

## Summary of OGP Europe Regional Meeting, October 2022

- This note provides background information on the OGP Europe Regional Meeting (11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022), attended by Mr Harvie. It provides a summary of events and bi-laterals Mr Harvie participated in, and key actions from these.
- An overview is also provided on the situation re. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) report into UK Action Plan 2021-2023
- The OGP Europe Regional Meeting took place in Rome at the Roma Eventi Fontana di Trevi Conference Centre.
- It was co-hosted by the Governments of Italy and Estonia. It included a handover of the co-chairing of OGP's international steering committee from the Government of Italy and Aidan Eyakuze (Twaweza) for civil society, to the new co-chairs the Government of Estonia and Anabel Cruz (Institute for Communication and Development).
- The Europe Regional Meeting agenda was a mix of high level dialogues, workshops and peer exchanges, and networking opportunities. Key themes to be addressed include anti-corruption, digital innovation, democratic participation, and the development of a new [five year strategy](#).
- The audience was c. 250 people, including governments representatives, (political and executive), civil society activists, academics and stakeholder organisations.
- The full agenda and attendee list is available: [Europe Regional Meeting \(opengovpartnership.org\)](#) and a link to the recording of the plenary session.

### 1. OGP Key Messages

- Coming at a critical time when democracy is under unprecedented threat from attacks both external – like Russia's invasion of Ukraine - and internal - such as plummeting public trust in government - the OGP Europe Regional Meeting brought together reformers who are renewing democracy in and out of governments to make them more transparent, inclusive, participatory, and accountable.
- It is one of three OGP regional meetings in October, along with one in the Americas and one in Africa/Asia to focus on the next 5 year strategy for open government reform.

### 2. Scotland's representation

- High Level attendee Patrick Harvie, Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights
- Scotland Civil society Co-Chair Lucy McTernan (also on OGP's International Steering Group, the UK OGP Steering Group and chair of the OGP Criteria and Standards Committee)
- Scotland's Head of Open Government and Point of Contact Doreen Grove

### 3. Events

Mr Harvie was invited to speak in one of the key workshops: 'Embedding Participation in Climate Policy-Making'.

### Key Messages

- Increased public participation builds trust in governments, increases the legitimacy of decisions, and helps ensure policymakers have valuable local knowledge.
- Our people-centred approach to climate change policy moves from encouraging incremental changes in attitudes and behaviours, to supporting a society-wide transformation.
- It is right that we are challenged to do more on tackling the climate emergency and that we hear the voice of the next generation. In Scotland's Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change we have committed to developing a new approach to ensuring a genuine role in climate policy processes for children and young people, building on the work of the Climate Assembly.
- To achieve the national effort required to transform our economy and society to effectively tackle climate change, we need to enthuse and empower everyone, building climate change narratives that resonate and speak to people's values and concerns, and which facilitate a society-wide response to the climate emergency.
- We can use open government principles to help drive these actions

### Other Speakers

- Moderator: Raphael Pouye (Director of France Operations, Democratic Society)
- Valentyna Andriyishyna, Communal Enterprise of Khmelnytskyi City Council + OGP Point of Contact, Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine
- Bjørn Bedsted, Director, Danish Board of Technology
- Mathilde Bouye, Democratie Ouverte

## **4. Ministerial Bilateral meetings**

Mr Harvie attended five bi-lateral meetings, with Ministers from Estonia, Finland, Norway and Kosovo, and with a representative from OECD.

### Estonia

Mr Taimar Peterkop, Secretary of State (Estonia)

### Purpose

The Republic of Estonia will be the new chair for OGP, and will officially take over the chairmanship at this European regional meeting. This provides Estonia, an OGP Nordic+<sup>1</sup> member, significantly wider influence across the partnership.

- This meeting was an opportunity to discuss their vision for their chairmanship of the OGP, including where and how they plan to not only further support Nordic countries, but the wider partnership.

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<sup>1</sup> [Nordic+ Fact Sheet \(August 2021\) \(opengovpartnership.org\)](#) OGP Nordic+ members are: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Scotland

- The meeting was also offer the possibility to discuss Estonia's transition to an e- government and e-state.
- Both Scotland and Estonia are well regarded members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP)
- As members of OGP Nordic+, Scotland and Estonia have a collaborative working relationship
- This meeting was an opportunity to build on this, establishing closer connections and identifying shared interests and priorities in particular in the use of digital technology
- This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss how to inclusively deliver on commitments to public participation and engagement

#### Issues discussed

1. Estonia's history since independence, the benefit of being small nations, and the similarities in the two countries' histories
2. The lead that Estonia has in e-government, the use of open source technology, digital inclusion and use of libraries (which are mandated to exist)
3. Mandated digital identity, which has built rather than eroded trust. How digital systems can be transparent: every time someone views a file it leaves a footprint.
4. Importance of participation in all areas, but highlight the particular need for good participation in climate issues – Estonia, like Scotland is a major fossil fuel producer
5. Mr Peterkop set out how Estonia was using OGP to build trust in Estonia and to help them move from governing in a crisis, maintaining the core values of OGP to ensure they are open, accountable and involve their population effectively.

#### Actions

The value of the Nordic+ group was agreed and It was agreed to continue the dialogue on Open Government reforms as well as the continued discussions on e-governance – officials to follow up and keep Ministers informed

#### **Finland**

Ms Sirpa Paatero, Minister of Local Government (Finland)

#### Purpose

- This was an opportunity to further build a collaborative relationship with an Open Government Partnership Nordic+ Minister across areas related to open government.
- Scotland and Finland are well regarded members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP)
- As members of OGP Nordic+<sup>2</sup>, Scotland and Finland have a collaborative working relationship
- This meeting was an opportunity to build on this, establishing closer connections and identifying shared interests and priorities
- Finland's commitment to national dialogues, and work undertaken to develop these, aligns with Scotland's recent commitments in this area and comparable surrounding work (e.g. IPDD working group)
- This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss how to inclusively deliver on commitments to public participation and engagement

### Issues discussed

1. The role of the levels of government – in Finland municipalities are key decision makers
2. The use of plain language to increase transparency
3. Cooperation between NGOs and civil society. Finland has high civil society membership: 15 million memberships of civil society organisations for a population of 5.5 million i.e. everyone is a member of several organisations
4. Finland's work on trust in government with the OECD had been key to unlocking their relationships with civil society
5. Types of dialogue: [redacted] they have initiated specific feedback dialogues targeted at particular marginalised groups to provide a safe space for people to discuss sensitive things. An example of this was for sex workers.
6. Dis- and mis-information and managing extreme views – more of an issue in Scotland than Finland
7. Options for greater participation, including the value of Citizens' Assemblies particularly around climate agenda [redacted]
8. Move to digital or e-government - Finland creating mobile phone identification wallet.

### Actions

It was agreed to continue the dialogue on Open Government reforms particularly on the response to climate through the work of Nordic+ OGP group – officials to follow up and keep Ministers informed

### Norway

Ms Gunn Karin Gjøl, State Secretary (Norway).

### Purpose

- This was an opportunity to further build a collaborative relationship with an Open Government Partnership Nordic+ Minister across areas related to open government. The meeting provided an opportunity to share expertise, identify key issues affecting both countries, and share ideas and \*open government solutions.
- Scotland and Norway are well regarded members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP)
- As members of OGP Nordic+<sup>3</sup>, Scotland and Norway have a collaborative working relationship
- This meeting is an opportunity to build on this, establishing closer connections and identifying shared interests and priorities
- This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss how to inclusively deliver on commitments to public participation and engagement

### Issues discussed

1. Welcoming the opportunity for closer relationships between Norway and Nordic family countries
  2. Ms Gjøl outlined Norway's OGP history as a founding member and the changing agenda of OGP re. issues of governance covered. E.g. Norway had an OGP
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commitment around transparency on funding on programmes to stop deforestation in Africa and a commitment on gender equality – both of these were criticised in their first plans, but are now seen as ground-breaking

3. Similarities of issues – a shared challenge of oil and gas transition. Each set out the context and how they are approaching transformation, and using OGP and citizen involvement
4. Trust and misinformation - Norway have just completed an OECD Trust survey, which they found useful in understanding the changes they need to make.
5. The use of plain language in Norway has been put into legislation – significant shift in the way civil servants draft correspondence, reports and legislation, and is building trust in practical ways (Finland have followed Norway to apply this)

### Actions

It was agreed to continue the dialogue on Open Government reforms particularly on the response to climate through the work of Nordic+ OGP group – officials to follow up and keep Ministers informed

### Kosovo

Mr. Elbert Krasniqi, Minister of Local Governance, accompanied by a member of Civil Society from Kosovo

### Purpose

- an opportunity to foster a relationship with Kosovo and establish connections and identify shared interests and priorities.
- to discuss how to inclusively deliver on commitments to public participation and engagement.

### Issues Discussed

1. Discussion centred around constitutional issues, open government practices in each country, information sharing, and identifying commonalities.
2. Kosovo delegation described their constitutional and open government history [redacted]
3. Kosovo keen for full membership of OGP [redacted]
4. Acknowledges the support of UK as national member but would also welcome the support of Scotland as a reforming and respected OGP member
5. [redacted]
6. It was suggested there could be bilateral relationship between two countries on the green agenda.
7. The role of civil society in Scotland, including before the establishment of the Scottish Parliament

### Actions

- [redacted]
- Mr Elbert Krasniqi suggested invitation for Mr Harvie to visit Kosovo – Kosovan officials to action

### Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Allesandro Bellantoni, Head of the Open Government, Civic Space, and Public Communication Unit at OECD

## Purpose

- Set out and build on the relationship between OECD Open Government team and Scotland
- Scotland is viewed as an active reforming member of OGP.
- The OECD's Open Government, Civic Space and Public Communication Unit assists countries worldwide to draft and implement policies and services in the areas of open government including transparency; access to information; citizen participation; civic space and public communication. Scotland has been actively working with OECD in a number of these themes.
- The OECD supports governments by providing policy advice and recommendations on how to integrate these core principles into public sector reforms.
- This meeting will be an opportunity to discuss Scotland's work in these fields, raising OECD awareness of Scotland's interest and innovation, and identifying opportunities for collaboration and showcasing.
- OECD are keen to encourage governments to move to become Open States, which would mean involving all state institutions in open government work undertaken.

## Issues Discussed

1. Role of civil society in Scotland before the establishment of Scottish Parliament, how this has evolved since, and the current role of civil society in examining Climate Change
2. The use of deliberative democracy – Scotland's commitment to Citizens' Assemblies and Citizen Juries, how this can be expanded to areas like the development of the National Care Service. The issue of impact from deliberative democracy when the recommendations are not implemented – the Citizens' Assembly on Climate in France is an example of problems.
3. AB set out the history of OECD role in OGP, their ambition to increase monitoring of effective OGP initiatives, and the move into a broader application to the whole system of governance which they describe as Open State

## Actions

OECD offer to continue to work with Scotland to improve OGP actions and on the broader ambition.

## **5. OGP IRM report into UK Action Plan 2021-2023**

- A recent<sup>4</sup> Open Government Partnership (OGP) Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) report into the United Kingdom's most recent Action Plan has found the UK has failed to comply with OGP minimum standards for the third time<sup>5</sup>.
- It outlines that the UK has:

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<sup>4</sup> Published 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022

<sup>5</sup> IRM reports assess the design and implementation of the commitments adopted by OGP participating jurisdictions. This provides independent, evidence-based, and objective reporting to hold OGP members accountable.

- failed to meet and comply with the minimum standards required as set out in the OGP Participation & Co-Creation Standards.
- did not provide satisfactory reasoning into why certain priorities, ideas or activities proposed by non-government stakeholders were, or were not, included in the 2021-2023 action plan.
- was unable to sufficiently account for how feedback from the public was used to shape the plan before it was finalised in late 2021.
- In February 2021, the UK was placed under Procedural Review for not meeting the minimum standards during the co-creation of the 2019-21 Action Plan.
- In line with Procedural Review, if a country acts contrary to the OGP process on numerous occasions and in different ways, that country can be specified as 'inactive'.
- Officials attended the Europe Regional meeting and Steering Group, at which the UK's OGP membership was discussed. The Steering Group have asked the UK to provide additional information, with the effect that a decision on the UK's OGP membership has been deferred.
- At the time of the Europe Regional meeting, the new UK Minister appointed with responsibility for Open Government (Edward Agar) was unable to attend. There was therefore no High Level UK attendance at the Europe Regional Meeting.
- On 25<sup>th</sup> October, Jeremy Quin was appointed as the UK Minister responsible for Open Government.
- Scotland's OGP membership is separate to that of the UK's and will be unaffected by the UK's status.