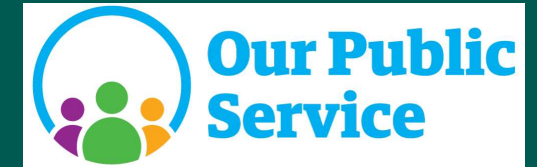




An Roinn Caiteachais
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public
Expenditure and Reform



Open Government Round Table

6th meeting, 06th July 2022



Agenda



1. Welcome and intros (new people including Ailís and Cliona) 5 mins
2. Update on NAP (Ailís) 5 mins
3. Outcome of Civic Society meeting with OGP (Antoin) 10 mins
4. Outcome of Government side meeting with OGP (Philip) 10 mins
5. Survey Results (Ailís) 5 mins
6. Facilitated session – what next for the Round Table 50 mins
7. AOB 5 mins

Minutes (1/3)



1. Welcome and intros

- The two Co- Chairs introduced and welcomed Cliona Kelliher (civil society membership) and Ailís Henry (Secretariat) to the Round Table (RT). Cliona replaces Catherine Lawlor following her resignation. Catherine was the next ranked person from the election last year.

2. Update on NAP

- The Secretariat updated the RT that the amended third National Action Plan had been signed off on by cabinet on 5th July.
- Next steps include – letter from the Chairs to accompany amended NAP to be issued to OGP
- Secretariat to upload amended NAP to OGP website and will also conduct a website review and make the necessary edits to ensure it is up to date.

2. (i) Other updates from Secretariat

- Invite to the launch of the OECD trust survey on 13 July which will be circulated to RT members.
- Johnny Sheehan advised the Secretariat he will be in contact with subgroup after 18 July to schedule meeting.

Minutes (2/3)



3. Outcome of Civic Society meeting with OGP

- Antoin provided an overview of the meeting with OGP's Paul Braithwaite.

4. Outcome of Government side meeting with OGP

- Philip gave a high level overview of the meeting with OGP's Paul Braithwaite and notes the opportunities of OGP's connections globally to exchange good ways of working in terms of open government partnership.

4 (i) Government side updates

- Philip reminded the RT of the open data strategy workshops, details of which were circulated via email.
- Philip noted that a new service design expert group has been established.

Minutes (3/3)



5. Survey Results

- Secretariat presented the results from the round table member's survey. Slides will be circulated to RT members.

6. Facilitated Session

- The 8 RT members present were split into breakout rooms. Antoin and Philip each facilitated a group to discuss the strengths of the group, the challenges faced and how best to address them going forward, and how the RT member can make maximum value of the 17 months remaining.

7. AOB

- Next meeting to be held in person in September, potentially a half day in the morning. The agenda to be agreed upon via email.



Survey results

Survey was issued to RT Members on Monday 04 July, the following slides contain the feedback received

1. What were the challenges? (1/5)



- **Expectations**

- **Civil society had great expectations** to drive forward and action community ambitions through the development of a robust and impactful engagement plan, feeding into the NAP, but soon realised that **resource constraints on the department side were going to be a considerable barrier to achieving this.**
- Managing expectations around what **autonomy** the roundtable had **to influence** Government policy and departmental actions
- Unrealistic proposals arising from the public consultation exercise.
- Unrealistic expectations of what is possible to deliver.

1. What were the challenges? (2/5)



- **Meeting structure and relationship building**

- Despite the nature of the round table, there still seemed to be a 'them and us' feeling, and meetings online do not facilitate relationship building(which was unavoidable due to Covid).
- Meeting online only was very difficult.
- The difficulty in finding common ground between the civil service side constrained by defined government policy/public spending code/pre-existing procedures/etc and civic society advocating for more ambitious outcomes. The process became somewhat adversarial at times as a result.
- finding time to consider the themes emerging and how best to engage busy people in the Department who are already dealing with a range of issues that have a fundamental impact on peoples lives

1. What were the challenges? (3/5)



- **Processes and knowledge**
 - **Not having a methodology** for continued engagement, comms or pr for society across the country.
 - **Lack of knowledge** about **what was happening in the departments** and **departmental priorities** in relation to the OGP.
 - **Lack of understanding at what was happening internationally**, this would have allowed us to assess our methodology for delivering the NAP and how we could improve on same
 - **Drafting** -we didn't draft effectively enough.
 - Our process was **not very open to the 'outside world'**. We didn't have a strong way to 'link in' with others.
 - We **weren't exactly clear on what we were supposed to be doing**. What do we really mean by open government, and how do we focus things?
 - Identifying key existing Programme for Government commitments to include.
 - The necessarily truncated timescale for the last NAP **required a significant time investment**.

1. What were the challenges? (4/5)



- **Processes and knowledge continued..**
 - The necessarily truncated timescale for the last NAP **required a significant time investment.**
 - **urgent timeframe** left no time or space for meaningful dialogue.
 - actions via civil **service were rigid and seemed immovable**, thereby not relevant to a process that should centre dialogue. Resulting actions were often barely recognisable from original proposal and were in alignment with Programme for Government commitments already in place.
 - There is **limited experience/skills in engaging in deliberative dialogue.** The opportunities to create a 3rd option, a new form of commitment for action, are limited as a result.
 - Actions should be measured for culture change, not just areas of focus.

1. What were the challenges? (5/5)



- **Consultation submissions**
 - **Processing the submissions** received and identifying appropriate actions.
 - perhaps **too many proposals** from the public consultation exercise were brought through for consideration. A deeper short listing exercise may have been more effective.
- **Communication** and then **agreement on priorities** for the Round Table, as well as what **input civil society representatives were truly able to have into commitments**. It's not clear how much power and influence civil society members really have.

2. What worked? (1/2)



- I want to thank those that are in a facilitating role in this space, both in the civil society and civil servant side, as both are operating with almost no resources. **Meetings have been well organised** and delivered both **efficiently and effectively**, the agenda was completed succinctly and there was time for breakouts and discussions. There were **opportunities to feed into the agenda** though the civil society meetings.
- It was great to **discuss the reality of the situation** in relation to each potential commitment at an **early stage**. Getting officials involved at an early stage really helped.
- It was great to have the opportunity to work collegially with our civil service colleagues.
- We gained some insight into how the civil service/government side works.
- **Consensus was garnered** on how to respond to the submissions received
- Actions were refined to meet Open Government Partnership criteria
- Action Plan was agreed
- The **division into sub working groups worked reasonably well**, particularly when it came to drafting individual commitments and where operating in a virtual space.

2. What worked? (2/2)



- We **developed a NAP**. However, I question the purpose of this as an output/aim if there is no meaningful change from the existing status quo. If so, are we greenwashing?
- Distilling the focus by **agreeing range of actions** where Open Government can be progressed
- **Agreement to reach some kind of consensus**, even if it didn't please everyone.

3. What would you do differently in relation to the OGP and the process of preparing the NAP? (1/3)



- **Meet in person** as the round table and **develop an engagement methodology**, communication and PR plan. This is missing for society and this should be a core ambition for the round table moving forward - for consultation right through to delivery of the NAP. We can do this by working together for one day outside of 'the office' to assess what best practice is in other countries of a similar size e.g. Scotland (involving Paul Braithwaite), defining what good looks like for us, agreeing on what is then achievable based on resources available and compiling a plan to deliver same over the next iteration of the NAP.
- **Have every second meeting in person**, for those who can travel (obviously a travel and subsistence budget would be required).
- **Meet face to face at least once a year.**
- **At least some in-person meetings** might lend themselves to more effective relationships.
- Have a **clearer vision** of what we as a group **want to achieve for the next two/four years.**
- Have **clearer timelines** that were planned by our round table.
- Have **clear responsibility for drafting** with the subgroups, and **resources if necessary**

3. What would you do differently in relation to the OGP and the process of preparing the NAP? (2/3)



- **Assess the genuine scope for change** prior to accepting proposals. There is no point setting the public up for engagement when it is unclear what the potential is. Perhaps gov could look at areas they want public engagement in relation to and request proposals with a level of specificity.
- If this is not possible then round tables should be facilitated by an external, independent facilitator. They should be skilled in dialogue, power differentials and culturally appropriate to enable a new way of relating to each other.
- accepted proposals should then include the proposer in dialogue for consultation purposes
- When there are so many governmental scandals nationally and internationally, approaching 'openness and transparency and accountability' via separate areas of focus via a method that government can find acceptable, is surely going to be relatively low impact. **OGP should be radical in its demands of government because they hold more power.** A dialogue across power differentials where there is no incentive or desire by one side to concede some of that power...another approach is needed I think.
- seek broader support in the Department.
- ensure public consultation is possible at different stages and that the OGRT has access to the documentation it needs to input into the OGP.

3. What would you do differently in relation to the OGP and the process of preparing the NAP? (3/3)



- 'Better' engagement with the public. This would be in terms of;
 - **structure** - how we work and engage with the public and various stakeholders
 - **focus** - what exactly we try to achieve with engagement
 - **resources** - having enough to deal with the actual material coming back from the consultations.
- Include other pre-existing Government commitments that match the programme framework
- Could the Round Table **set parameters or priorities for the public consultation exercise**, eg seek proposals in certain areas? This might help focus the process.
- Some **clarity** around how the Round Table acknowledges, **adapts to or builds on existing government policy and procedures would be helpful.**
- Although deadlines always help to focus minds, **more time for the next NAP** might help.

Breakout room discussion



- How can we make more of our strengths?
- Prioritize the challenges we faced
- How can we concretely address these challenges?

Report back

- How can we make maximum value of the 17 months remaining to us?

Report back

Breakout room discussion (1/3)



How can we make more of our strengths?

- Communication Forum that doesn't always exist providing a format bringing together people with differing outlooks/perspectives
- The commitment, structure and staff of DPER provided a solid foundation for the work of the group
- The arrangements for pre-meeting consultations by the Civil Society members aided consensus building
- Group members identified challenges/constraints early in the process which was helpful in managing expectations/dealing with frustrations.
- Key strength – NAP was developed.
- Alignment with Programme for Government.
- Better structure around the two channels.
- Become a good example of a country getting out of procedural review.

Breakout room discussion (2/3)



Prioritize the challenges we faced and how can we concretely address these challenges?

- Civil Service work/priorities frames by PfG; Statements of Strategy; Business Plans.
- Difficult to get broader engagement in Departments unless the OGP initiative featured in the PfG, SoS or BP
- Insufficient clarity on goals/objectives of the forum. What problem are we trying to fix? Where are we adding value?
- Need to apportion more time to work through our challenges.
- Early Engagement.
- Strengthen communications with Gov Departments
- In person meetings will help build meaningful relationships
- Set Clearer Goals/Objectives
- Clarify if OGP forum is about informing the process for change or feeding into the substance of that change. Eg will OGP identify how review of ethic legislation will be communicated and who will be engaged or will it provide the subject matter experts that will inform the new structures, processes and measures.
- Hitch our actions onto pre-existing structures eg the Civil Service Action Plan and its Community Participation Pillar

Breakout room discussion (3/3)



How can we make maximum value of the 17 months remaining to us?

- Leverage DPER contacts to connect with those in the Department responsible for the reforms within the Action Plan
- Leverage DPER to find out about budget/resourcing for Communications/Consultations/Engagement process
- Identify and Articulate models of Civic Participation
- Mapping exercise to include the process and milestones of next NAP
- Engagement and communications
- Facilitated session with Paul Braithwaite
- Create a clear and transparent process and plan that everyone understands
- Conduct a gap analysis of Ireland's NAP
- For consultations examine a way to go have a focussed thematic approach
- Low hanging fruit – check for anything we haven't signed up to