



Open Government Partnership Global Conference 2021

Ireland – Minister of State Ossian Smyth’s written statement

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.

Ireland is fully committed to upholding the Open Government Partnership principles of open and transparent government. Minister Michael McGrath and I have publically reiterated this commitment in Dáil Éireann, our national parliament, on the 16th November 2021.

While policy work on open government matters have been ongoing, I am delighted to share that Ireland has made significant progress over the past 6 months to get our Open Government Partnership process back on track supported by our Programme for Government commitment to ‘continue and reinvigorate’ the process.

Milestones achieved to date, with civil society, include:

- New open government in Ireland webpages on gov.ie;
- New co-created terms of reference for the Open Government Round Table, Ireland’s multi-stakeholder forum, are agreed and published.
- Completed public call for expressions of interest to join the Open Government Round Table multi-stakeholder forum, which was almost 4 times oversubscribed by Civil Society.
- Completed first public call for submissions for the next and future open government national action plans and
- Nomination of public sector Open Government Round Table members in recognition of their ongoing work.

I was delighted to open and attend the 1st Open Government Round Table online meeting on 29th November 2021 with members representing civil society and the public service. After sharing their aspirations for the process, members got down to business with a clear focus on their interim year-end deliverable and mapping out a fully participative process to finalise the next national action plan by the end of June 2022.

It is a cornerstone of the process that the Round Table members will collaborate on the issues to develop the next open government national action plan commitments through this multi-stakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society. Hence, there are were no predetermined issues or commitments to be addressed at the outset of the process.

We are delighted that Ireland is in the running for the Open Government Partnership Citizens' Impact Award for the 'Irish Citizens' Assembly and our deliberative democracy journey'.

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 which originated as proposals put forward by deliberative democracy exercises: advancing marriage equality as recommended by the Convention on the Constitution in 2013, and replacing the Eighth Amendment, which concerns abortion. The approach enabled a mature and informed debate of highly charged topics by citizens chosen at random to represent the views of the people of Ireland.

Ireland has the political support and structure to enable the Open Government Partnership process to evolve and deliver on its commitment.

As we forge ahead to deliver on our commitment, I want to acknowledge Civil Society's central role and the support of the Open Government Partnership Support Unit.

It is my hope that Ireland's experience in 'getting back on track' will inspire others to overcome past challenges and to refocus on how the Open Government Partnership process can further enhance transparency; civic participation; public accountability to positively impact the lives of our people.

Minister of State, Ossian Smyth

7th December 2021