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The influence of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) on the Open Data discussions

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Abstract/ Executive Summary:

Open Government Partnership (OGP) is gaining momentum and as evidence to this is the impressive number of Governments that have joined this partnership during the past 2 years. By joining this multi-stakeholder initiative, Governments commit to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.

Open Government as well as Open Data are rather old principles, however, mobile technologies and Internet managed to transform these concepts during the past years and this transformation has become not only in scale but in kind as well. The core link between Open Data and Open Government is public transparency given that by opening up and sharing information/ data, citizens can hold their Governments more responsible and accountable for their actions.

This paper will give an introduction to what is OGP and its relationship with the open data concepts and will look at two countries cases from Europe (Moldova and Romania) to look more in detail on how did the OGP process influenced the national open data policies.

1 What is Open Government Partnership?

1.1 Background and context

Back in September 2010, in his Remarks the United Nations General Assembly, US President Barack Obama spoke about the importance of open economies, open societies, and open governments as "strongest foundation for human progress". Obama highlighted that the work of strengthening democratic government requires sustained commitment, and that countries around the world are taking innovative steps to better serve the people they represent. He issued a challenge to the leaders assembled in New York to gather together again in September of 2011 with specific commitments and plans of action to promote transparency, fight corruption, energize civil society, and to leverage new technologies[1].

As a response to the challenge launched by President Obama, a group of governments and civil society organizations working in several countries around the globe, have come together to form the Open Government Partnership (OGP)[2].

The Open Government Partnership is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder international initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In pursuit of these goals, OGP provides an international forum for dialogue and sharing ideas and experience among governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector, all of which contribute to a common pursuit of open government. OGP stakeholders include participating governments as well as civil society and private sector entities that support the principles and mission of OGP. OGP is not registered as its own independent legal entity.

Eligible governments can join OGP through the following series of steps:

- Submit a letter of intent that signals their government's commitment to open government and intention to participate in OGP;
- Develop a concrete action plan according to OGP requirements3; and
- Implement the action plan and report on progress in cooperation with the OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism.

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[1] Available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/23/remarks-president-united-nations-general-assembly
[2] Available at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about
[3] Available at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/node/1355

All governments that have submitted a letter of intent, committed to abide by OGP principles and processes by endorsing the OGP Declaration, and initiated the process of developing concrete action plans are considered participating governments in OGP and listed on the OGP website.

OGP participating governments commit to meeting five common expectations, and they are:

- Endorse the high-level Open Government Declaration;
- Make concrete commitments, as part of a country action plan, that are ambitious and go beyond a country's current practice;
- Develop country action plans through a multi-stakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society;
- Commit to a self-assessment and independent reporting on the country's progress; and
- Contribute to the advancement of open government in other countries through sharing of best practices, expertise, technical assistance, technologies and resources, as appropriate.

Thus, by joining the OGP and endorsing the Open Government Declaration, Governments are fully responsible and committed to:

- Promote openness, because more information about governmental activities should be timely and freely available to people;
- Engage citizens in decision-making, because this makes government more innovative and responsive;
- Implement the highest standards of professional integrity, because those in power must serve the people and not themselves; and
- Increase access to new technologies because of their unprecedented potential to help people realize their aspirations for access to information and a more powerful voice in how they are governed.

In addition to participating governments, civil society organizations can contribute to OGP via running for membership of the Steering Committee (SC)[4], engagement in the development, implementation and monitoring of action plans at the country level, and, taking part in the OGP annual conference and other OGP outreach events.

In addition to Governments and Civil Society, OGP strongly encourages the private sector to take

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[4] Available at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/steering-committee

part in developing, monitoring, and supporting the implementation of country action plans, both through participation in domestic public consultations and multi-stakeholder forums, as well as through the provision of technical expertise. Representatives from relevant international organizations and intergovernmental bodies may also be invited by the OGP SC to attend the OGP annual conference and related SC events as observers, when this can be practically accommodated.

All in all, OGP stakeholders are expected to uphold the values and principles articulated in the Open Government Declaration, and to consistently and continually advance open governance for the well being of their citizens.

Should the OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) process find that a participating government repeatedly (in two consecutive IRM reports) acts contrary to OGP process and to its action plan commitments, fails to adequately address issues raised by the IRM, or is taking actions that undermine the values and principles of OGP, participation of that government in OGP is going to be addressed by both the Criteria and Standards Sub-Committee as well as Steering Committee. Both the subcommittee and SC processes will include direct conversations with governments under such review.

Open Government Partnership is only 2 years old, however, it has managed to bring up a lot of positive initiatives and movement around the globe on issues related to transparency, citizen engagement, open data, innovation/technology, and many others.
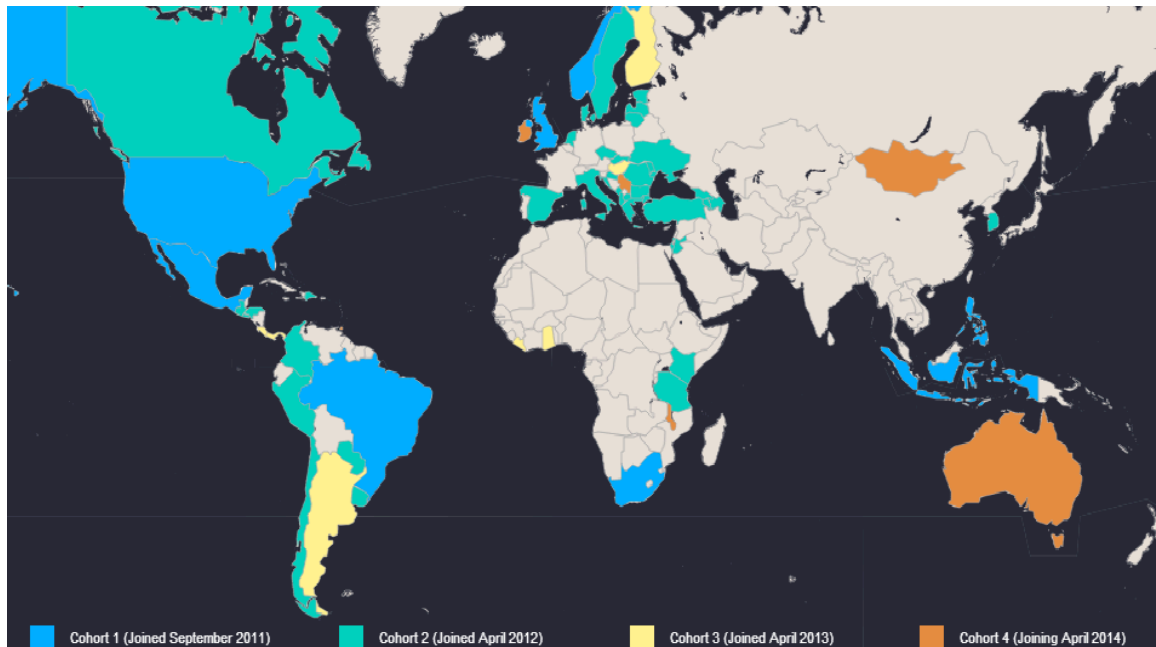
Up to date, a total of 60 Governments from all around the globe are part of Open Government Partnership, Governments joining OGP in different phases and committing to open government across four key areas – fiscal and budget transparency, freedom of information, asset disclosures for public officials, and citizen engagement[5]:

- Founding governments joined in September 2011 (among which UK and Norway in Europe);
- Cohort 2 countries joined in April 2012 in Brasilia Annual Meeting, among which Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Albania, Greece, Netherlands, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, others;
- Cohort 3 countries joined in April 2013 in London (among which Finland and Hungary);

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[5] http://www.opengovpartnership.org/

- Cohort 4 of countries is expected to joining in April 2014 (among which Serbia, Ireland).

Below is a map of OGP countries/cohorts, a complete list of countries can be accessed from http://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries.

Cohort 1 (Joined September 2011)   Cohort 2 (Joined April 2012)   Cohort 3 (Joined April 2013)   Cohort 4 (Joining April 2014)

Given the government-civil society nature of the Open Government Partnership, OGP has an executive, decision-making body of the initiative which is the Steering Committee. It is comprised of government and civil society representatives that together guide the ongoing development and direction of OGP, maintaining the highest standards for the initiative and ensuring its long-term sustainability. The Steering Committee can consist of up to 20 SC Members of which ten representatives from OGP participating governments and ten civil society representatives.

Today, this unique partnership has a Steering Committee composed of, as of October 2013, governments of Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and civil society organizations such as: INESC (Brasil), MKSS (India), "CMB" Training Center (Moldova), Twaweza (Tanzania), Pubish What You Pay Indonesia, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (international), Revenue Watch Institute (international), International Budget Partnership (international)[6].

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[6] Available at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/governance-staff-donors

1.2 Open Government Partnership and Open Data

While the OGP Declaration[7] does not specifically mentions the keyword "open data", there are a number of references in the Declaration that are a direct reference to the movement of re-using public sector information.

Thus the Declaration mentions in the commitment of "Increase the availability of information about governmental activities" that the signatory countries are committing to:

- increasing our efforts to systematically collect and publish data on government spending and performance for essential public services and activities;
- pro-actively provide high-value information, including raw data, in a timely manner, in formats that the public can easily locate, understand and use, and in formats that facilitate reuse;
- recognize the importance of open standards to promote civil society access to public data, as well as to facilitate the interoperability of government information systems.

It also includes in the commitment of "Increase access to new technologies for openness and accountability" the desire of the signatory countries to use the opportunities offered by the new technologies for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration in order to "make more information public in ways that enable people to both understand what their governments do and to influence decisions." They also commit to "engaging civil society and the business community to identify effective practices and innovative approaches for leveraging new technologies to empower people and promote transparency in government."

But Open Government (and even less the OGP) does not equal open data. In fact what is even understood by "open government" is still under discussion, with countries that signed the OGP, academics[8] or even former proponents of the term seeming to sometimes have different opinions.

Beth Noveck, who was U.S. Deputy Chief Technology Officer (CTO) for Open Government commented[9] negatively on the current meaning of the word for most people: "In retrospect,

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[7] Available at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/open-government-declaration
[8] A very good article on this topic is Yu, Harlan and Robinson, David G., The New Ambiguity of 'Open Government' (February 28, 2012). 59 UCLA L. Rev. Disc. 178 (2012). Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=2012489 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2012489
[9] Defining Open Government, available at http://cairns.typepad.com/blog/2011/04/whats-in-a-name-open-gov-we-gov-gov-20-collaborative-government.html

"open government" was a bad choice. It has generated too much confusion. Many people, even in the White House, still assume that open government means transparency about government".

Instead she points out that "were never exclusively about making transparent information about the workings of government" and should be instead about a shorthand for open innovation or the idea that working in a transparent, participatory, and collaborative fashion helps improve performance, inform decision making, encourage entrepreneurship, and solve problems more effectively."

A report from the Latin America regions[10] shows the same unclarity in the OGP process about what open government is and its relationship with open data. Thus the organizations have tried to be explained the keywords: "open government is a tool to contribute to transparency and accountability, but it does no substitute the right to information in any shape or form; open data serves as an instrument to those rights. The networks coined the following formula together – Open Government Partnership = Access to information as a right + Transparency and accountability as a public policy + Open data as an instrument."

Also the NGO Global Integrity points out[11] that "a sizeable number of Action Plans included at least one commitment that we classified as being outside of the scope of 'open government.' "

Other people also question the fact that the open data movement is such a great idea for OGP. Nathaniel Heller from Global Integrity explains12 the concern: "(...) open data provides an easy way out for some governments to avoid the much harder, and likely more transformative, open government reforms that should probably be higher up on their lists. Instead of fetishizing open data portals for the sake of having open data portals, I'd rather see governments incorporating open data as a way to address more fundamental structural challenges around extractives (through maps and budget data), the political process (through real-time disclosure of campaign contributions), or budget priorities (through online publication of budget line-items)."

This is supported also by the commitments made by the signatories countries. An interesting

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[10] See Good Practices in OGP- Networks Alianza Regional & Transparencia Internacional (WBI Word Bank Institute) – Page 8, available at http://www.scribd.com/doc/166133201/Good-Practices-in-OGP-Networks-Alianza-Regional-Transparencia-Internacional-WBI-Word-Bank-Institute

[11] See "Assessing OGP Action Plans" 21.06.2012 , http://www.globalintegrity.org/blog/ogp-action-plan-assessments

[12] See "Is Open Data a Good Idea for the Open Government Partnership?", 15.09.2011 http://globalintegrity.org/blog/open-data-for-ogp

analysis[13] made by Public Integrity in 2012 on over 40 Country Actions Plans shows that over 190 commitments were actually made in the field of Open Data, which was one of the most popular category of commitments, together with the "E-Government" could to almost a third of all open government activities:

Commitment Activity Focus Area	Count
E-government	199
Open Data	190
Citizen Engagement	131
Access to Information/ Freedom of Information	93
Budgets & Financial Planning	79
Sub-national governance	57
Public Servants/Civil Service	50
Anti-Corruption	34
Procurement	29
Capacity building/ Training	28

Top 10 Focus Areas - OGP Action Plans
Source: Global Integrity - July 2012

In any case, the national particularities are essential to take into account when someone wants to build up a working Open Government Action Plan and if OGP can help or not. In this context probably the key word of the OGP in the context of open data is partnership and Paul Maassen, independent civil society coordinator at OGP underlines14 it extremely well:

"Open Data within OGP offers a great opportunity for partnership. Between policy wonks and tech geeks, between government and the private sector, between government and civil society. It has revolutionary potential but needs many different expertise to make it the success it current popularity seems to warrant."

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[13] See "So What's In Those OGP Action Plans, Anyway?", July 2012 http://globalintegrity.org/blog/whats-in-OGP-action-plans
[14] Paul Maassen speech at the event Open Data Romania – June 18 2013 – text available online at http://soros.ro/ro/documente.php?document=1717

2 Examples of ways in which Open Government Partnership influences the national open data policies: Moldova and Romania

As there are a significant number of OGP Action Plans with commitments on open data, it is clear that many countries' open data policies have been influenced by OGP in one way or another.

The OGP itself has also some internal tools to asses the way the OGP commitments have been achieved by each signatory country: the reports of the Independent Reporting Mechanism. The first reports[15] conducted in the eight founding countries of the partnership during the past months do illustrate this process very well. For example of the European founding countries of the OGP, UK has been so far the most active in Open Data. Also, shadow civil society reports[16] or other studies have also highlighted the OGP processes in the other parts of the world.[17]

We have decided for the purpose of this article to focus two countries in Europe, where the authors have been involved in the open data policies process, in order to highlight some of the particularities of these processes in the national context.

Moldova, even if it is outside the European Union, seems more advanced on the open data policies and used the OGP process as a way to consolidate their current open data strategy, whereas Romania, even though it is in the EU since 2007, have used the OGP process to bring the open data policy on the Government's table.

2.1 Moldova

Back in 2010, the Government of Moldova endorsed an ambitious "Moldova Governance E-transformation Project" and thus, committing to better serving its citizens. This project aims to build leadership capacity in the use of ICTs, modernize and improve public sector governance in Moldova, boost the country's competitiveness, create a more attractive investment climate and to increase transparency and accountability by giving citizens a voice in public matters by opening government data.

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[15] Available at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/independent-reporting-mechanism
[16] See for example the Canadian report highlighted at http://www.ogphub.org/blog/canadian-civil-society-shadow-report-published-on-national-ogp-process/
[17] See for example Good Practices in OGP- Networks Alianza Regional & Transparencia Internacional (WBI Word Bank Institute) – cited above

Implementation of this initiative is possible due to technical and financial support from the World Bank.

Open Government Data initiative is one of the key pillars of the "Governance E-transformation" agenda and was launched in April 2011, thus, Moldova becoming the 17th country to join the Global Open Data Initiative. As part of this pillar, the Government launched an Open Data portal – a single platform for accessing government data in Moldova - www.date.gov.md. Sustainability of this initiative is ensured through the Prime Minister's Directive from April 29, 2011, which stipulates that every ministry has to publish at least three datasets per month.

www.date.gov.md started off with making public 67 datasets from public agencies while by the time Moldova joined Open Government Partnership in April 2012, the number of datasets had increased to 334.

Moldova's accession to Open Government Partnership was an opportunity to further develop and advance the Open Data agenda, by taking open data initiative to another level. Thus, the Law on public sector information reuse has been approved on December 12, 2012. This law outlines the conditions for public sector information reuse and obliges all the central public authorities to develop lists of public sector data that they hold, which should also be made public. Additionally, open data became an important component of Moldova's Action Plan on Open Government, by having an Annex of more than 30 open data sets to be released during 2012-2013, most of these data sets being requested by Civil Society organizations in the consultation process around the Action Plan.

As of October 2013 www.date.gov.md portal contains more than 600 datasets on public expenses, health, economy, education, others. Several applications are showcased on the portal that link to the geospatial portal www.geoportal.md, statbank.statistica.md – National Statistics Portal, www.lex.justice.md - State Registry of Legal Acts.

Open Data initiative in Moldova started more as a supply driven one, while demand for open data has only now started to slowly grow. To boost more demand, especially among civil society organizations, there were a series of events and capacity building programs organized with support from the World Bank.

Right after the Government had approved its Open Government Action Plan for 2012-2013 on April 4, 2012, an "Open Innovation Week" dedicated to Open Government related initiatives

followed in May of 2012. During that week events such as Data Journalism Boot Camp, Public Expenditure database training, TechCamp and Hackathon were organized in order to provide civil society, mass-media representatives as well as public servants and developers with the opportunity to learn new tools to explore, visualize and transform data into valuable applications, in addition to raising more awareness about the broader Open Government Agenda endorsed by the Government of Moldova.

Open Innovation Week included development of three, high-visibility "showcase" applications. These applications made innovative use of Moldova's BOOST public expenditure data: (1) Afla.md (which correctly aligns names and locations of all Moldovan schools with spending); (2) Buget.md (first major reuse of BOOST database that includes an API enabling developers to make better use of Moldova's public expenditure data); and (3) Alerte.md (Moldova's version of an Open311 platform that was adopted and launched by the Mayor of Chisinau).

One of the immediate visible result of Apps4Moldova is the launch of the www.opendata.md portal that has been put together by developers' community to make public government data accessible to users of mobile, desktop and web applications.

The Open Innovation Week ensured successful launch of Moldova's first TechCamp and Hackathon, referred to as Apps4Moldova. 18 teams of developers have designed several prototypes of applications based on open government data. Apps4Moldova was a typical Hackathon (often a very loosely structured event). It encompassed a highly innovative hybrid model designed to be demand-driven, competitive, and challenge-focused: conditioned on reuse of government open data and principles of sustainability.

Furthermore, preparation for the event involved intensive team - and relationship building between developers, who sought open data, government agencies and civil society organizations who wanted to have their problems addressed through new applications. Such challenge identification and matchmaking represented an unconventional approach to co-creation of knowledge events.

All these activities aimed at engaging key local stakeholders with international experts representing Brazil, South Africa, and Kenya, etc. Connecting multiple stakeholders was essential for knowledge sharing on various aspects of an Open Data ecosystem required to improve

governance and quality of public services while also strengthening the innovative capacity of the government.

In addition to the above mentioned examples and events that followed right after Moldova joined Open Government Partnership, there is another important outcome of that process which related to the launch, at the end of May 2012, of a civil society working group on E-Government/Open Government within the National Participation Council[18] (civil society advisory body to the Government of Moldova). A community of open data development www.codd.md was set up by this civil society working group as a space for civil society organizations to share and learn about ways to use Open Data, about Open Government initiatives and many more.

The group aims at monitoring the progress on the implementation of the Open Government Action Plan including on the Open Data component, as well as identifies and promotes new initiatives and opportunities for civil society to use public data in their day-to-day activities. One of the interesting initiatives that Moldova joined as a result of the working groups' efforts back in November 2012 is the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA)[19] – a global initiative launched by the World Bank which aims at an enabling environment in which citizen feedback is used to solve fundamental problems in service delivery and to strengthen public institutions. As a result of the first call for proposals from March 2013, one Think Tank organization from Moldova won the grant, which will help open up the education sector by making more raw data from the education sector available to key educational stakeholders. These results were possible given the close collaboration between government and civil society and commitment to open data.

This collaboration continues today as well. Civil society working group on E-Government/Open Government works closely with E-Government Center on the elaboration of the Action Plan on Open Government for 2014-2015 as well as on the Open Data Policy that would promote the "Open Data by default principle".

More than that, there were attempts to bring citizens' feedback/input into the new Action Plan elaboration, via a survey monkey tool, that was asking a number of questions among which "What public data and information is of most interest to you, which has to be disclosed by the

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[18] www.cnp.md
[19]

http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:23017716~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,00.html

Government in the first place?" and so respondent clearly stated that they are interested in data related to education, public procurements, health, justice, environment, economy, agriculture, construction, others. Hopefully, data from these sectors will be a top priority for the new action plan.

By joining the Open Government Partnership (OGP) more synergy was created around Open Data in Moldova, even if the progress made is still modest. The momentum for Open Data Portals as well as for crowdsourcing data applications in Moldova is growing. However, there are still a number of important challenges to be addressed in the upcoming future and they relate to digitizing public data, open data formats, standardization of classifiers, decoupling public data from personal data, building the capacity of public servants to work efficiently with the data, build the capacity of civil society organizations to use the data effectively as part of the work they do at local and national levels and many more. These challenges should be addressed in a comprehensive manner, in order to release more public data and thus, explore both its social and economic potential.

2.2 Romania

Romania has transposed the EU Directive 2003/98/EC on the re-use of public sector information by law 109/2007[20] regarding the re-use of information for public institution. The Romanian law has also been modified in 2008 by law 213/2008. Even though the law is closely following the text of the directive, in practice the law was not implemented at all in the first 5 years. The lack of any supervisory authority or any direct sanctions for the public institutions that do not allow the re-use of their information were major handicaps, which could not be overcome. But the political will at the highest level was probably the major inhibitor of any real policy with effects on the ground. Most of the public institutions had no knowledge even on the existence of the law, even less on how to apply it. The re-use of public information by private companies or NGOs was (and in fact still is) made by scraping the information from public websites.

Romania expressed their interest to sign the OGP Declaration in September 2011, but by the end of the year 2011 only a few things happened. It was the Romanian civil society that saw the real opportunity of signing the OGP to bring the subject of Open Data (together with other subjects related to an open government) on the public authorities table and tried to collaborate in their work.

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[20] Full text of the law available in Romanian here http://www.legi-internet.ro/legislatie-itc/altele/legea-nr1092007-reutilizarea-informatiilor.html

Once the dossier regarding the OGP Action Plan went to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and was assigned to the team that worked on the National Anti-corruption Strategy (SNA)[21], things started to move by the initiation a real process of consultation with civil society regarding the Romanian Action Plan. Signing the OGP declaration was included in the SNA 2012-2015[22] in the Specific Objective 2, which deals with institutional transparency by increasing the level of availability of public open data made available by public authorities.

Several meetings took place between civil society and MoJ representatives with other public institutions by April 2012, when the Romanian Action Plan[23] was adopted by the Romanian Government. Following the debates the Action Plan was focusing on opening up the data from the public sector, which was highly demanded by the civil society, but also for developing some new services of electronic government.

The plan foreseen the measures that need to be implemented in 2012, 2013 and 2014 for fulfilling the assumed commitments, without specifying though the responsible institution, allocated budget or detailed deadline for each activity. The public endorsement of the OGP Declaration by Romania was made at the OGP meeting in Brazil in April 2012, also when the Action Plan was publicly presented.

Thus the Romanian Government committed to "facilitating access to the information produced by the public sector and to regularly release high-value data sets." with the following activities to take place by the end of 2012:

1. designating a person responsible for publishing open data in each public institution;

2. identifying regulatory needs in order to make data open, as well as the logistical and technical solutions for their publishing;

3. making an inventory of the available data sets able to be delivered in an open format and identifying those that reflect that most relevant information for the activity of each institution (high-value data sets). This will also include data sets collections.

4. priority publishing on the web page of each institution of the following: data sets

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[21] http://sna.just.ro/
[22] Text available at http://sna.just.ro/sna/sna20122015.aspx (only in Romanian)
[23] See details of the Action Plan at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/country/romania/action-plan

identified according to the above paragraph; data sets that are subject to compulsory disclosure according to Law no. 544/2001(Freedom of Access to information law);

But in reality nothing major happened by the end of 2012, also due to an unstable political situation that made it unclear who would actually be the institution that would coordinate this process. An independent report[24] from the NGO Soros Romania, which took part of the OGP consultation process, released in 17 December 2012 underlines the limitations:

- Implementing the OGP Action Plan is still on a very basic stage
- Dissemination of information - as the first step in implementing the OGP Plan - is still in the beginning
- The public authorities questioned about the subject showed a disinterest and seldom it was a confusion between open data and public interest data
- The efforts for offering open data to citizens are fortuitous.

The road from words to action towards availability of open data quickly shortcut-ed after a new formed department (called Department for Online Services and Design - DSOD)[25] in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister was formed in December 2012. With new staff dedicated mainly for the implementation of OGP Action Plan and Open Data commitments, the activities on having a real open data in place have started in 2013. Even though a lot of them took longer than expected, due to inertia, bureaucracy and the need to explain to relevant people in almost all public institutions what are open data and why opening up the data is really something to work for, at least it looks that now the Romanian Government is on the right track.

With the launch of the official open data portal estimated by the end of 2013, a lot of interim, but necessary, steps have been made, including having responsible persons for open data in all the Ministries or awareness and dissemination activities taking place in different public institutions, sometimes in common meetings with the civil society.

Looking back at the whole process regarding the open data policies and its implementation so far, such a quick development seems it would have been impossible without some activities that proved to be instrumental - at least until the current stage:

- signing the OGP Declaration and commitment to create an Action Plan to include open data;

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[24] Available at http://soros.ro/ro/comunicate_detaliu.php?comunicat=212 (only in Romanian)
[25] http://online.gov.ro/

- involvement of key public sector actors from MoJ SNA and then from DSOD willing to take the lead in the public sector on open data policies;
- close partnership with civil society during the whole stages of the activities.

It is interesting to point out that, despite the fact that Romania has been a member of the European Union since 2007, the EU policies on the matter, including the PSI Directive and its recent revision, have had a very limited impact in reality, at least until now, on the current system of re-using the public data.

3 Conclusions

Open Government Partnership (OGP) has certainly managed to build the momentum around Open Data initiatives in several OGP member countries around the globe. By having Governments produce national Action Plans on Open Government, Open Data may become one of the key priorities as part of country Action Plans, especially if the civil society can also push for it.

However, in countries with limited experience of participatory democracy more efforts are needed in order to build the demand for open data via Open Government, social accountability, citizen-centered approaches and practices.

At the same time OGP is a good tool for civil society to promote the usage of Open Data, but it needs to be tackled in a multi-stakeholder approach, where the business sector and entrepreneurs must be involved. Open Data are a means, not a goal, and it is an important aspect that key stakeholders should be emphasizing more and more often. That is why it was crucial that the Open Data events bring in together, not only developers' community, but also mass-media representatives, civil society representatives, Government representatives.

While it is still too early to assess properly the overall impact of the Open Data in Moldova and Romania, it is fair to say that the available evidence suggest that its short term direct impact has a great potential for further development and growth if proper mechanisms are set up in place. Impact is more likely to become visible in the long-term if it results out of the combination of technological and organizational innovation.

Civil society community becomes more and more interested in looking at initiatives that pursue the goals of improving public services and promoting web-based innovation, thus, covering the policy priorities of good and open governance, service delivery and innovation. However, the biggest challenge lies in the understanding of the type of services needed, type of services for which the local context is ready, type of services that have the potential to serve a wider community of users. Civil society should be more active and more engaged, and should learn how to scrutinize government and take more responsibility for the co-delivery of services.

OGP proved to be a valuable tool for promoting or enhancing open data policies, but it is up to the countries themselves to understand how they can develop the re-use of public information beyond the OGP requirements - and we specifically refer to the involvement of the

entrepreneurs and the commercial re-use of public information. Both countries examples that we discussed in this paper are still lacking examples of success stories on the commercial re-use, as a direct result of the PSI policies

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http://blog.opengovpartnership.org/author/veronica-cretu/

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