should replace the existing ethics framework with a uniform and consolidated values-based normative framework'. Due in part to the lack of progression of the Public Sector Standards Bill, GRECO rated Ireland as "globally unsatisfactory" in June 2018 (GRECO removed this rating in 2020). GRECO continues to re-iterate this recommendation, most recently in November 2020.</p> <p>Instances of further potential gaps in the framework for ethics have become matters of public debate. Relevant recommendations of the Review of Structures and Strategies to Prevent, Investigate and Penalise Economic Crime and Corruption (the 'Hamilton Report'), published in December 2020, also fall to be considered in the context of reform of the statutory framework. In particular, the Report notes that delayed implementation of reform would be detrimental to Ireland's evaluations by the relevant international monitoring bodies and 'have adverse implications for the State's anti-corruption regime'.</p>
<p>What is the commitment?</p>	<p>To undertake a comprehensive review of the statutory framework for ethics in public life, which will inform proposals for legislative reform to be brought to Government in 2022.</p>
<p>How will the commitment contribute to solving the public problem?</p>	<p>Recommendations from this review, including legislative, are expected to further strengthen, modernise, simplify and streamline the statutory framework for ethics in public life with a robust and effective institutional framework for oversight, investigation and enforcement.</p> <p>This will enhance public accountability and transparency, strengthening the trust of citizens in democracy and its institutions. Ensuring that conflicts between the public interest and private interests of public officials are regulated correctly, is central to maximising the value</p>

	<p>generated and contribution made by the public sector. A significant body of international research has established a clear link between the quality of public institutions and long-term economic and social sustainability.</p> <p>Recommendations emerging from the review are to revert to Government, including for legislative reform(s), as appropriate.</p>
<p><i>Describe what the intended impact of successful implementation will be?</i></p>	<p>A modern, fit for purpose legislative framework in this area is important to ensure there is public trust and confidence in public institutions and officeholders and to safeguard Ireland's reputation.</p> <p>An up-to-date, fit-for-purpose, easy to understand and user-friendly ethical framework will contribute to the quality and efficacy of public administration. Ensuring that conflicts between the public interest and private interests of public officials are regulated correctly, is central to maximising the value generated and contribution made by the public sector.</p> <p>Implementing reform in a timely manner is also important in the context of Ireland's evaluations by the relevant international monitoring bodies and the State's anti-corruption regime.</p> <p>A significant body of international research has established a clear link between the quality of public institutions and long-term economic and social sustainability.</p>
<p><i>Which Open Government value(s) does your commitment relate too?</i></p>	<p>Values: Public Accountability and Transparency</p> <p>Theme: Anticorruption</p>
<p>Why is (and describe how) this commitment is relevant to the Open Government value(s)?</p>	<p>The statutory review will result in up-to-date evidence based policy and legislative recommendations, shaped by participation of the public via the public consultation and external/internal stakeholders engagement. Subject to the</p>

	approval of the Government, these will be implemented to further enhance the rules, regulations and mechanisms that make up Ireland's statutory framework for ethics in public life to ensure those in public life and government officials have improved clarity and enhanced oversight, investigation and enforcement.		
<i>What United Nations Sustainable Development Goal³⁴ does this commitment relate too³⁵?</i>	<p><u>Goal 16:</u></p> <p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p><u>Sub-goal 16.6:</u></p> <p>Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels</p>		
<i>Additional information (if known)</i>	<p>This review will encompass initiatives carried forward from previous Open Government National Action Plans (commitment 3.1 in NAP 1 and commitment 13 in NAP 2)³⁶.</p> <p>This review will further the commitment in the 2020 Programme for Government to 'reform and consolidate the Ethics in Public Office legislation'.</p>		
Commitment milestones			
Suggested next steps and milestones to guide implementation <i>(Don't forget to capture and detail any public facing element desired; e.g. stakeholder engagement)</i>	Who / What organisation <i>(if known)</i>	When <i>(if known)</i>	Additional info.
Seek agreement of Government for detailed proposals for the Review.	DPER ³⁷	May 2021 – Sept 2021	

Review of the existing statutory framework for Ethics in Public Life.	DPER	May 2021 – End of 2021	
Seek agreement on a public consultation to inform the review.	DPER	Mid Oct 2021 – Early 2022	
Engage with various stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Dáil and Seanad Committee's on Members Interests; ▪ Local government representative bodies (the Association of Irish Local Government and the Local Authority Members Association); and ▪ Key stakeholders (e.g. Transparency International Ireland). 	DPER & Oireachtas (legislature)	Initiate at the same time as the public consultation	
The outcome of the Review and public consultation will inform a Memorandum for Government with the proposals to progress implementation.	DPER	2022	
Contact information			
Lead contact name (required)	Michael Perkins		
Organisation (if applicable)	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform		
Role title (if applicable)	Assistant Principal Officer		
Email and Phone (required)	Michael.Perkins@per.gov.ie +353 1 604 5613		
Special interest and/or policy area of expertise (optional)			

Other Actors Involved	Government Ministries, Department/Agency	<p>The Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO).</p> <p>The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in relation to the Ethical Framework for Local Government set down in Part 15 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).</p> <p>The Department of Justice, with the newly established Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption and the Forum of operational agencies (contributes to the Hamilton Implementation Plan).</p> <p>Local Government Representative Organisations including the Local Government Management Association, the Association of Irish Local Government, the Local Authority Members Association, and the County & City Managers Association.</p> <p>The Office of the Attorney General.</p>
	CSOs, private sector, multilaterals, working groups	<p>The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).</p> <p>Engagement with Civil society organisations including Transparency Ireland, TASC, Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Uplift.</p>

Ireland's 3 rd Open Government Partnership National Action Plan	
▪ Review of Ireland's Freedom of Information (FOI) regime	
Commitment Start and End Date (e.g. 31 August 2021 - 31 August 2023)	
Who do you think would be the lead implementing Government Department(s) / agency (if known and any relevant contact details)	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER).
Commitment Context	
<i>Objective</i>	This comprehensive review provides an opportunity to further enhance the FOI regime by examining the strengths and weaknesses of the current FOI regime; considering relevant domestic and international developments and major innovations in communication technology.
<i>Status Quo</i>	<p>Transparency is a core principle of public administration.</p> <p>The Freedom of Information Act is one of the key mechanisms through which members of the public can access public records in Ireland and one of its key aims is the promotion of transparency and openness in public administration. The first Freedom of Information Act was passed in 1997 and has been updated a number of times. The current legislation came in to force in 2014.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of requests are made annually under the legislation. In 2019, 41,176 requests were processed. Even in the face of the disruption caused by the pandemic, 32,652 requests were processed in 2020.</p> <p>The vast majority of FOI requests decided on are granted in full or in part, around four out of every five FOI requests</p>

	<p>in most years (81% in 2020). Usually, the majority of requests are for personal information (57% in 2020). These types of requests tend to be granted at an even higher rate than the average, and are most often made to bodies such as the HSE, voluntary hospitals, or the Department of Social Protection.</p> <p>Journalists account for about a quarter of those making FOI requests (23% in 2020), while in most years the largest single grouping of requesters are clients of the public body concerned (50% of requesters in 2020).</p> <p>Review mechanisms are available where individuals are unhappy with the FOI decisions they have received. The level of uptake tends to be quite low, with internal reviews sought for about 3% of requests in most years (3.3% in 2020) and an independent review by the Information Commissioner sought in about 1% of cases annually (1.3% in 2020). The role of the Commissioner is to determine whether the FOI decision made by a public body was justified. In most years, the Commissioner tends to uphold the public body's decisions in the majority of decided cases (70% in 2020).</p> <p>In June 2021, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath TD, announced a comprehensive review of the operation of Freedom of Information (FOI) and the 2014 legislation³⁸.</p> <p>It is clear that the FOI system is a vital method for accessing information from public bodies. The focus of this review is to continue and further enhance the FOI operation.</p>
<p><i>Ambition</i></p>	<p>In light of the major innovations in communication technology which have transformed the ways in which individuals and public bodies interact with each other, it is timely to review and seek out ways in which the FOI model can be brought up to date to ensure that it is suitable for today's needs³⁹.</p>

Commitment description	
What is the public problem that the commitment will address?	<p>The ways that people seek, consume and interact with information have been transformed since FOI was introduced in 1997 by the rise of technologies such as the internet. The review will look for ways that the legislation might be brought up to date with these changes.</p> <p>While the annual statistics show that the FOI system as it stands is functioning relatively well, the bare figures cannot alone tell the full story. In carrying out the review, we will seek to engage as broad a range of stakeholders as possible and ensure the scope and direction of the review is driven by these engagements.</p>
What is the commitment?	To undertake a comprehensive review in order to further enhance the Freedom of Information (FOI) regime by examining the strengths and weaknesses of the current FOI regime; considering relevant domestic and international developments and how major innovations in communication technology may need to be reflected.
How will the commitment contribute to solving the public problem?	The comprehensive review will be collaborative in nature and use a number of methods, including a public consultation, to establish how the FOI system is operating, and how it could be made better. A report will be brought to Government and published, which will make recommendations for improvements to the system, including by amending the legislation if required.
<i>Describe what the intended impact of successful implementation will be?</i>	<p>Transparency is a core principle of public administration. The transformational change in terms of operation, culture and ways of working is significant from any recommendations that would be brought forward.</p> <p>As the recommendations have yet to emerge from the process, it is not possible to be specific about the impact. But the impact of previous recommendations on culture and ways of working has been deemed transformative</p>

	over time ⁴⁰ . The independent review of the 1 st Open Government National Action Plan found that the FOI Code of Practice and implementation of the FOI 2013 Act commitments both ranked as 'major' in terms of opening government.
<i>Which Open Government value(s) does your commitment relate too?</i>	Value: Transparency
Why is (and describe how) this commitment is relevant to the Open Government value(s)?	It is anticipated that the recommendations to emerge from the comprehensive review will ensure: that more information will be disclosed; improved the quality of the information disclosed; improved accessibility of information to the public, and/or enable the right to information.
<i>What United Nations Sustainable Development Goal does this commitment relate too?</i>	<p><u>Goal 16:</u></p> <p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p> <p><u>Sub-goal 16.6:</u></p> <p>Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.</p>
Additional information <i>(if known)</i>	This review will build on the 1 st Open Government National Action Plan, commitments 3.2 and 3.3 ⁴¹ which related to reform of the FOI via the FOI Bill 2013 and establishing of a Code of Practice for FOI.

Commitment milestones			
Suggested next steps and milestones to guide implementation <i>(Don't forget to capture and detail any public facing element desired; e.g. stakeholder engagement)</i>	Who / What organisation <i>(if known)</i>	When <i>(if known)</i>	Additional info.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure Government approval for the review. ▪ Publish a roadmap document in the coming weeks, setting out the process and the ways in which interested parties can get involved. 	DPER / Cabinet	Q3 2021	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial public survey to ensure civic participation informs the scope of the review. ▪ Initiate a Customer Satisfaction Survey. 	DPER	Q4 2021	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish consultation paper and seek detailed submissions. ▪ Review of international good practice. ▪ Regional events to ensure broadest input (if possible given Covid 19 public health guidance). ▪ Initiate Cost of FOI project. 	DPER	Q4 2021– Q1 2022	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submissions received will be considered. ▪ Consultation with Office of the Information Commissioner and other key stakeholders. ▪ Focus groups and interviews as appropriate. ▪ Draft the Review Report drawing on all elements of the review process outlined. 	DPER	2022 Q1 – 2022 Q2	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review report and recommendations to be submitted to the Minister and to Government (Memorandum). ▪ Publish the Review Report. 		DPER	Q3-Q4 2022	
Contact information				
Lead contact name (required)		Niall Mulligan		
Organisation (if applicable)		Department of Public Expenditure & Reform		
Role title (if applicable)		Assistant Principal Officer		
Email and Phone (required)		Niall.Mulligan@per.gov.ie +353 1 604 7345		
Special interest and/or policy area of expertise (optional)				
Other Actors Involved	Government Ministries, Department/Agency	Approximately 600 FOI bodies, including Government Ministries and bodies established under statute.		
	CSOs, private sector, multilaterals, working groups	Key sectoral NGOs and advocacy groups working in the area of transparency and related fields.		

Ireland's 3 rd Open Government Partnership National Action Plan	
▪ Review of the operation of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015	
Commitment Start and End Date (e.g. 31 August 2021 - 31 August 2023)	
Who do you think would be the lead implementing Government Department(s) / agency (if known and any relevant contact details)	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER).
Commitment Context	
<i>Objective</i>	To look at how the existing legislative foundation could be enhanced most effectively and efficiently; strengthening weakness which have been identified.
<i>Status Quo</i>	<p>The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (the Act) sets the framework to provide transparency to the public on "who is lobbying whom⁴² about what". By regulating lobbying activity through registration and reporting requirements, the aim is to strengthen public confidence in politics and in the business of government, to increase the accountability of decision makers and to subject public policy making, and those who seek to influence it, to greater openness, transparency and to the potential for appropriate independent scrutiny.</p> <p>In light of a specific event⁴³, the Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) announced on 29th September 2020 that section 22 of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 dealing with the cooling-off period for certain elected and public officials would be reviewed.</p> <p>Also, the opposition introduced two Private Members Bills:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regulation of Lobbying (Post-Term Employment as Lobbyist) Bill 2020, introduced in the Dáil 4th November 2020 by the Labour Party. ▪ Regulation of Lobbying (Amendment) Bill 2020, introduced in the Oireachtas (legislature) on the 19th November 2020 by the Sinn Féin Party. Second Stage of the Bill took place under Sinn Féin Private Members' time on 24/25 November 2020. An amendment was agreed on the 24th November 2020 that the Bill would be deemed to be read a second time in 9 months' time (24th August 2021) to allow consideration of the Standards in Public Office (SIPO) recommendations for the wider reform of lobbying, including the provisions of both Private Members Bills. <p>In light of these events, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform requested a thorough and comprehensive review of the legislation.</p> <p>Note that the second statutory review of the operation of the Lobbying Act was published in January 2020. Under section 2 of the Lobbying Act, there is a requirement that the operation of the Act be reviewed every 3 years.</p>
<i>Ambition</i>	To undertake a wide review of how the existing legislative foundation could be enhanced most effectively and efficiently; strengthening weakness which have been identified.
Commitment description	
What is the public problem that the commitment will address?	To address the public concerns about the operation of the Lobbying Act in relation to the operation of the cooling-off period for certain elected and public officials (section 22 of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015).
What is the commitment?	To undertake a wide ranging review of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 to assess the policy, legal and practical implications of a specific event and to undertake a wide

	review of how the existing legislative foundation could be further enhanced in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and to address any weaknesses that the process surfaces.
How will the commitment contribute to solving the public problem?	The wide ranging review will encompass the operation of the cooling-off period for certain elected and public officials (section 22 of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015).
<i>Describe what the intended impact of successful implementation will be?</i>	The wide ranging review will bring forward recommendations, which will then be brought to Government to draft the necessary amendments to the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 to commence the legislative process.
<i>Which Open Government value(s) does your commitment relate too?</i>	Value: Public Accountability and Transparency Theme: Anti-corruption
Why is (and describe how) this commitment is relevant to the Open Government value(s)?	Communication, dialogue and engagement are central to a well-functioning democracy. Interest groups, representative bodies, industry and civil society organisations, NGOs and third party professional lobbyists all provide crucial input and feedback to the political and public administration systems. It is important that this activity is transparent and open to public scrutiny as part of the proper checks and balances which mitigate any attempt to seek to exert undue or improper influence on the conduct of policy formulation, development and decision making.
<i>What United Nations Sustainable Development Goal does this commitment relate too?</i>	<u>Goal 16:</u> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build

	<p>effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p> <p><u>Sub-goal 16.6:</u></p> <p>Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.</p>		
<p>Additional information <i>(if known)</i></p>			
Commitment milestones			
<p>Suggested next steps and milestones to guide implementation</p> <p><i>(Don't forget to capture and detail any public facing element desired; e.g. stakeholder engagement)</i></p>	<p>Who / What organisation <i>(if known)</i></p>	<p>When <i>(if known)</i></p>	<p>Additional info.</p>
<p>Wide ranging review to involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An assessment of the current operation of key provisions of the Act; ▪ An overview of lobbying regulation in other jurisdictions; ▪ Consideration of options to address concerns raised and the policy, legal and practical implications of different responses, and ▪ Be informed by the concerns and points raised by Deputies in the House and at Committee hearings. 	<p>DPER</p> <p>DPER</p> <p>DPER & Attorney General</p> <p>DPER / Oireachtas committees</p>	<p>Q1 – Q2 2021</p> <p>Q2 2021</p> <p>Q2 2021</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	

<p>Key stakeholder consultation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultation with, and consideration of, the views of the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO); ▪ Consultations with the Office of the Attorney General (AG). 	<p>DPER / SIPO / AG</p>	<p>Ongoing throughout the process</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete a draft review of the Regulation of Lobbying Act and distil evidence based recommendations. 	<p>DPER / Cabinet</p>	<p>Mid Q2 2021</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek Government approval (Memorandum to Government) to draft the Heads of a Bill to amend the Regulation of Lobbying Act in line with the review recommendations. <i>(Circulate a draft memorandum in advance to obtain Departmental observations before formally submitting to Government)</i> 	<p>DPER / Cabinet / AG</p>	<p>Mid Q2 2021</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft Heads of a Bill (also called a General Scheme) in accordance with Government approval 	<p>DPER / AG</p>	<p>Q4 2021</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek Government approval to the General Scheme and to priority drafting by the AGs of the Regulation of Lobbying (Amendment) Bill. 	<p>DPER/ Cabinet</p>	<p>Early Q1 2022</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Send General Scheme to the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach for pre-legislative scrutiny. 	<p>DPER/ Oireachtas (legislature)</p>	<p>Q1 2022</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request Attorney General's Office to commence priority drafting of the 	<p>DPER/</p>	<p>Q1 2022</p>	

Regulation of Lobbying (Amendment) Bill on the basis of the General Scheme.		AG		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek Government approval to the final text of the Regulation of Lobbying (Amendment) Bill. 		DPER/ Cabinet	Q3 2022	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of the Regulation of Lobbying (Amendment) Bill to the Oireachtas and commencement of the process of progressing the Bill through all stages in the Oireachtas prior to enactment. 		DPER/ Oireachtas (legislature)	Q3 2022	
Contact information				
Lead contact name (required)		Joyce Nolan		
Organisation (if applicable)		Department of Public Expenditure & Reform		
Role title (if applicable)		Assistant Principal Officer		
Email and Phone (required)		Joyce.Nolan@per.gov.ie +353 1 604 5486		
Special interest and/or policy area of expertise (optional)				
Other Actors Involved	Government Ministries, Department/Agency	Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) Attorney General (AG)		

	CSOs, private sector, multilaterals, working groups	Oireachtas (legislature) and its Committees

Ireland's 3 rd Open Government Partnership National Action Plan	
▪ Progressing civic participation with the objective of further enhancing the proactive and meaningful participation and engagement with citizens in the decisions that affect them	
Commitment Start and End Date (e.g. 31 August 2021 - 31 August 2023)	
Who do you think would be the lead implementing Government Department(s) / agency (if known and any relevant contact details)	This cross-governmental commitment has a variety of lead implementing Government Departments as captured in the milestones and contact details.
Commitment Context	
<i>Objective of this commitment</i>	The Round Table begins identifying a pathway using the existing structures where available, to further enhance civic participation.
<i>Status Quo</i>	<p>Public consultation and engagement is embedded in the way of working of Irish civil servants and this ethos is epitomised in its core values of independence, integrity, impartiality, equality, fairness and respect⁴⁴.</p> <p>The existing consultation and engagement framework includes -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extensive engagement fora across the public sector. ▪ Public consultation listing (searchable)⁴⁵ with the ability to subscribe for automatic updates. ▪ Consultation principles and guidance⁴⁶. <p>There are an enormous number of existing engagement fora across government at national;</p>

	<p>ministerial; departmental; and sectoral levels⁴⁷ spanning most, if not all, policy areas.</p> <p>The importance of consultation and engagement is captured and reflected in the Programme for Government (2020) commitments.</p> <p>A variety of methods are used to increase awareness of consultations and maximise engagement, including: key stakeholder group events; online surveys/ consultations/workshops; targeted digital engagement, and physical stakeholder meetings / forums in line with public health guidelines.</p>
<p><i>Ambition</i></p> <p><i>This commitment is a first step towards this longer term ambition.</i></p>	<p>To work with Civil Society to understand and progress towards a framework for government, public bodies and local government that guides and promotes early, proactive, meaningful and representative engagement with the citizen, civil society and stakeholders.</p> <p>Framework characteristics envisaged include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An open and transparent process; ▪ Inclusive participation of citizens, including traditionally marginalized groups, civil society and stakeholders; ▪ Participants having an equal opportunity to participate, and ▪ Consultation feedback with evidence based reasons for why the decisions were reached.
<p>Commitment description</p>	
<p>What is the public problem that the commitment will address?</p>	<p>That a more consistent approach occurs across departments, public bodies and local government to early, proactive, meaningful and representative consultation and engagement with the citizen, civil society and stakeholders.</p>

<p>What is the commitment?</p>	<p>To progress the adoption of a set of values and principles for engagement with the community and voluntary sector and begin to embed those values in how the government seeks the input of both the community and voluntary sector, civil society and the public in the formation of policy.</p> <p>To establish the Civic Forum, which will provide for formal dialogue between local and central government and the community and voluntary sector.</p> <p>That the Social Dialogue process will be strengthened and deepened. Social Dialogue is a process for engagement between the state and groups representing different segments of society including Government, Trade Unions and employers, the community and voluntary sector, as well as farmers and environmental groups to discuss key societal issues.</p> <p>That a Round Table subgroup be established to focus on progressing civic participation with the objective of further enhancing the proactive and meaningful participation and engagement with citizens in the decisions that affect them.</p>
<p>How will the commitment contribute to solving the public problem?</p>	<p>The commitment will contribute to a more consistent approach to early, proactive, meaningful and representative consultation and engagement with the citizen, civil society and stakeholders by establishing the values and principles which will be published and reflected in the published guidance; establishing the Civic Forum for formal dialogue between central and local government bodies and representatives of civil society and strengthening/deepening the Social Dialogue process.</p>
<p><i>Describe what the intended impact of successful</i></p>	<p>That the policy deliberation and formulation process reflects active consultation with a diverse group of citizens, communities, civil society and stakeholders to</p>

<i>implementation of this commitment will be?</i>	ensure that the evidence based policies which emerge will deliver for citizens, support implementation and build trust.
<i>Which Open Government value(s) does your commitment relate too?</i>	Civic Participation
Why is (and describe how) this commitment is relevant to the Open Government value(s)?	The milestones will enhance the existing framework to guide and promote early, proactive, meaningful and representative engagement with the citizen, civil society and stakeholders. This will result in a more consistent approach and enhanced experience of civic participation.
<i>What United Nations Sustainable Development Goal does this commitment relate too?</i>	<p><u>Goal 16:</u> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p> <p><u>Sub-goal 16.6:</u> Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.</p>
Additional information <i>(if known)</i>	

Commitment milestones			
Suggested next steps and milestones to guide implementation	Who / What organization (if known)	When (if known)	Additional info.
Strengthening and deepening the Social Dialogue with the active participation of the various parties, including Civil Society.	D/Taoiseach; relevant Department; Agencies and Civil Society	Not yet known ⁴⁸	
Consultation, engagement and drafting of the 'Values and Principles for engagement with the community and voluntary sector' to be finalised.	DRCD	End Q1 2022	
Cabinet to consider 'Values and Principles for engagement with the community and voluntary sector'.	DRCD	Q2 2022	
The 'Consultation Principles and Guidance' to be updated, as required, in light of Cabinet consideration of the values and principles above.	DPER	Q4 2022	
The establishment of the Civic Forum ⁴⁹ for formal dialogue between central and local government bodies and representatives of Civil Society. The definition of the role, format and modalities of the Civic Forum will be agreed with the existing Cross-sectoral group (which oversees the Government's strategy for community and voluntary sector ⁵⁰).	DRCD	Q2 2022	
The hosting of the first Civic Forum.	DRCD	Q3 2022	

Contact information			
Lead contact name (required)	Kieran Moylan	c/o Department of the Taoiseach Round Table member	Críona Brassill
Organisation (if applicable)	Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)	Department of the Taoiseach	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER)
Role title (if applicable)	Principal Officer	Principal Officer	Assistant Principal
Email and Phone (required)	Kieran.Moylan@drcd.gov.ie c/o Barry.Vaughan@taoiseach.gov.ie Criona.Brassill@per.gov.ie		(01) 773 6817 (01) 619 4000 (01) 604 5059
Special interest and/or policy area of expertise (optional)			
Other Actors Involved	Government Ministries, Department/Agency	All Departments; Bodies and Local Government	
	CSOs, private sector, multilaterals, working groups	Open Government Round Table	

Ireland's 3 rd Open Government Partnership National Action Plan	
▪ Strengthening inclusion and civic deliberation in local decision making	
Commitment Start and End Date (e.g. 31 August 2021 - 31 August 2023)	
Who do you think would be the lead implementing Government Department(s) / agency (if known and any relevant contact details)	<p>Department of Rural and Community Development for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public Participation Networks (PPNs), ▪ Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). <p>Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other Local Authority Committees' functions, membership and procedures with which the PPNS engage.
<i>Objective</i>	To further enhance civic representation, engagement and participation, including in the Public Participation Network (PPN) and Strategic Policy Committee (SPCs) in local government decision-making processes.
<i>Status Quo</i>	<p>Public Participation Networks</p> <p>Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 commenced on 1 June 2014, provides the legislative basis which gives effect to the Framework for Public Participation and the Public Participation Networks (PPNs).</p> <p>A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a structure that brings together Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups in each local authority area. The primary purpose of the PPN is to enable the PPN member groups to input into and have their voices heard within the formal decision making structures of the local authority.</p>

	<p>The PPNs should have as diverse a membership as possible, which reflects the volunteer-led activity in the Local Authority area and which is socially inclusive.</p> <p>Throughout Local Authorities, public participation must be seen as an important and valued element of policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>In addition, it should be demonstrated that the public's contribution has the potential to meaningfully influence the decisions or outcomes, and the public participation process should communicate to the PPNs how their input affected the decision or outcomes once the decisions are made</p> <p>Refer to the Public Participation Network Handbook for the statutory remit and more detail on the purpose and operations of PPNs.⁵¹</p> <p>A structural review of the PPNs was undertaken in 2021. The purpose of the review was to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assess how the existing structure has facilitated the operation of the PPN network to date against the overall objectives as outlined in the 2014 Report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with local government.2. Identify opportunities to further strengthening and enhancing PPN structures.3. Make recommendations as to how to build on existing structural strengths and support the future development of PPNs. <p>The following are the high level areas that were included in the Review terms of reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structure and Governance;• Impact of Structure on Strategic Effectiveness;• Impact of Structure on Participation, Engagement and Inclusion;• Effectiveness of "three college" structure and linkage groups;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Support and Development under the current structure; • Review of National Advisory Group (NAG) structure, • Suitability of PPNs for contributing to climate action and community development. <p>Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs):</p> <p>SPCs assist the council in the formulation, development and review of policy; reflecting the major functions or services of a local authority within the broader context.</p> <p>Each local authority has established SPCs which bring together both elected members and people actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to develop and review policies related to council services. The SPCs provide elected members with external views as they discharge their strategic role in the development of the local authority, including their policy development and oversight roles.</p> <p>Involving people in making the decisions that affect them and their lives is a core principle of democracy. Real participation goes beyond voting (representative democracy) to a situation where people and government work in partnership to co-create infrastructure and services, solve problems and work towards the well-being of all in this generation and the generations to come (deliberative democracy). By definition, such an approach requires making a specific effort to ensure that the voices and views of people who are not traditionally influential are heard and considered.</p>
Commitment description	
What is the public problem that the commitment will address?	PPNs are a key method under statute for civil society to influence local policy decisions made by Councils ⁵² . PPNs have been operational for five years with significant investment from the Department of Rural and Community Development and local authorities. Given the length of time which has elapsed since their establishment, a review

	<p>of the PPN structures is timely.</p> <p>(1) There is a need to identify opportunities for further strengthening and enhancing PPN structures, and for recommendations as to how to build on existing structural strengths and best support the future development of PPNs.</p> <p>(2) For PPNs to fulfil their potential, it is important the breadth of perspective on societal issues that impact all people is not limited. At present, it is not clear whether there is diversity in representation within PPNs in practice. As a result, an evidence base is required to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. collate data on the demographic characteristics of those involved in PPNs, b. identify demographics with low representation, c. identify any barriers that may be preventing certain demographics who wish to participate from doing so, d. make recommendations on how barriers to participation can be addressed. <p>(3) PPN reps participate in Local Authority Committees, deliberative processes need strengthening along best practice lines to ensure meaningful participation.</p>
<p>What is the commitment?</p>	<p>A: To publish the PPN Structural Review report</p> <p>To publish and disseminate widely the PPN Structural Review report which will provide evidence based recommendations on governance and accountability, and national support structures to inform the future DRCD/PPN initiatives arising.</p> <p>B: Upon publication of the report, the Department will work collaboratively with stakeholders to shape the future of PPNs</p>

	<p>Stakeholders will have involvement at every step, from planning to implementation.</p> <p>C: To develop an evidence base and recommendations on addressing barriers to participation from across all demographics within communities</p> <p>In order to ensure diverse input by citizens into the decision-making process, it is essential that PPNs represent a range of perspectives from throughout the community sector.</p> <p>DRCD propose to engage consultants to research the current barriers to participation from across all demographics within our communities.</p> <p>The current draft timeframe (subject to resource allocation) is to agree a terms of reference and request for tender to engage consultants in Q2 2022 with a report to be produced by end 2022.</p> <p>The purpose of the research will be to collate data on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) the demographic characteristics of those who currently take an active part in PPN activities,b) identify demographics with little or no representation,c) identify any barriers that may be preventing certain demographics who wish to participate from doing so, andd) make recommendations on how barriers to participation can be addressed. <p>D: Review of Strategic Policy Committees (DHLGH)</p> <p>DHLGH is committed to undertaking a review of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), which will commence during 2022.</p>
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	<p>E: Develop mechanisms to enhance the engagement of marginal groups in local deliberative processes (DRCD)</p> <p>Develop mechanisms to enhance the engagement of marginal groups in local deliberative processes. DRCD have secured Dormant Accounts Funding.</p>
<p>How will the commitment contribute to solving the public problem?</p>	<p>This commitment will generate actionable evidence based recommendations which will be progressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The publication of the structural review of the PPNs, undertaken in 2021, will provide recommendations on governance and accountability, to inform the future DRCD initiatives arising. ▪ The collaborative process of co-production on future changes to the PPN following the findings of the report will ensure that the changes are sustainable, and address those communities' needs, and have community buy-in. ▪ The research report will provide a base line of the PPNs diversity and produce evidence based recommendations to inform the future DRCD/PPN initiatives arising- ▪ The review of the Strategic Policy Committees will consult with stakeholders, including the PPN Advisory Group, in drafting the TORs and as part of the review process to generate findings, conclusions and/or recommendations for implementation.
<p><i>Describe what the intended impact of successful implementation will be?</i></p>	<p>Civic society passionately engaged in civic participation, in a manner valued by citizens, Local Authorities and National Government, with clear deliberative, independent processes that reveal innovative solutions to complex social challenges.</p>

<p><i>Which Open Government value(s) does your commitment relate too?</i></p>	<p>Civic Participation</p>
<p>Why is (and describe how) this commitment is relevant to the Open Government value(s)?</p>	<p>This commitment will generate actionable evidence based recommendations which will be progressed to further enhance civic participation.</p>
<p><i>What United Nations Sustainable Development Goal does this commitment relate too?</i></p>	<p><u>Goal 16:</u> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p> <p><u>Sub-goal 16.6:</u> Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.</p>
<p>Additional information <i>(if known)</i></p>	<p>Programme for Government⁵³ commitment – To fully implement Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities, the five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland up to 2024.</p> <p>Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland⁵⁴: Objective 7 - Supporting commitments in Our Public Service 2020, continue to develop and strengthen Public Participation Networks as the primary mechanism for communities to engage with local government decision-making.</p>

Commitment milestones			
Suggested next steps and milestones to guide implementation <i>(Don't forget to capture and detail any public facing element desired; e.g. stakeholder engagement)</i>	Who / What organisation <i>(if known)</i>	When <i>(if known)</i>	Additional info.
Review findings of the Mazars independent report.	PPN Oversight Group	Q1 2022	
Approval of next steps by DRCD Management Board and Minister.	DRCD	Q2 2022	
Finalise terms of reference to address barriers to participation.	DRCD	Q2 2022	
Finalise research on barriers to participation.	DRCD	Q4 2022	
Commence the Review of the Strategic Policy Committee during 2022 and to consult with stakeholders, including the PPN Advisory Group, in drafting the TORs and as part of the review process ⁵⁵ .	DHLGH	Q4 2022	
Contact information			
Lead contact name (required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ciara Bates (Department Rural and Community Development) ▪ Diarmuid O'Leary (Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage) 		
Organisation (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Department Rural and Community Development (DRCD) 		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Role title (if applicable)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DRCD, Principal Officer, Community and Voluntary Supports and Programmes ▪ DHLGH, Principal Officer, Local Governance and Elected Members
Email and Phone (required)		
Special interest and/or policy area of expertise (optional)		
Other Actors Involved	Government Ministries, Department/Agency	
	CSOs, private sector, multilaterals, working groups	National Secretariat of the Public Participation Network and as per existing PPN processes.

End notes:

The end notes have been provided to provide transparency on the work of the Round Table and to provide practical insights to others in the Open Government Partnership community.

With the passage of time, given the regular updating/refreshing of the Open Government Ireland website, if a link is broken please contact IrelandOpenGovernment@per.gov.ie for assistance.

¹ Source: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/open-government-awards>

² Detail at: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/open-government-awards/ogp-impact-awards-2021/>

³ Source: Official written transcript at <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-11-16/64/?highlight%5B0%5D=56104&highlight%5B1%5D=21> and Dáil Éireann video 16th November 2021 at <https://bit.ly/30uTBpE> (start at timeline 7:03:20)

⁴ Source: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Ireland_Summit2021_20211214_Minister-of-State-Ossian-Smyth-Written-Statement.pdf

⁵ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/202913/?page=null>

⁶ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5a21f-open-government-round-table-multi-stakeholder-forum-activity-ongoing/#meeting-information>

⁷ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/34125-open-government-national-action-plans-progress-reports-and-reviews/#3rd-open-government-national-plan-2019-2021>

⁸ Source: OGP National Handbook, pre 2021, page 10.

⁹ Note that Ireland's expedited process availed of the ability to amend action plans for up to 9 months after date due for submission under the OGP process (source: OGP National Handbook, pre 2021, page 10).

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/procedural-review/#PRC>

¹¹ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>, page 121 of 128 pages.

¹² Source: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/ireland-end-of-term-report-2016-2018/>

¹³ <http://ogaireland.org/>

¹⁴ This is a subsequent iteration of a previous national action plan 'star' commitment. It was the subject of a submission received from the public call. It is also a Programme for Government (2020) commitment.

¹⁵ Source: <https://data.gov.ie/pages/open-data-directive>

¹⁶ Current Round Table members and their bios are published at <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/216589/510e7434-7d0b-4431-9b45-5cc5f11f3977.pdf>

¹⁷ Resigned 20th May 2022 on taking up role with the Standards in Public Office Commission

¹⁸ Non-voting since Department of the Taoiseach representative joined in January 2022.

¹⁹ Joined the Round Table in January 2022.

²⁰ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/202913/?page=null>

²¹ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5a21f-open-government-round-table-multi-stakeholder-forum-activity-ongoing/#interim-civil-society-bureau-open-government-association-2019-2021>

²² Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5a21f-open-government-round-table-multi-stakeholder-forum-activity-ongoing/#interim-civil-society-round-table-2021>

²³ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9a7cf-public-call-for-expressions-of-interest-to-join-the-open-government-round-table/>

²⁴ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5a21f-open-government-round-table-multi-stakeholder-forum-activity-ongoing/#interim-civil-society-bureau-open-government-association-2019-2021>

²⁵ Source: Official written transcript at <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-11-16/64/?highlight%5B0%5D=56104&highlight%5B1%5D=21> and Dáil Éireann video 16th November 2021 at <https://bit.ly/30uTBpE> (start at timeline 7:03:20)

²⁶ Source: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Ireland_Summit2021_20211214_Minister-of-State-Ossian-Smyth-Written-Statement.pdf

²⁷ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d79a2-open-government-in-ireland/#introduction>

²⁸ Source: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/open-government-awards/ogp-impact-awards-2021/>

²⁹ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/06f43-public-call-for-submissions-for-the-next-and-future-open-government-national-action-plans-oct-2021/>

³⁰ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/221939/?page=null>

³¹ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/201587/?page=null>

³² Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/34125-open-government-national-action-plans-progress-reports-and-reviews/#3rd-open-government-national-plan-2019-2021>

³³ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5a21f-open-government-round-table-multi-stakeholder-forum-activity-ongoing/#meeting-information>

³⁴ Refer to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

³⁵ Ireland includes this Sustainable Development Goal information to further enhance the coordination of policy implementation and it is a requirement under Ireland's 2nd Sustainable Development Goal National Implementation Plan 2021-2023 (draft).

³⁶ Refer to Open Government in Ireland website at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/34125-open-government-national-action-plans-progress-reports-and-reviews/#open-government-national-plan-2016-2018>

³⁷ Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

³⁸ Freedom of Information Act 2014 is available at <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2013/89/>

³⁹ Refer to press release available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/a72d5-cabinet-has-approved-plan-for-review-of-the-freedom-of-information-act/>.

⁴⁰ Refer to the speech by the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner, Peter Tyndall at Public Affairs Ireland - 27th March 2014 available at <https://www.oic.ie/publications/speeches/15-years-on-has-the-foi/>

⁴¹ Refer to Open Government in Ireland website at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/34125-open-government-national-action-plans-progress-reports-and-reviews/#open-government-national-plan-2016-2018>

⁴² Designated persons are Ministers, Ministers of State, members of the Oireachtas (legislature), MEPs, Local Authority members, special advisers, and senior civil and public servants (specified grades).

⁴³ Refer to <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/sipo-legislation-to-be-reviewed-following-michael-d-arcy-case-taoiseach-tells-d%C3%A1il-1.4367334>

⁴⁴ Source: People Strategy for the Civil Service 2017-2020 at <https://assets.gov.ie/7232/1bd4d30f2003444a9ca59f1cf87afc28.pdf>

⁴⁵ Consultation webpage available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultations/> enables the public to subscribe for updates and to manage subscription via email link.

⁴⁶ Source: Consultation Principles and Guidance (2016) at <https://assets.gov.ie/5579/140119163201-9e43dea3f4b14d56a705960cb9354c8b.pdf>

⁴⁷ Examples include: Labour Employer Economic Forum; National Economic and Social Council; Social Inclusion Forum; Brexit Stakeholder Forum; Hospitality and Tourism Forum; Retail Forum & the Retail Roundtable; Apprentice Council; Labour Market Advisory Council; and extensive engagement at departmental level.

⁴⁸ At the time of circulation, working is ongoing but the timeline for completion and decision announcement is not yet known.

⁴⁹ The establishment of the Civic Forum is a commitment in the *'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024'*

⁵⁰ Source: *'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024'* at <https://assets.gov.ie/26890/ff380490589a4f9ab9cd9bb3f53b5493.pdf>

⁵¹ Source: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9db5e3-ppn-handbook/>

⁵² PPNs are one among a suite of ways that citizens and civil society can participate in local decision making.

⁵³ Available at gov.ie - Programme for Government: Our Shared Future (www.gov.ie), page 92.

⁵⁴ Available at [https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/7285e7-minister-ring-publishes-ambitious-five-year-strategy-to-support-the-/-/](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/7285e7-minister-ring-publishes-ambitious-five-year-strategy-to-support-the-/). Specific actions are outlined on page 29.

⁵⁵ As funding/resource allocation is awaited, no further milestones are possible at the time of publication.



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