Open Government Partnership (OGP) – 12th Round Table Meeting Minutes – 31st May 2023

1.   Welcome and updates since last meeting

- The Co- Chairs welcomed members to the meeting.

2.   Updates on commitments under the Third Open Government's Partnership National Action Plan 2021-2023 (NAP3):

Ciara Morgan (DPENDR) and (DoF) provided an update as follows:

Review of Ireland's Statutory Framework for Ethics in Public Life

Responsibility for this work has been transferred to the Minister for Finance in January 2023..

Government approved the publication of the Ethics Review report and preparation of a General Scheme based on the recommendations on 13 December 2022. The review report was published on 7 February 2023. Its recommendations focus on five main themes:

- A legislative framework for Ethics to be underpinned by a set of overarching integrity principles;
- New specific statutory prohibitions, including on the use of insider information;
- Strengthening disclosures requirements to improve transparency and examining whether the regime should encompass more office holders;
- Strengthening the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO); and
- Post-term employment restrictions for elected officials/public servants that address matters not already covered by lobbying regulation and should align closely with that legislation.
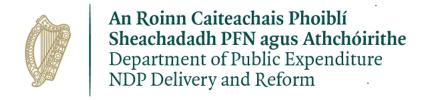
A General Scheme is being prepared by the Department. An indicative outline has been agreed and drafting of the heads is progressing. Awareness raising activities of the review report and its recommendations is ongoing as the General Scheme is being prepared.

Review of Ireland's Freedom of Information (FOI) Regime

A Memorandum for Information updating Government on progress on the review was brought to Government on 13 December 2022 and published. The update sets out the review themes and gives an indication as to the direction of reform. The themes are:

- A more coherent approach to information governance and access;
- Supplementing formal FOI requests; and
- Improving the request process.

It is intended to seek Government approval to the final review report in Q2 2023. The Minister intends to bring legislative proposals, informed by the review, to Government in 2023.

Review of the Operation of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

Responsibility for this work has been underlined transferred to the Minister for Finance.

The review recommendations informed the drafting of an amendment Bill to strengthen the existing legislative framework. This Bill was published in September. The Bill was considered in the Dáil at Report and Final stages on 1st March 2023. It was considered at Report and Final stages in the Seanad on 17th May 2023. A number of Government amendments were introduced in the Seanad which will be considered by the Dáil on 13th June. The Bill should then be sent to the President for signature and be enacted. SIPO will need time to make the necessary changes to the Lobbying register, its published guidance, and its procedures so it is intended to commence the provisions of the legislation in the Autumn.

Kieran Moylan (DRCD) there was no update given on the NAP3 actions under the responsibility of DRCD as the official gave his apologies for his absence.

Diarmuid O Leary – (DHLGH) there was no update given on the NAP3 actions under the responsibility of DHLGH as the official gave his apologies for his absence.

Victoria Gbafah – (DPENDR) provided an update as follows;

Update of 2016 Consultation Principles and Guidance for the Public Sector

- On 18th May 2023 two workshops were held to discuss the Consultation Principles and Guidance for the Public Sector. The first workshop included public service officials and the second workshop included non-state community and voluntary members of the Cross Sectoral Group.

3.   **Discussion on the facilitation phase in the development of NAP4.**

The Brave Lab gave a presentation on the consultation report which summarised the outputs from the 5 Thematic Workshops. Following a discussion, the below was highlighted;

1. Data Access and Citizen Science:
    - Data providers were not clear why public wanted access to data sets.
    - There was dissatisfaction among the public at the length of time it took to get back data from government departments and agencies.

2. Governance Processes:
    - Registers that could be searched overlap with areas in workshop 1 (Data Access and Citizen Science. This is relevant as there are repeated requests being made for data access to the same registers.
    - Non-government organisations and civil society need to come together for training purposes.

3. Barriers to services & Barriers to participation
   - There are gaps between guidelines and practice.
   - A lot of additional work has been placed on Local Authorities.
   - There is a transition from non-participation to participation.
   - The theme of participation is across every workshop.
   - Feedback loops are needed.
   - Need to design customer-centric services rather than what suits departments and organisations. Embed the link between OECD policy and national policy.
   - Compounding negative experience of groups who are already marginalised by not designing services that take their individual needs into account. If you design for these marginalised sectors, you will end up designing for everyone, i.e. this is where you should begin your design of services.
   - There is a lack of resources among NGOs to pursue these issues.

4. Communication Standards and Supports
   - Needs joint-up approach.
   - Enact a "Plain English" Bill.
   - Clearly communicate when government and organisation websites have last been updated.
   - Increase participation by including the experience of real people.
   - Pressure on government services for open data for research purposes has exploded and was not envisaged. The data sets are usually designed for "regular" users and not the general public.

5. Public Participation: Agenda Setting & Format
   - Citizen Assembly: a good example of public participation but participation is skewered toward people who are already highly engaged with the process. The opposite is also true, e.g. Energy Transition; those who are most effected by the economics of this transition are the least engaged with the process (Denomics). The mapping of the Genome (genetic information) is now owned by a private company.
   - We need to consider using preferential decision making that could assist in the intensity of participation.
   - Concern that if government is doing something disruptive with the Genome, it can underrepresent the beneficiaries and over represent those negatively affected.
   - Need to have honest discussion around how to do public participation properly and what it takes in terms of resources.

A final workshop entitled *What We Learnt* was facilitated by the Brave Lab in order to summarise the outputs of previous 5 workshops for submission owners and policy holders.

An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí
Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public Expenditure
NDP Delivery and Reform

4. **Actions arising /AOB/Next meeting/ close**

- The Round Table members agreed to review the summary consultation report that will be produced by The Brave Lab post workshops and identify broad areas that has the potential to be commitments in NAP4.
- The civil service side agreed to test out the feasibility of identified broad areas with policy holders while keeping the focus of NAP4 as ambitious as possible and report back to the Round Table members.
- The Secretariat agreed to produce a series of "clarity" papers post workshops where it was deemed that further clarity was needed from the submission owners.
- It was decided not to pursue clarity with any policy holders until the broad areas had been identified by the deliberation of the Round Table members.

Next meeting: 20th July 11:00 – 12:30am WebEx.