



DG DIGIT

Unit.B2 (Interoperability & Digital Government Unit)

Open Source Software Country Intelligence Report

Ireland

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Ireland

Executive summary

Since 2019, the use and development of Open Source Software (OSS) in Ireland's public administration has increased slightly. This shift has been motivated by a cultural shift towards user centricity and reusability in the country's digital delivery of public services. The Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer have played a key role in driving the digital transformation of Ireland's public sector through open source.

This slight shift towards open source is best understood in the context of the priority given to digital innovation in Ireland's strategy for public services reform. The government of Ireland has published a number of strategic reports and frameworks on innovation and public services – including about digital transformation and the opportunities offered by the GovTech sector¹. While direct mentions of open source in these different reports and strategies remains limited, the emphasis on interoperability, reusability, and transparency is a recurring theme. This is reflected in Ireland's "Build to Share" programme, and in its engagement with the multistakeholder GovStack initiative² which both encourage the creation of reusable digital solutions for Ireland's public sector.

Despite the lack of formal recognition of OSS as a digital priority in Ireland, there are examples of improvement programmes for digital public services integrating open source. The Life Event programme and Digital Wallet, announced in 2024, are a good example of Ireland's attempt at developing open source building blocks for digital public services. Prior to this, the Covid Green app marked a turning point in OSS awareness amongst public servants and users in Ireland. A success, in terms of development and adoption in Ireland and abroad, the Covid Green app showcased the benefits of OSS with regard to rapid development and transparency, which motivated further interest for open source development in the Irish public sector.³

¹ The concept of GovTech generally designates the application of emerging technologies to improve the delivery of public services. You can find more about GovTech in the [Cruinniú GovTech Report](#).

² [GovStack Principles](#)

³ [Panel: Growing Open Source in the Irish Government, The Linux Foundation](#)

Actors

This section presents the key governmental bodies and strategic players influencing awareness and uptake of OSS within the Irish government and public sector.

Policymaker

- The Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR)⁴ is responsible for improving public services in Ireland, through enhanced governance, capacity building, and effective delivery of public services. The department is responsible for the Connecting Government 2030 Strategy, Ireland’s Digital and ICT strategy for public service – see the section on [Policy and Legal Framework](#).
- The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO)⁵, a division of DPENDR, leads on digital government and on the digital delivery of public services in Ireland – covering ICT, digital, and data-related developments. Acting as the main office for the implementation and delivery of public services, the OGCIO collaborates with other government departments and agencies to manage requests related to the digitalisation of Ireland national government services. OGCIO’s main implementation framework includes the “Government as a Platform” initiative and the “Build to Share” programme. Though there are limited direct mentions of open source in the OGCIO’s work, the current Head of Digital Service has discussed the possibility of setting up an OSPO within the Irish government.⁶

Strategic players

- The Open Ireland Network (OIN)⁷, established in 2021, aims to connect the open source community in Ireland while also engaging with the entire innovation ecosystem – including industry, government, and academia – to promote knowledge and skills related to open source. OIN regularly engages with the Irish government, including with the OGCIO, to drive open source awareness amongst government bodies and public servants. It also supports the government’s outreach efforts to the open source community in Ireland.⁸
- Lero Open Source and Open Science Programme Office (Lero-OSPO), 2021⁹: Hosted by the University of Limerick, Lero acts as an OSPO for a network of academic institutions in Ireland, encouraging the development of OSS and promoting related knowledge. Funded by the EU, the government of Ireland, and the Science Foundation for Ireland, Lero has 12 partner institutions as of 2023. Trinity College’s OSPO,¹⁰ the first academic OSPO set up in Ireland, is also a partner institution to Lero-OSPO.

⁴ [About the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform](#)

⁵ [Office of The Government Chief Information Officer](#)

⁶ [Panel: Growing Open Source in the Irish Government, The Linux Foundation](#)

⁷ [Open Ireland Network](#)

⁸ [Webinar: Open Source in Government, Technology Ireland ICT Skillnet](#)

⁹ [Lero Open Source and Open Science Programme Office](#)

¹⁰ [Open Source Programme Office \(OSPO\), Trinity Innovation](#)

Policy and legal framework

This section summarises the main digital and public services policies relating to open source software in Ireland, including landmark strategies documents and implementation frameworks. The list is presented in a chronological order, starting from the most recent milestone.

- Better Public Services, A Transformation Strategy to Deliver for the Public and Build Trust, 2023¹¹: It is the latest public services strategy for the Irish government. Drafted by DPENDR, the strategy presents a consolidated view of the building blocks for the digital delivery of public services in Ireland. Like other digitalisation strategies presented by the Irish government (see below), it does not mention open source. However, it does emphasise a shift towards embracing a culture of innovation, including through open collaboration and the development of joined-up services such as MyGovID (see the section on [Open Source Software Initiatives](#)).
- Connecting Government 2030 – A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service, 2022¹²: Sets the framework for the development of a digital government in Ireland through the digitalisation and interoperability of public services. It replaces the previous Public Service ICT Strategy (2015)¹³ and eGovernment Strategy 2017-2030 (2017).¹⁴ This is the only element of Ireland’s digital strategy for public services that directly refers to open source. It does so in relation to the first strategic priority which aims at “A Human Driven Digital Experience” through the improvement of user experience. The strategy is inscribed in Ireland’s commitment towards the GovStack initiative, a global open source community for the digitalisation of government service delivery,¹⁵ and encourages a standardised ecosystem through the development of digital building blocks “embracing an open-source approach”. This strategy reflects the priority actions of the GovTech2019 report and is to be implemented by DPENDR –see below.
- Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy, “Building on our Strengths”, 2021¹⁶: Sets out a 10-year strategy to reform the civil service in Ireland to become a leading example of eGovernment, notably through its 2nd theme: “Digital First and Innovation”.
- Build to Share programme, 2021¹⁷: Focuses on providing users with integrated online services and government agencies with a reusable suite of innovative public services tools, and is one of the implementation frameworks of the OGCIO. Though this focus on reusability, Build to Share is a good example of the culture shift towards alignment with OSS within the public sector.

¹¹ [Better Public Services. A Transformation Strategy to Deliver for the Public and Build Trust](#)

¹² [Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service](#)

¹³ [Public Service ICT strategy](#)

¹⁴ [eGovernment Strategy 2017-2030](#)

¹⁵ [GovStack Principles](#)

¹⁶ [Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy. “Building on our Strengths”](#)

¹⁷ Build To Share, Office of the Government Chief Information Officer

- Making Innovation Real, Public Service Innovation Strategy, 2020¹⁸: Focuses on coordinating the Irish government’s efforts towards innovation in the public sector. While it makes no direct reference to open source, it does emphasise co-creation and partnership across public services and with external partners, which can encourage open source development.
- Our Public Service 2020 and Innovation, 2019¹⁹: Follows two previous public service reform plans launched in 2011 and lays out a framework for the development and innovation of public services in Ireland. While it sets a strategic momentum towards the digital transformation of Ireland’s public service, it does not explicitly reference open source.
- Cruinniú GovTech Report, 2019²⁰: Summarises the discussion on the opportunities for the GovTech sector in Ireland that took place during the Cruinniú GovTech event in June 2019.²¹ GovTech is referenced as an example for digital skills development amongst public servants and for the digitalisation of public services, including through the reuse of government assets.

Open source software initiatives

This section presents an overview of the main open source software-related initiatives in Ireland. The list is presented in a chronological order, starting with the most recent initiative.

- Community of Practice for Open Source Practitioners in the Public Service, 2024: Open Ireland Network is implementing a Community of Practice for open source practitioners in the Irish public service. The aim of this community is to foster a collaborative environment where government professionals can share knowledge, tools, best practices, and innovation related to open source technologies. This community will serve as a hub for learning, networking, and enabling the responsible adoption of open source solutions and practices to improve government services and operations. The Open Ireland Network and the Irish government had previously been collaborating on raising open source awareness amongst public servants in Ireland, including through events.²²
- Life Events programme and Digital Wallet, 2024²³: In June 2024 DPENDR announced the Life Events programme which will provide online users with integrated access to Ireland’s public service through a single online platform structured around key life events (e.g., birth, marriage, graduation moving to Ireland). The Life Events programme builds upon Ireland’s engagement with the GovStack Principles and is in line with the Build to Share programme. Different building blocks of the programme will be built upon existing open source solutions or newly developed ones, and will be available for other public services to reuse. In addition to Life Events, DPENDR is also developing Ireland’s Digital Wallet solution based on the same building blocks principles.²⁴

¹⁸ [Making Innovation Real. Public Service Innovation Strategy](#)

¹⁹ [Our Public Service and Innovation](#)

²⁰ [Cruinniú GovTech Report](#)

²¹ [GovTech 2019](#)

²² [Open Source in Government. November 2021 webinar. Open Ireland Network](#)

²³ [Government Advances Life Events Programme for Enhanced Public Services](#)

²⁴ [Ireland: Life Events Service & Government Digital Wallet. July 2024 presentation](#)

- Ireland.ie, Digital Ireland House, 2023: Developed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Digital Ireland House is part of the government's Global Ireland 2025 Initiative. Built on an open source content management system (CMS), it was developed to showcase Ireland to international audiences and has become the digital hub for information relating to Ireland's international engagement.
- Telecom Infra Project (TIP) OpenWifi, 2022²⁵: Launched as a trial initiative under the WiFi4EU programme,²⁶ this project offers increased coverage for public Wi-Fi in the city of Dublin by using the open Wi-Fi architecture developed by the Telecom Infra Project.²⁷ While the project was launched in 2021, there has been no update on its continuation since.
- Covid Green app, 2020²⁸: Introduced as part of the Irish government response to the Covid-19 pandemic, this Covid-19 contact tracing app was developed by the Irish Health Service in partnership with the Linux Foundation Public Health Initiative.²⁹ The open source application was reused by other countries across Europe and certain states in the US. Critically, the Covid Green app represented an important shift in the use and development of open source by the Irish government as it demonstrated the benefits of open source in terms of rapid development and engagement with the users. The open source nature of the project also facilitated its uptake by other countries and demonstrates how open source can facilitate international exchanges between governments.³⁰
- LocalGov Drupal (LGD), 2018³¹: Developed by a partnership of councils in Ireland and the United Kingdom, LGD is an open source CMS that can easily be reused by councils to offer improved access to public services information online. As of August 2024, 48 councils across the two countries have switched to LocalGov Drupal for their websites. One recent example is the new website of the Tipperary County Council.³²
- Data.gov.ie, 2017³³: It was developed in 2014 as the central portal to access open government data, for free use and distribution, Data.gov.ie is Ireland's flagship open data initiative. The online portal is operated by the Government Reform Unit of the DPENDR, and the source code has been available on GitHub since 2017.³⁴

²⁵ [OpenWiFi Pilot. GovLaunch](#)

²⁶ [Wifi4EU programme. European Commission](#)

²⁷ [OpenWiFi. Telecom Infra Project](#)

²⁸ [Irish Covid-19 App Moves Beyond Ireland. OSOR](#); [Covid Green App. GitHub](#)

²⁹ [Covid Green. LF Public Health](#)

³⁰ [Panel: Growing Open Source in the Irish Government. The Linux Foundation](#)

³¹ [LocalGovDrupal](#)

³² [Tipperary County Council's LGD website. Annertech](#)

³³ [Data.gov.ie](#)

³⁴ [Data.gov.ie on GitHub](#)

- Building Control Management System (BCMS), 2013³⁵: Developed for the Local Government Management Agency, the BCMS aims to facilitate the electronic administration of building control in the country. All processes related to the statutory building control in Ireland are currently handled by local authorities through this system.³⁶ BCMS received the “Open Source Award”, at the Ireland eGovernment Award in 2016.
- The National Library of Ireland (NLI), 2009 onwards³⁷: The NLI has been involved in a number of open source projects particularly in the areas of publishing platforms and online registries.³⁸ NLI’s landmark OSS projects and contributions include the Catholic Parish Registers (2014)³⁹ and the VuFind search engine.⁴⁰ The latter is used by libraries across the world and won the first eGovernment Open Source Award in 2011.⁴¹
- Ireland eGovernment API and Open Source Award, 2002⁴²: Ireland eGovernment Awards have been recognising innovation in the government sector since 2002. Particularly, the API and Open Source Award celebrates projects that use open source technologies or are committed to open data. For instance, the 2019’s winner was Ireland’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its integration of OSS, including GeoServer and OpenLayers, in its Unified WebGIS Framework.
- Adoption of OSS by the public sector across Ireland, 2000 onwards: Since the early 2000s, a number of local and national authorities in Ireland have adopted OSS across their IT infrastructure – from operating systems and data management to email and document management. Public sector organisations that have adopted OSS include Limerick City Council⁴³, An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force)⁴⁴, the Irish Revenue Commissioners,⁴⁵ and HEAnet (Ireland’s National Education and Research Network).⁴⁶

³⁵ [BCMS. National Building Control and Market Surveillance Office](#)

³⁶ [Building Control. Gov IE](#)

³⁷ [Open Source at the National Library of Ireland](#)

³⁸ [Open Source at the National Library of Ireland](#)

³⁹ [Catholic Parish Registers at the NLI](#)

⁴⁰ [VuFind](#)

⁴¹ [Open Source at the National Library of Ireland](#)

⁴² [Ireland eGovernment Awards](#)

⁴³ [Changing Limerick’s Government Services Boosts Open Source. OSOR; Limerick City Council Migrates to Open Source Email Solution with Zentyal](#)

⁴⁴ [Lower Costs Nudge Irish Police Towards Open Source. OSOR](#)

⁴⁵ [Open Source Lets Irish Taxes Scales IT Solutions. OSOR](#)

⁴⁶ [Open Source Common in Irish Education Network. OSOR](#)

