

National Open Source Innovation Summit 2025 – Report

Introduction

On Friday, 7 February 2025, the National Open Source Innovation Summit convened at The Alex Hotel in Dublin, bringing together technologists, public servants, policymakers, academics, non-profits, and industry leaders to explore how open source is reshaping public digital infrastructure, research collaboration, and strategic policy across Ireland and globally.

Hosted by Open Ireland Network, the Summit served as a vital forum for exchanging ideas and initiatives that align open source with long-term national and international priorities—from sustainable development and public sector reform to digital sovereignty and artificial intelligence governance.

The following report captures the major themes, strategic insights, and forward-looking recommendations that emerged from the day’s conversations.

Visual Overview: 8 Core Themes from the 2025 National Open Source Innovation Summit

The following visual distills the key thematic insights that emerged throughout the Summit. These eight core themes reflect the breadth of perspectives—from global institutions to national policymakers, industry leaders, and academic voices—that collectively shaped the conversation around Ireland’s open source future. Each theme represents a strategic area of focus for embedding open source into national policy, infrastructure, and innovation practice.

Core Themes from NOSIS 2025



Figure 1: Core Themes from National Open Source Innovation Summit (NOSIS) 2025

Theme 1: Open Source as a Platform for Global Development

Keynote Speaker: Omar Mohsine (United Nations)

Omar Mohsine opened with a compelling reminder that the origins of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were deeply collaborative in nature. As the UN now looks ahead to 2030, it is increasingly clear that digital infrastructure—and particularly open source—is not only a tool but a precondition for delivering on the SDGs.

Mohsine traced this logic through UN-led programs such as the open source hackathons under “Reboot the Earth,” and collaborative SDG-specific technical efforts (e.g., Moodle adaptations for low-connectivity contexts in Côte d’Ivoire). These initiatives demonstrate how open source enables not only technological scalability but local agency and innovation.

“Nothing says ‘all of us’ like open source. It’s not just a development model—it’s a philosophy of inclusion.” — Omar Mohsine, United Nations

He further underscored the role of open source communities in enabling transparency, interoperability, and reuse across international institutions, and announced a forthcoming UN open source portal to consolidate and promote open projects.

Theme 2: The European Pivot – From Cost-Saving to Digital Sovereignty

Speaker: Dr. Sachiko Muto (RISE, OpenForum Europe)

Europe’s relationship with open source has matured significantly in the past decade. Dr. Muto traced the historical arc of EU policy—from early cost-driven arguments for open source adoption, to today’s strategic framing around digital sovereignty, resilience, and innovation competitiveness.

Notably, the Interoperable Europe Act, which entered into force in 2023, introduces legally binding obligations for EU member states to share cross-border digital public services and prioritise open source wherever feasible.

Her remarks emphasised the growing role of open source in geopolitically sensitive infrastructure, such as cloud platforms, data governance, and AI systems. The European Commission has actively backed this direction, including through significant funding packages with open source requirements—such as the €1.2 billion investment into cloud and edge infrastructure under open licensing terms.

“This isn’t just about efficiency anymore. Open source is now central to Europe’s vision of strategic autonomy.” — Dr. Sachiko Muto, RISE / OpenForum Europe

Theme 3: Collaboration, Trust, and the Irish Cultural Lens

Speaker: Kathryn Lynch (Innovate Ireland)

Kathryn Lynch provided a cultural reflection on why Ireland, despite its strong community ethos, underperforms in formal collaborative innovation. Drawing from both data and personal experience, Lynch explored how informal trust-based relationships—so central to Irish society—sometimes become a barrier to scalable, structured collaboration.

She drew a humorous but poignant parallel between contractual rigidity in business and the over-engineered “prenups” we place around innovation partnerships. Referencing Nordic innovation systems where structured trust is institutionalised, she challenged the audience to rethink how we build long-term, open partnerships.

“The longer the contract, the shorter the trust. Innovation thrives on clarity and commitment—not whispered promises.” — Kathryn Lynch, Innovate Ireland

Lynch argued that Ireland’s innovation ecosystem could benefit from blending its natural informality and relational strength with more transparent, repeatable structures for partnership and accountability—especially in open source collaborations.

Theme 4: Institutionalising Openness – The Rise of OSPOs

Speakers: Clare Dillon, Gabriele Columbro, Sayeed Choudhury

A recurring thread across the summit was the rise of Open Source Program Offices (OSPOs) in government, academia, and industry. These entities serve as internal and external enablers—supporting contribution governance, policy alignment, developer community engagement, and institutional culture shift.

Clare Dillon framed the strategic case for a National OSPO in Ireland, modeled on successful examples in countries such as Germany and Mexico. The OSPO model creates a connective tissue across agencies, universities, and departments, enabling coordinated investment in reusable open source infrastructure and standards.

Gabriele Columbro (Fintech Open Source Foundation) reinforced that OSPOs are not merely support structures—they are key drivers of innovation policy and capability development.

“If open source practitioners across institutions can collaborate, there’s no reason the lawyers no and procurement teams can’t follow.” — Gabriele Columbro, Fintech Open Source Foundation

In academia, Sayeed Choudhury presented the OSPO at Carnegie Mellon University as a case study in aligning open source with research impact. His remarks focused on supporting faculty and students to move from isolated research projects to sustainable open source products, with real-world users and measurable outcomes.

Theme 5: AI and Open Governance – IBM’s Strategic Bet

Speaker: Bill Higgins (IBM)

IBM’s AI and open source lead Bill Higgins delivered a grounded and deeply strategic talk about the role of open source in enterprise-scale AI development.

Tracing parallels to IBM’s early investments in Linux, Kubernetes, and Cloud Foundry, Higgins explained that IBM has now made open source the foundation of its AI strategy, including for its own WatsonX platform and model family (Granite).

He described IBM’s co-investments in critical projects such as PyTorch and vLLM, and shared the story behind IBM’s push to bring vLLM under open governance at the Linux

Foundation—citing the importance of license stability, neutral stewardship, and ecosystem coordination.

“The future of AI infrastructure will be shaped by open governance. Anything less is too risky to bet on.” — Bill Higgins, IBM

For developers and institutions alike, Higgins reinforced that open source is not just a good practice—it is now an operating necessity. Skills development, platform adoption, and system interoperability are all accelerated through open ecosystems.

Theme 6: Education, Scale, and the Next Generation of Open Source

Speaker: Sayeed Choudhury (Carnegie Mellon University)

While much of the conversation around open source revolves around technology, Sayeed Choudhury highlighted its vital role within academia—as both research output and infrastructure. As the founding director of multiple university OSPOs, Choudhury shared how institutions like Carnegie Mellon are embedding open source into the core of academic life.

He explained that universities are rich producers of open source software, but often lack the internal structures to support long-term maintenance, licensing, or community engagement. That’s where OSPOs—Open Source Program Offices—come in.

Through case studies such as Penrose (a tool for generating mathematical diagrams) and Temoa (an open energy policy modelling tool), Choudhury illustrated how open source allows research projects to evolve into production-grade platforms with real-world impact.

“Moving from project to product requires more than good code. It takes governance, community, and intention from day one.” — Sayeed Choudhury, Carnegie Mellon University

He also emphasized the importance of supporting students—not just to build software, but to understand the full lifecycle of open source: licensing, collaboration, documentation, and sustainability. Open source, in his framing, is not simply a technical skill—it’s a critical component of modern research literacy.

Theme 7: Government at Scale – Open Source in Public Sector Strategy

Speaker: Barry Lowry (Government CIO, Ireland)

Barry Lowry presented a comprehensive overview of how open source has evolved from a fringe choice to a strategic element of government infrastructure. Citing examples from the

COVID-19 digital response to the National Digital Strategy, Lowry underscored the importance of scalable reuse, ecosystem support, and pragmatic coexistence with proprietary systems.

He outlined the role of the Government CIO's office across strategy, infrastructure, and oversight, emphasizing that open source must be seen not as a cost-saving alternative, but as a platform for interoperability and resilience.

Lowry also reflected on the power of shared infrastructure and highlighted projects like the HSE COVID app and the national digital wallet as examples of collaborative development models. These projects have blended proprietary and open technologies to deliver impact at speed and scale.

"The countries with the strongest digital governments are often those leading in open source adoption—and economic competitiveness follows."

— Barry Lowry, Government CIO

Theme 8: The Open Source Collaboration Opportunity for Ireland

Panel: Dermot Casey (IRDG), Clare Dillon (Open Ireland Network), John Durcan (IDA), Kathryn Lynch (Innovate Ireland)

This multi-stakeholder panel explored the cultural, structural, and economic barriers to scaling open source collaboration in Ireland—across enterprise, academia, and government. Each panelist offered not only critique but also pragmatic direction for accelerating action.

Dermot Casey, drawing on his experience with innovation networks, argued that action is the best antidote to inertia:

"Don't tell people how brilliant it is—show them. Build something real, make it work, make it valuable. Then others will follow."

He advocated for low-risk, high-impact pilot projects that bring SMEs together to co-develop open source solutions—creating shared IP and real commercial value.

Kathryn Lynch reframed open source as a strategic business asset, not a fringe developer concern:

"Open source has a marketing problem. Business leaders want the hole, not the drill. We need to position open as a solution to real, pressing problems—not a movement for developers only."

She emphasized the need to restructure funding and innovation incentives to reward reuse, adaptation, and integration—not just greenfield invention.

John Durcan, speaking from IDA Ireland's vantage point, highlighted the untapped potential in connecting multinational R&D hubs with local innovators:

"The nice thing about Ireland is that we already have the companies here. So why not do the collaboration here? Why not open source here?"

He cited the telecom sector's shift to open platforms, such as Open RAN, as a model for how Ireland can lead global change—if the right connectors are in place.

Clare Dillon brought the focus to the human layer of open source, underscoring the need for stronger storytelling, inclusion, and coordination:

"We don't celebrate contributions enough. People don't see the value they're creating because we're not showing it clearly—and we're not including business, legal, and policy voices in the conversation."

She called for new talent pathways, greater visibility for Irish success stories, and more collaboration infrastructure—including legal clarity, funding mechanisms, and training that reflect how open ecosystems actually function.

The panel closed with a shared message: for Ireland to lead in open source, it must move from passive admiration to active orchestration.

Admiration alone will not generate ecosystems. What's needed now is strategic follow-through—with concrete incentives, matchmaking platforms to link SMEs with multinationals and academic partners, and cultural shifts that normalise collaboration as standard practice.

As Clare Dillon aptly stated:

"We need to create more space where people meet, build trust, and get things done—across sectors, not just within them."

The collective insight was clear: open source is not just a technical model—it's a civic and economic opportunity. Collaboration must be *designed*, not hoped for. And Ireland is uniquely positioned to turn connection into capability.

"Innovation doesn't start with code. It starts with connection."

Though not attributed to any one speaker, this phrase captured the panel's underlying ethos: trust, shared goals, and cross-sector alignment are the real engines of open innovation.

A National Agenda for Open Source Leadership

The Summit offered not just a reflective lens but a practical roadmap. A number of strategic priorities emerged for national consideration.

Throughout the day, speakers called for Ireland to not only adopt open source technologies—but to shape the systems, policies, and partnerships that sustain them. The Summit outlined a clear, actionable agenda for embedding open source into the nation's digital fabric:

1. Establish a National OSPO

Ireland has the opportunity to lead by example through the creation of a cross-sector Open Source Program Office (OSPO). As **Omar Mohsine**, *Digital Innovation Lead at the United Nations*, highlighted, multilateral institutions like the UN have already formed federated OSPOs across agencies. A national OSPO could coordinate policy, procurement, training, and collaboration across public bodies, academia, and industry.

2. Embed 'Open by Default' into Policy and Practice

Dr. Sachiko Muto, *Chair of OpenForum Europe and Senior Researcher at RISE*, traced how the European Commission and member states are adopting open-by-default approaches—especially in areas like digital public services and cross-border interoperability. Ireland should follow suit with clear, enforceable mandates for openness in public sector software, with guidance on licensing, exceptions, and stewardship.

3. Build for Trust, Not Control

In her keynote, **Kathryn Lynch**, *Chief Strategy Officer at Innovate Ireland*, challenged Ireland's cultural reluctance to collaborate. Innovation flourishes when partnerships are framed around shared success—not legal defensiveness. This cultural shift must be mirrored in how we design procurement frameworks, research collaborations, and cross-sector alliances.

4. Cultivate Open Source Capacity and Talent

Sayeed Choudhury, *Director of Open Source Programs at Carnegie Mellon University*, emphasized that open source readiness requires more than technical skill—it demands understanding of governance models, licensing, community norms, and contribution etiquette. Ireland's education system and innovation agencies must invest in open source literacy, from undergraduate programs to professional development for civil servants and researchers.

5. De-risk Innovation Through Open Governance

Bill Higgins, *Director of Open Source and AI Platforms at IBM*, illustrated how strategic contributions to open governance foundations like the Linux Foundation enable long-term investment without vendor lock-in. Ireland should prioritize open governance frameworks in national digital projects—especially in AI, cloud infrastructure, and data analytics—to ensure sovereignty, adaptability, and multi-stakeholder alignment.

Conclusion

The National Open Source Innovation Summit 2025 underscored a clear evolution: open source is no longer solely a technical implementation choice—it is a strategic imperative. Across public service, academia, civil society, and industry, speakers offered case studies, personal stories, and policy signals that collectively made the case for open models as foundational to modern digital governance and infrastructure.

From Omar Moshine’s insights at the United Nations on open source as a global development enabler, to Sachiko Muto’s analysis of EU policy trends, to Sayeed Choudhury’s experience embedding open source within academic ecosystems, and Kathryn Lynch’s cultural lens on trust and collaboration—each speaker brought a different facet of the larger picture. Bill Higgins of IBM emphasized how strategic, long-term investment in open ecosystems leads not only to technical resilience but to sustainable business advantage. Together, these voices mapped a multi-dimensional view of open source: human, institutional, and infrastructural.

Ireland now faces a strategic inflection point. The opportunity is not just to use open source—but to shape it, contribute to it, and lead within it. That requires more than policy. It demands shared infrastructure, institutional capacity, international alignment, and cultural confidence.

*“In open source, we don’t have to do it alone. And in fact, we never have.” —
Gabriele Columbo*

The path forward is collaborative, intentional, and open.