

Europe is Interested in OGP

Submitted on 29 May 2014 by Martin Alvarez-Espinar



The [Open Government Partnership](#), launched in 2011, is a global initiative to help governments engage in Open Government. The idea is simple: ([eligible](#)) governments along with the civil society develop strategic road maps that include commitments related to openness, accountability and responsiveness to citizens. These strategic plans, also called **Action Plans**, are submitted to the OGP where an [Independent Reporting Mechanism](#) (IRM) tracks the progress in these participating countries and checks if commitments are being fulfilled.

Earlier this month, on 8-9 May, the OGP [held a regional meeting](#) in Dublin. Representatives from all the participating countries in Europe attended the two-day event, organised in plenary keynote talks and parallel tracks with thematic panels. I should emphasize the good organisation of the meeting and, in particular, the commitment showed by the host, [Brendan Howlin](#) (T.D., Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform) who actively took part in most of the conversations that took place over the two days. Ireland is advancing towards openness step by step and, as Howlin said, this reform within governments and society should take into account the local culture. He used a nice simile with the traditional electoral posters that cover all the lampposts in Ireland, an invariable tradition even in our digital era.

During the event, participating countries **presented their (good) experiences, learned lessons,** and various achievements they have made. Representatives of governments, civil society and members of the IRM, who check the implementation of the action plans, explained the achievements up to date. Some good approaches were examined, like the participative development of Georgia's second Action Plan. In this case, the Georgian Government gathered feedback from over 700 multi-stakeholders, over 19 meetings taking place in 14 cities. Other simple and innovative proposals were presented, like that of the newest member, Tunisia, where the Government will open dialogues with society using social networks such as Facebook (seen as an economical, effective and fast way to reach most of the people in the country).

Open Data, transparency and democracy were always at the forefront of discussions. Democracy can be achieved through transparency and increasing public participation, but information must be accessible. That accessibility will be achieved through effective communications and governments

should use experts to “translate” critical information for everyone.

The most interesting new addition to this European meeting was the presence of European institutions, such as the European Commission (EC) and the [European Ombudsman](#). **Emily O'Reilly (European Ombudsman)** highlighted the role of the OGP as the most promising initiative to improve governance, and suggested that the EC should be more involved in the OGP, at least, developing standards for transparency. Thus, Emily declared herself as committed to contribute to OGP.

Mechthild Rohen (Head of Unit 'Public Services' at the EC's DG CONNECT) presented the interesting white paper, "[A vision for public services](#)", with the aim of outlining the long-term vision for a modern and open public sector, and the way public services may be delivered in an open government setting (enabled by ICT). The paper defines the concept of Open Governance based on: Open Data, Open Services, and Open Decisions. This document may be used as a tool for governments to implement strategies to reform their public services.

Day after day, we see more and more countries joining OGP and growing in terms of Open Government. This is good news for everyone!!! We hope to have more on board soon.