**OGP Civil Society Forum Meeting**

**Draft Summary Meeting Notes**

**18/03/14**

**Civil Society Members Present:** Antoin Ó Lachtnain (chair), Nat O’Connor (TASC), Nuala Haughey (TASC, TI Ireland), Denis Parfenov (Active Citizen/OKF Ireland), Edward Stevenson, Flora Fleischer (OKF Ireland).

**In attendance:** Claire O’Keeffe (CSF Administrator)

**Apologies:** Anne Colgan, Angela Long, Donal O’Brolchain, John Devitt (TI Ireland), Ingo Keck

**Update on Joint Working Group Meeting (13/03/14)**

* An update was given on the Joint Working Group meeting of 13 March 2014. See draft notes of that meeting [here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/171ui_B2rSOmuRQTWX17BB5Ce0beY-up7EUu8UuqedTM/edit).
* There was agreement that the issue of the abolition of FOI fees was crucial. Several options were discussed in relation to next steps on this issue, given that Minister Howlin is due to bring a memo to cabinet on it in the coming weeks.
* As a first step, it was agreed that JWG members would seek a detailed timeline from officials in relation to the FOI Bill at the JWG meeting of 20 March 2014, with the aim of identifying the window of opportunity to react before the Minister brings a firm proposal on FOI fees to a meeting of the Government (possibly in mid-April).

**Draft Text for Inclusion in NAP**

* Two sets of draft NAP text were discussed and it agreed to bring these to the JWG meeting on 20 March 2014. The draft text related to:
	+ Local government (Annex 1)
	+ Capacity building AP (Annex 2)
* It was agreed that for both of these proposals lead government departments and NGOs will be identified to fit the description of the actions into the NAP template.

OGP European **Conference (8/9 May)**

* An update was given on the planning for the OGP European Conference in Dublin in May. A total of 40 European Ministers have been invited, as well as Neelie Kroes (Vice President of the European Commission leading on the digital agenda) and Tim Berners-Lee (inventor of the world wide web).
* It was suggested that individuals and organisations reach out to civil society activists to encourage attendance and stress that registration is vital in order to attend. As part of this, it was noted that civil society in Ireland has an important role in encouraging the participation of civil society groups from around Europe to attend. Those in attendance undertook to circulate information about the event to their networks and to encourage attendance.
* It was suggested that a block of seats be sectioned off for any late-comers and to ask DEPR if there is a contingency plan regarding over-attendance.
* On May 7th a half day is being held as a pre-curser to the main conference, is being organised by OKF Ireland and OGP. Currently the themes to be discussed include Web We Want; FOI fees; Accountability of the Police Forces in Europe; Open Data; Peer Learning between OGP countries; Irish Aid Transparency; the role of multinational corporations based in Ireland. OKF Ireland agreed to share information about this event and everyone is invited to contribute ideas for the agenda and process.

**CS-led review of OGP**

* OGP civil society support unit is piloting a civil society-led review process of OGP in eight countries including Ireland. The review consists of two parts (1) Evaluation of the consultation process and (2) Evaluation of the quality of the final NAP. Five Irish NGOs have already been invited by Paul Maassen (OGP Civil Society coordinator) to become involved in the CS-led review process. However it was agreed to issue a fresh open call to NGOs to volunteer to take part, with a view to getting four or five organisations involved. A call will be put through the CS member lists, with a deadline of next Monday (March 24th). In the meantime, the survey methodology will be emailed to everyone.
* It was discussed that the May 7th event would be an opportunity to invite more people to comment on the draft response to the review.
* The review questionnaire can also be used as an advocacy tool. Groups can be organised to collate the information that comes back from the review process.

**Administrator’s work plan**

* There was a discussion about how best to manage the administrator’s available work time and to have a clearer process in relation to issues around notes of meetings and agendas. It was agreed that the administrator’s work plan will be set at the weekly civil society meetings at a high level and posted on Trello and that any other issues or suggestions should be brought directly to Nat O’Connor and/or Nuala Haughey at TASC, who will ensure a manageable package of work for the administrator. There will be a weekly review of the administrators’ work. If the weekly meetings aren’t feasible, this can be done through email. Clear high-level actions will be posted on Trello to show the weekly work done.
* It was agreed that the administrator’s workplan for next week is as follows: Website updating; Ensure that people can comment on drafts; Ensure everyone is aware of separate events that are being organised; and tweeting – including setting up Tweets to go out over a period of time.
* Those in attendance agreed to retweet tweets from @ogpconsultirl.

**Other Business**

* The draft minutes of the previous CSF (11/03/14) were approved after the following sentence was struck: “It was agreed that a verbal progress report on this work at the weekly CS Forum was not required.” They are available here.
* It was agreed that in an effort to move away from email discussion of amendments to the minutes that minutes of CSF meetings will be posted online with links from the ogpireland.ie website and suggested amendments can be made online, with the notes signed off at the next actual CSF meeting.

**Annex 1: Local Government National Action Plan Suggested Text**

Further to the discussion at the civil society OGP forum on Tuesday 13th March, what follows is suggested text for the Action Plan re local government, based on Departmental feedback on the initial action: “Develop best practice initiatives for Local Government Consultation and Engagement Online & Offline.”

The proposed new action text is:

“Identify and promote public awareness of best practice initiatives for Local Government consultation, engagement and public participation via the new Local Community and Development Committees (LCDCs), Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) and local frameworks for public participation in local government, which should set out the mechanisms by which citizens and communities will be encouraged and supported to participate in the decision-making processes of the local authority.”

While the Departmental response noted that adoption of the frameworks will be a reserved function of local councils, the SMART action refers to the identification and publication of best practice initiatives for local government consultation, engagement and public participation, which in turn could be a catalyst for further public involvement in local government in line with the diverse proposals arising in the consultation report. Even if not all local councils adopt them, at least best practice will be published and this may create more public awareness of the possibility and demand for them at local level.

**Annex 2:** **Capacity Development to support the National Action Plan**

The OGP National Action Plan represents a significant step forward in the way Government and citizens work together for the common good and the public interest. This new initiative signals change in the way public bodies do business and in the nature of the relationship between civil society and the state. As with any major change process, both the vision and the content of the National Action Plan must be supported so as to optimise the chances of success. Monitoring alone will not ensure the best outcomes.

Achieving the outcomes of the OGP National Action Plan will need vision and strong leadership. It will be underpinned by a well-defined work plan. A programme of capacity development will be an essential means of ensuring that the new skills, knowledge, systems, attitudes and relationships on which the Plan depends are put in place to support the NAP.

**The essential elements of the NAP Capacity Development Plan include:**

**Mapping** the core competencies for open government and citizen engagement at national and local level and a programme to build and strengthen these core competencies

**Best practice guidance** for all civil/public servants in all departments on open government generally, open data and citizen engagement

**Public awareness-raising** programmes in relation to OG and civic participation

A programme of **knowledge sharing** among civil/public servants and with civil society about best practice in open government, citizen engagement

Robust arrangements for **monitoring and evaluating** the quality and quantum of public consultation and engagement in key sectors at national and local level, and with core groups including children and young people

On-going joint review and improvement by government and civil society of **systems** on which open government depends, such as record management for FOI purposes.

**The Capacity Development Programme to underpin the National Action Plan will be the responsibility of a lead department, with a defined budget, but operated in partnership with other departments and in consultation with civil society**.