

THEMATIC COMPILATION OF RELEVANT INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY IRELAND

ARTICLE 13 UNCAC

PARTICIPATION OF SOCIETY

IRELAND (THIRTEENTH MEETING)

Freedom of Information

Ireland's Freedom of Information Act (FOI) regime gives the public the right to access documents held by up to 600 public service bodies with the aim, inter alia, of delivering open, accountable and ethical government.

eFOI is a ICT solution offered under the Government's 'Build to Share' applications programme to capture, track and respond to FOI requests through a single easy to use system with controlled permissions to ensure users only see what they should. It has a simple, intuitive button-based interface. It has the ability to assign FOI requests for response to multiple individuals or groups and it can also transfer requests to other departments. It can track fees associated with a request and identify when a response was issued. eFOI aims to have the ability to reuse predefined templates to reduce workload when making decisions and communicating with the requester. It also aims to automate reporting and statistics. A review of the FOI legislation is currently ongoing and consideration may be given to how technology could better support transparency measures.

Promotion of Open Data

Open Data refers to the online publication of information from government departments and public sector bodies. Open Data is data that can be freely used, shared and built-on by anyone, anywhere, for any purpose. It can lead to greater transparency and accountability of public bodies, better data discipline providing for greater efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, more citizen participation as well as job creation.

Significant advances have been made in progressing Ireland's Open Data initiative, with Ireland placed 2nd in the EU Open Data Maturity Survey of 2021. The Open Data Strategy 2017-2022 sets out Ireland's vision for Open Data which is to create an environment where the economic, social and democratic benefits of Open Data are fully recognised, resourced and realised. Implementation of the Strategy is being progressed under the leadership of the Open Data Governance Board (ODGB). Membership of the ODGB is drawn from business, civil society, academia and media.

The two core objectives of the strategy are:

- publication of high value government data in open format, making it publicly available and freely reusable, and

- engagement with a broader community of stakeholders to promote its social and economic benefits.

The national portal <https://data.gov.ie/> is the repository for Ireland's Open Public Sector Data. The Portal provides online access to over 13,200 datasets in open and accessible formats from 150 public sector bodies. There were 240,000 users of the Open Data Portal in 2021, an increase of 6.5% compared to 2020, which was itself a record-breaking year.

The Open Data Initiative in Ireland was further strengthened following the adoption of the EU Open Data Directive into Irish law on the 22 July 2021 through SI 376/2021. The Directive requires all public sector bodies to make requested data available to the public in open and machine-readable format. An instruction note on the implementation of the Directive, Circular 20/2021, was issued by Government to public bodies.

Two new procurement frameworks have been put in place for 1) Technical Services for Open Data and Data Management and 2) Open Data Training. The services provided will allow public sector bodies to comply with the Open Data Directive to make more government data available and accessible to the public.