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**THE EXPERT GROUP
ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE
2nd TECHNICAL MEETING**

Executive summary

The second technical meeting of the Expert Group on Public Administration and Governance of the European Commission (“Expert Group”) took place on 14 October 2022 in a hybrid format from 9:15-17:30 CET. The meeting was organised by DG REFORM with the active participation of several Commission services (DG DIGIT, Join Research Centre, DG CNECT, DG HR) and was hosted by the Slovenian authorities in Ljubljana. This meeting was the 4th of the 5 scheduled Expert Group meetings for 2022.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the main challenges for managing the digital transition (in the public administration and for the whole society).

Representatives from the Member States included senior officials from national authorities responsible for horizontal issues, policy coordination and modernisation in the area of public administration as well as representatives from the ministries responsible for management of digital transformations and digital governance of the public sector. Observers were invited for the morning sessions and included representatives of the European Parliament, the OECD, the World Bank, the Council of Europe, Expertise France, the European Institute for Public Administration (“EIPA”), the European Group on Public Administration (“EGPA”) and members of the Inter-service Group on Public Administration (“IGPA”) of the European Commission. On average 120 participants joined the meeting (35 in person in Ljubljana).

In her introductory remarks Ms **Sanja Ajanović HOVNIK**, Slovenian Minister for Public Administration, welcomed the participants of the 2nd technical Expert Group meeting to Ljubljana, highlighted the importance of digital transition for the public sector in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the new challenges that have arisen for public administration. Ms **Nathalie BERGER**, Director of Directorate B of DG REFORM explained that advancing with the digital transformation is one of the key EU priorities, an enabler of a resilient economy that will ensure that Europe is better prepared for future shocks. Ms BERGER expressed her satisfaction that the Expert Group is developing into a real platform for open dialogue.

The meeting was structured in four sessions, which are summarised below.

1. First session on EU digital transformation

Mr **Daniele DOTTO**, Deputy Director of Directorate B¹ of DG REFORM welcomed the online and in-person participants and moderated the presentations of the first session. Mr DOTTO

¹ Also Head of Unit B.2 - Governance and Public Administration of DG REFORM.

emphasised that digitalisation goes beyond digitisation, and thus replicating bureaucracy electronically; hence it should become an integral part of an organisation's strategy. Mr DOTTO explained that the objective of this session was to frame the EU policy and outline key digital initiatives that have an impact on public administration including multi-level governance of digital transformation through presentations of the line Directorates General (DG) of the European Commission responsible for the EU digital agenda. To this end, presentations from DG DIGIT, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and DG CNECT explained the digital decade policy programme 2030 (**Eric PETERS**), the tools and indicators for monitoring the digital transformation as developed by the European Commission (**Sven SCHADE** and **Maria LEEK**), aspects of the EU policy for digital transformation at regional and local level (**Serge NOVARETTI**) and key legislative initiatives at EU level ranging from the Interoperability Act, the Digital Services and Digital Markets Act to the Data Governance and Data Act.

2. Second session on and concrete initiatives in the area of digital transformation

Ms **Athina MANTA** moderated the second session, explaining that specific challenges are emerging from digitalisation including positive developments, while highlighting that the impact of digital transition on the environment or on the employees should be duly considered. In this respect, concrete initiatives were presented by the European Commission including the data space for public administrations (**Federico MILANI**), the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the public sector (**Carlos TORRECILLA SALINAS**) highlighting the guiding principle of the European Commission to make trustworthy and ethical use of AI, which differentiates Europe from other technological giants. The potential use of GovTech for bringing innovation in public sector through start-ups while respecting public procurement rules was also presented (**Peter BURIAN** and **Carlos TORRECILLA SALINAS**). The environmental impact of digitalisation, digital waste and recommendations on how to reduce it were highlighted (**Ilias IAKOVIDIS**). The French representatives presented the agreement negotiated by the Sectoral Commission of Social Dialogue for public administrations focusing on the impact of digitalisation on work organisation, health and safety, the rights of employees to telework and to disconnect (**Faustine BENTABERRY**).

3. Third session on good practices presented by the Member States and DG REFORM in the area of digital transformation

The third session was moderated by Ms **Nicole DONKERS** and focused on presentations of good practices of specific Member States in the area of digital transformation of the public sector. Slovenia presented its reform on the digitalization of human resource management processes and the upskilling of public officials in terms of digital competencies (**Peter POGAČAR**). France presented the challenges for recruiting and retaining digital talents in the public sector considering the implementation of digital projects, the need for digital skills and the acceleration of transformation of public sector through digitalisation (**Soraya SAA** and **Naima EZ-ZAKI**). Sweden presented its example of Governance of public sector digital transformation taking into account multi-level governance and decentralisation (**Oskar THORSLUND**). Hungary presented the reform of digital transformation of the Hungarian territorial public administration through centralisation and optimal use of resources (**Petra SCHEIRING**). DG HR presented the alignment of the human resources strategy with digital transformation at the European Commission (**Marta SILVA MENDES** and **Dirk LAPAGE**). DG REFORM provided an overview of the support provided by the European Commission to the Member States through the Technical Support Instrument and its correlation with national strategies in the area of digital transformation (**Adrian JUAN VERDEJO**).

4. Round table discussions and breakout rooms

This session consisted of interactive table discussions among the Members of the Expert Group. In practice, this session consisted of 4 in-person groups and 1 online breakout room. Each group of participants brainstormed on one specific topic among the following:

- a. How can we manage better the digital transformation in public administration? What works and what does not in governance roles and processes at domestic level?
- b. How can we bring digital at the centre of organisational development in public administration? What can we improve, what can we keep in defining the strategies, resources, budgeting of individual organisations?
- c. What challenges in managing digital transformation in public administration we can effectively address together? How can public administration be an attractive working place for digital specialists, while preserving the basic principles of civil service policy? What existing and possible practices we can apply? How to attract young digital talents to the civil service? How to offer attractive career paths and opportunities for digital talents?
- d. What are we missing in managing the digital transformation of public administration today?

The groups were moderated by policy officers of DG REFORM and of the JRC, while one breakout room was moderated by the French representatives. One representative of each group reported back to the plenary the key points of discussion and the main future actions required for each of the topic discussed. The members of the group showed great insights and interest in knowledge sharing concerning policies and strategies for attracting digital profiles in public administration, for designing incentives for competing with remunerations from the private sector and for developing a competency framework on digital skills appropriate for public administrations.

5. Conclusion

Mr DOTTO invited **Mr David MAIR**² to take the floor to announce the publication of the Staff Working Document (SWD) of the European Commission on “Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research”³. The SWD was jointly produced by the JRC and DG RTD with the support of DG REFORM. Mr MAIR expressed the request to dedicate the next technical meeting of the Expert Group to the SWD and to the presentation of good practices of the Member States demonstrating a good articulation of scientists with policy-makers. The Members agreed.

Mr DOTTO concluded the works of the second technical meeting of the Expert Group in Slovenia by summarising the following conclusions:

- Digital transformation is a critical challenge for public administration and as such it should be treated horizontally in the strategies of the Member States;
- The added value of this technical meeting was two-sided: Firstly, for the Commission as it allowed a comprehensive overview of all policy initiatives by all co-competent services of the Commission. Secondly, for the Member States, as it provided an overview of all the tools and

² Head of the Knowledge for Policy: Concepts and Methods Unit, JRC

³ https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/event/launch-event-commission-staff-working-document-supporting-connecting-policymaking-member_en

mechanisms that the Member States could use for promoting their national digital reforms, including knowledge sharing, opportunities for funding and innovation in the public sector.

- Regarding future steps, Mr DOTTO invited the Members to reflect on the next steps and what further meetings are needed for more detailed discussions on certain topics. To this end, he suggested that the next High-Level meeting takes place in Brussels in January with view to finalising the work programme for 2023.
- He concluded by thanking Slovenia for hosting the event, the Member States for participating and the representatives of the line DGs of the Commission who cooperated actively and closely with DG REFORM for the organisation of this meeting.