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Civil Society Open Government Partnership Interest Group
Call for Civil Society and Public Participation in Ireland's OGP Process

Ireland is joining the international Open Government Partnership (OGP)[1], and therefore pledging itself to an annual Action Plan with concrete commitments to make Government more open and transparent, to achieve better governance and better outcomes for people living in Ireland.

The Irish Open Government Action Plan is to be developed through a "multi-stakeholder process", with the active engagement of citizens and civil society[2].

This is an important opportunity for the public, community groups and civil society to participate by suggesting ways of opening up public decision-making at both local and national level.

Prior to the official announcement, an ad hoc civil society interest group formed and has had a series of meetings to discuss OGP, including meetings with officials from the Government Reform Unit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Participants in these meetings have included individuals as well as those working in civil society organisations, including (in alphabetical order): Ivan Cooper (The Wheel); Paul Deane (Christian Aid); John Handelaar (KildareStreet.com); Nuala Haughey (Transparency International Ireland), Eamon Leonard, Peter McCanney, Hilary Minch (Dóchas), Nat O'Connor (TASC), Sarah O'Neill (Dailwatch.ie), Denis Parfenov (ActiveCitizen), Tom Stewart (Open Learning Ireland), Jane Suiter (DCU/Transparency International Ireland), and Martin Wallace (ActiveCitizen). Records of these meeting are available online[3].

We recognise that we are only one part of wider society, and even within the group we have different views on how to achieve open and transparent Government.

That is why it is so important that as many people and groups get involved in this initiative. We want to encourage everyone to take part, whether through contributing your ideas and suggestions in writing, to joining working groups as they meet and discuss different aspects of OGP's five grand challenges.

For a short period of time, the Government has appointed Transparency International Ireland as a consultant to co-ordinate and administer a consultative process with civil society. You can find out more about the consultation process on www.ogpireland.ie . The first public meeting is 10th July at 9.30 to 4.30pm, at the Wood Quay Venue in Dublin City Council's offices.

During and (especially) after the formal consultation, it will be up to individuals, groups and civil society to take ownership of the longer-term engagement with Government on the annual Action Plan process. That is why it is important to seize the opportunity now, to ensure as many people as possible aware of OGP and are engaged in this process.

Together we can foster a culture of open government that empowers and delivers for everyone living in Ireland.

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[1] See Press Release here; and Ireland's Letter of Intent here
[2] The minimum eligibility criteria and guidelines for countries participating in OGP are here.
[3] https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/open-government-ireland