# ePSI Platform in Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania

Submitted on 14 Jul 2015 by Martin Alvarez-Espinar

As we announced a couple of months ago, we were in three events as part of the ePSI Platform Tour. As in previous tour stops, we co-organised and took part in meetings, workshops and other public events in various cities (Riga, Sofia and Bucharest). The aim of these actions was to increase the awareness of open data in governments, engaging civil society and companies in PSI re-use.

## First stop: Latvia



On 26th May, we held a meeting in the headquarters of the Electronic Government Department within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, located in the centre of Riga. **Toms Ceļmillers**, Senior Consultant of the Information Society Policy Division chaired the meeting, inviting a dozen representatives from the Latvian Government, Riga Municipality and University of Riga.

Toms and his colleagues at the national government have been focused on raising awareness internally, creating benchmarks and an internal scoreboard – based on the PSI Scoreboard – to engage governmental agencies in releasing data of quality. The Latvian government is following the successful initiatives as a reference to make its project grow.

Among the attendees, **Agris Ameriks**, responsible for the Open Data initiative in the City of Riga, highlighted the commitment and current efforts of the municipality to release valuable information for citizens. Some other familiar faces like **Uldis Bojars**, expert at the University of Latvia, involved in the excellence of data publication.

All the attendees agreed that more awareness raising is needed in Latvia, but they are on the right track.

## Second stop: Bulgaria

Our second stop was at Boyana Residence, in Sofia, on 17th June. There, we took part in a roundtable titled 'Open Data: Present State and Perspectives', hosted by the Institute of Public Administration in Bulgaria. The roundtable gathered together more than 60 attendees from the national and local governments. **Georgi Manliev**, Executive Director of the Institute of Public Administration and Vassil Velichkov, Advisor at the Political Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Coalition Policy and Public Administration opened the event. **Kalina Cherneva**, Advisor at the Political Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Coalition Policy and Public Administration, and **Nusha Ivanova**, Expert at the Modernization of Administration Directorate, presented the status of the Open Data initiatives in Bulgaria.

Another relevant invitee was **Amélie Banzet**, Head of Open Data and Open Government Project in France. Amélie presented the lessons to learn, and good practices needed to create a successful initiative. One of the strongest points of the French initiative is the fluent dialogue the government tries to establish with re-users in order to understand their needs and learn from them.

## Last but not least: Romania

Bucharest was our last stop in this first round of visits. We were invited to take part in the [TechSparency & TechVocacy HUB workshop](#), also co-located with the OGP Romanian Club, held in Bucharest on the 3rd July. This event, centred on Open Government and Open Data, was organised by the Romanian [Institutul pentru Politici Publice](#), the Georgian [Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development](#), the Armenian [Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation](#), and [Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation](#).

Civil society and governments from Romania, Armenia and Georgia discussed about the OGP plans of these countries, as well as their future in terms of Open Data and PSI re-use. Attendees and speakers presented the opportunities for the Romanian society brought by the new technologies. The Digital Agenda for Romania includes relevant challenges such of Open Data, cyber-security, and interoperability. **Radu Puchiu**, Secretary of State at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, and Viorel-Bebe Ionică, Secretary of State at the Ministry for the Information Society, emphasised the Romanian Government's commitment to making the most of technologies in order to provide better public services to citizens.

> I would pay more taxes in order to have more and better open data and cyber-security. **Bogdan Andrei Gavrila, Volunteer at [CRSC Europe](#)**

We should also mention the presence of **Marisa Mac Isaac**, Rule of Law Officer at the US Embassy in Romania. In her speech she mentioned the amount of data that governments collect, and the challenge of sharing and manage that information internally, beyond opening up data in public.

The civil society, necessary to achieve Open Government, was strongly represented. NGOs and civic activists expressed their points of view, offering help and their transparency tools – e.g. Funki Citizens – to fight against corruption and fraud. [http://www.funkycitizens.org](http://www.funkycitizens.org). After the event we have realised that there is a really enthusiastic civic society in Romania, fighting for a change.

**Bogdan Manolea**, ePSI Platform Correspondent for Romania –also in my session– provided a clear picture of the legislation, activism, and the real status of the Open Data and PSI re-use in Romania.

To sum it up: still much more to do but we are heading in the right direction.

We will continue with more workshops, webinars and meetings after the summer. Stay tuned! Please [let us know](#) if you are interested in raising awareness in your country or city. We'll be glad to help you!