

Dublinked

DUBLIN,
IRELAND

With roughly 1.3 million inhabitants in its metropolitan area, Dublin is Ireland's capital and largest city, representing 40 percent of the national economy. During the 1990s, the city was the face of the Celtic Tiger phenomenon, during which the Irish Economy grew on average by 6–8 percent annually. Despite the severe economic slump of 2008, the Irish economy has recently started to bounce back. This has been driven by export growth and the continued attractiveness of the city as a destination for foreign direct investment. Roughly two thirds of exports originate from Irish-based foreign companies and more than 50 percent of such companies' headquarters are located in Dublin.

Project overview

Dublinked is an initiative that makes data open to the wider public (businesses, researchers, governments, citizens) concerning public provisions (e.g. water, transport, environment, and planning) in the greater Dublin region. The idea behind the initiative is that when data of such services is open, 'innovative minds' beyond the local government have the opportunity to contribute to sustainable solutions for problems encountered by the city, and develop valuable products and services. Beyond citizen empowerment and transparency, Dublinked's main ambition is to spur economic and technological development in the city, promoting R&D and innovation. Dublinked has been carried out at the metropolitan level (four local authorities of the Dublin region) in partnership with the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) and with the technical support of a leading global technology company. From an urban policy perspective, Dublinked is a flagship programme for the new generation of 'soft' local economic development initiatives with the vision of forming new communities of innovators and paving the road to economic recovery.

Results and impact

Open data is not a quick win. Requiring shifts in established mind-sets, culture and behaviour, open data initiatives take time to show full potential. Despite this, Dublinked has already been responsible for a number of

achievements, namely: i) a large number of apps and urban solutions developed by small companies and entrepreneurs; ii) contribution to the creation of new communities of innovators around open data (assessed by the large number of participants in data-camps, hackathons, workshops etc) iii) the reinforcement of the competitive position of local subsidiaries of leading IT firms vis-à-vis other global R&D departments and headquarters; iv) the strengthening of governance between public authorities and increased awareness of the value of open data and lastly, the contribution towards the formation of new advocacy and policies for the development of an open data movement at the national level.

Enablers

Despite Dublinked's relative infancy, a few critical success factors can be identified. Firstly, the drive of lead firms interested in open data was important in igniting the initiative, demonstrating the relevance of the data and the opportunities it presented for the city. The requirements of such companies helped to set priorities on the most 'valuable' types of data to collect and release. Secondly, the kick-off and efficient implementation of Dublinked largely benefited from the leadership of the City Manager and his senior assistants; focus was not so much on ruling and controlling, but much more about legitimising, nudging, connecting and daring. Thirdly, and related with the previous enabler, was the role of NUIM acting as a neutral independent party between public and private stakeholders, contributing to the solutions of many of the issues and challenges faced during the start-up process. Fourthly, finding and agreeing on the right scale for the initiative (Dublin region) was a strong plus, helping to collect data at the relevant scale for the users, and also to start up with a large and more consistent amount of data. Lastly, the project largely benefited from the operational leadership of the design-thinking unit Studio as the anchor player within Dublin City Council and as the connection with other partners and organisations outside the City Council.

