

Open Government Partnership Roundtable

Briefing on commitment related to PPNs: *Strengthening inclusion and civic deliberation in local decision making*

Commitment A: To publish the PPN Structural Review report

To publish and disseminate widely the PPN Structural Review report which will provide evidence based recommendations on governance and accountability, and national support structures to inform the future DRCD/PPN initiatives arising.

Update:

The Report on the PPN Structural Review, produced by independent contractor Mazars, was published on the 20 June 2022 and is available on the Department of Rural and Community Development's website (<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/19e5e-ppn-structural-review-report/>).

Commitment B: Upon publication of the report, the Department will work collaboratively with stakeholders to shape the future of PPNs

Stakeholders will have involvement at every step, from planning to implementation.

Update:

Following the publication of the review report, a call for input was issued to all PPNs, Local Authorities, civic society pillars and to a range of related stakeholders. Stakeholders were asked to provide written feedback on the recommendations made in Mazars report, priorities for action, any gaps which the report does not address, and any other issues of concern which they would like to raise. They were also asked to outline their thoughts on implementation, for the roadmap (project plan) which will be developed to guide action on strengthening the national Public Participation Network structure in the coming years.

We received 46 submissions in all; from 26 PPNs, 13 LAs, and 7 others (incl: Resource Worker and Secretariat Networks, the Environmental Pillar, Social Justice Ireland). Responses were analysed to help identify key priorities and areas of consensus across PPN stakeholders. Where permission is granted, submissions have been published on the DRCD website, ensuring transparency. They can be viewed on the Structural Review Report web page:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/19e5e-ppn-structural-review-report/>

A webinar on the Structural Review took place in October 2022 to facilitate stakeholder discussion on the structural review and the outline of the implementation and roadmap process to be developed based on the Call for Input process. Stakeholders had a further opportunity to discuss the area and input on the implementation roadmap at the PPN Conference in Portlaoise in late October.

A Working Group has been established to oversee the development and implementation of the Roadmap of future actions. Its members come from a range of PPN stakeholder groups, including PPN staff and volunteers, civil society groups, local authorities and relevant government departments. The Group is the main forum for developing and making recommendations to the Minister on future actions arising from the review report and stakeholder feedback.

Participatory and co-design processes will be used where deemed appropriate by the Working Group to ensure that stakeholders are actively involved in designing the actions that will affect PPNs over the coming years.

An independent consultation will be held to gather stakeholder feedback on the draft implementation Roadmap agreed by the Working Group. DRCD will commission a service provider to consult stakeholders on the draft Roadmap and make recommendations on its content based on the feedback received.

Commitment steps/milestones	Who/what organisation	Updated timeframe estimates	Update
Review findings of the Mazars independent report	PPN Oversight Group	Q2 2023	<p>A Working Group with representatives from all key stakeholder groups (PPN staff and volunteers, LA staff, civic society, DHLGH) has been established to oversee the development and implementation of the Roadmap which will guide the future development of PPNs over the coming years. The Group is the main forum for developing and making recommendations to the Minister on future actions arising from the review report and feedback received from stakeholders.</p> <p>The Group has met five times to date.</p> <p>The draft Roadmap agreed by the Working Group will be presented to stakeholders for feedback and input before being finalised and submitted to the Minister of State for approval.</p>

Approval of next steps by DRCD Management Board and Minister	DRCD	Q2 2022	The follow-up steps from the report were approved by the MB and the MOS, with publication of the report following in June 2022.
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C: To develop an evidence base and recommendations on addressing barriers to participation from across all demographics within communities

In order to ensure diverse input by citizens into the decision-making process, it is essential that PPNs represent a range of perspectives from throughout the community sector.

At present, it is not clear whether there is diversity in representation within PPNs in practice. This year, DRCD will commission a research project to

- explore the demographic characteristics of groups and individuals involved in PPNs,
- investigate the diversity involved,
- establish an evidence base on the area, and
- make recommendations on increasing the participation of under-represented groups in PPNs, drawing on the ‘Values and Principles for engagement and partnership working with the community and voluntary sector’ and the ‘Guidelines for Inclusive engagement in local planning processes’.

It is envisaged that the research will involve extensive consultation with groups found to be under-represented on PPNs.

Draft Terms of Reference for the research have been prepared and have been circulated to the PPN National Advisory Group, and to PPN staff and Secretariat networks for their observations and feedback. A request for tender will be issued once the TOR have been finalised.

An Oversight Group of PPN stakeholders will be established to provide advice and monitor the project. A call for expressions of interest in participating in the Group has been circulated among stakeholders.

DRCD hopes to issue a request for tender to procure research services in early Q2 2023.

Update:

Commitment steps/milestones	Who/what organisation	Updated timeframe estimates	Update
Finalise terms of reference to address barriers to participation	DRCD	Q2 2023	Draft Terms of Reference have been prepared and circulated to the PPN National Advisory Group, and PPN staff and Secretariat networks for their observations and feedback. A sub-group of PPN stakeholder representatives is being established to oversee the research project.
Finalise research on barriers to participation	DRCD	Q1 2024	Research to commence when project TOR finalised and research services procured.