



8th High-level meeting of the Expert Group on Public Administration and Governance

Ispra, 1-2 October 2024

Minutes

On 1-2 October 2024, DG REFORM, Unit B2 - Governance and Public Administration, chaired a high-level meeting of the Expert Group on Public Administration and Governance (EG) in Ispra, Italy. The objectives of the meeting were: a) to update the participants on the ComPact implementation plan and ComPact conference; b) to apply innovative techniques for the design and effective implementation of public policies (evaluation of megatrends and their impact in public administrations and identification of behavioural barriers that hinder implementation of EU policies); and c) to increase awareness for good practices on inclusive policy-making and participatory approaches through citizens' engagement.

16 Member States (AT, CZ, DE, EL, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK) were represented in person (22 participants), while 10 Member States (PT, BE, BG, FR, NL, LU, DK, SE, CY, PL – 16 participants) were represented online (35 people approximately, including participants from services of the European Commission).

Mr Kjartan BJÖRNSSON, Deputy Director and Head of Unit B.2, welcomed the participants on the first day and opened the meeting. He covered the developments at EU level since the last EG meeting and the insights brought about by the Letta and Draghi reports concerning the interplay between the reduction of administrative burdens and the competitiveness of the EU. He also emphasised the crucial role of public administration and Member States' reforms in the next Commission's mandate.

Mr Johannes BÖRMANN, DG REFORM, explained in detail the progress achieved on different actions of ComPact (workshops on PACE and local public administration, Passport of Competences, Toolbox etc.) with a focus on the Centres of Excellence, where an update was given by **Ms Luisa NETO, National School of Administration in Portugal**, on the mapping the networks and existing trainings, as well as the topics of high interest for the coming years. Among them, rule of law and participatory and deliberate democracy, as well as any other emerging issues that would help public administrations to enhance responsiveness to contemporary challenges. Finally, **Ms Mina SHOYLEKOVA, DG REFORM**,

briefly updated on the ComPact indicators for the three pillars. Next steps include discussions on what is not captured yet on the current indicators and the way to measure impact and results of reforms.

In a practical workshop with the Commission Competence Centre on Foresight, with **Mr Yannick DUJARDIN, JRC**, onsite, and **Ms Antonia MOCHAN, JRC**, online, the EG members applied the [Megatrends Assessment Tool](#) to explore possible consequences and policy implications of megatrends on public administrations in 2040. Besides leading to insights and results, which could be of direct relevance to the participants and their organisations, the purpose was also to showcase the tool – which is publicly accessible – so participants can easily run similar workshops in their Member States. Groups worked with the megatrends they thought they could have high impact, for which less awareness exists (e.g. “Accelerating technological change and hyperconnectivity”, “Changing nature of work”, “Changing security paradigm” and “Increasing demographic imbalances”) and discussed on their consequences and their impact on policymaking.

After the lunch break, **Mr David MAIR (JRC)** introduced the JRC and its work in Science for Policy, with an emphasis on evidence-informed policy making and the reasons to use it: enhances democratic procedures, contributes to combatting fake news and building trust while enhancing transparency and accountability, among others. He also explained the steps they are taking on Science for Policy and introduced the first conclusions of the relevant multi-country TSI project and the expected second phase with a new round of countries.

Mr BJÖRNSSON introduced **Ms Marion DUPOUX, JRC**, (and **Mr David MARTENS, JRC**, online) who lead the workshop session focusing on exploring the barriers to implement EU green policies in Member States. The workshop put emphasis in identifying the behavioural drivers behind commonly recognised barriers such as financial, governance, and political obstacles and aimed to uncover how human behaviour might influence these barriers. The session was divided into three main parts. First, participants wrote down the barriers they had encountered or were familiar with in their respective countries on post-its. They then shared these in small groups, clustering similar barriers together, before reporting to the plenary. During the plenary, participants placed their barriers on a commonality scale to indicate how widespread they thought these issues were, and then voted to highlight the barriers they felt most hindered the implementation process. In the second part, Marion introduced the concept of behavioural insights and explained how they can contribute to public policy and organisational change. The final part of the workshop involved participants reviewing the mapped barriers together to assess whether the barriers were primarily related to human behaviour. Barriers that were not explicitly behavioural but had potential behavioural links were assigned to individual groups for further analysis. Each group used behavioural cards representing common cognitive biases to explore the behavioural drivers behind their assigned barriers and identify which stakeholders in the implementation process were most likely to be influenced by these biases. The outputs of this workshop are contributing to the EU Policy Lab's new project aimed at mapping the journey of an EU law from its adoption to its application and enforcement. This project seeks to capture all stakeholders involved in the implementation process, map their level of influence on the law, and understand the relationships between these stakeholders. By doing so, the goal is to identify key leverage points where barriers to implementation arise and where interventions could mitigate or remove these barriers. Ultimately, the project will focus on developing and testing targeted interventions at these critical points to improve the effectiveness of EU law implementation.

Finally, the in-person participants visited the JRC premises, where **Mr Matteo FORNARA, JRC**, did a guided tour in the [Europa Science Experience](#), a nearly zero energy building under the New Bauhaus Initiative demonstrating the European Commission's commitment to sustainability and innovation.

The second day focused on civic participation and its importance for building trust of citizens to the government, a pre-condition for increasing compliance with public policies. **Mr MAIR, Ms Ângela GUIMARÃES PEREIRA and Ms Elisa VECCHIONE, JRC**, presented the importance of bringing citizens' concerns to the deliberative process (citizen assemblies, participatory budgeting, participatory planning, and co-design), which contributes to increase trust in institutions and a better quality of policymaking (as highlighted in ComPACT Pillar I). They also explained the trainings offers for public administrations available in the Competence Centre (JRC), tailored to the different levels of governments.

Seminal interventions included **Ms Silke TOENSHOFF, Committee of Regions**, who explained the capacity building activities on participatory approaches in the local and regional level (e.g. support to local dialogues). **Mr David GOESSMANN, OECD**, highlighted the role of democratic governance to support trust in public institutions and build better policies, and the need to be inclusive and meaningful and embedded in the institutions. Testimonial interventions enriched the discussions from representatives of two regions of Spain and Italy on citizen engagement processes. **Ms Lone ARDAIZ, Arantzazulab**, presented the case of Tolosa, and explained how they are changing the relationship between institutions and society, by including deliberation and public decision models at regional level to overcome complex issues and build public trust. Secondly, **Ms Daniela FERRARA, Regione Emilia-Romagna**, explained the case of Emilia Romagna and how they reinforced citizen engagement in cohesion policy at regional level using the tools and participatory processes already in place to build common trust.

A participatory session followed, where Member States discussed how public administrations can be supported for implementing participatory governance. Main conclusions comprised the need of political support/engagement and a good framework (legal and institutional) for the inclusion in the policy cycle, and to guarantee the financial resources and skills/trainings/digital means needed for its implementation. They also agreed on their implementation at all levels of governance, with the inclusion of relevant sectors (e.g. academia, universities) and according to international good practices. Finally, the members highlighted the need to include those processes also at the beginning of the policy cycle and to have central direction and coordination from the central government. A brief discussion followed on how to better use AI in participation processes, the importance of human interaction to overcome common challenges, and the need for time/resources to re-evaluate existing processes to include and better design and implement participatory approaches.

After the coffee break, **Mr Thomas PAPPENSCHALLER, Austrian Civil Service and Administrative Innovation**, presented the Austrian example of a national guide for novel types of civic participation in the digital age (by using mobile and digital means), including respectful interaction with citizens across all levels of government.

Ms Ivana ZEPPA, DG CNECT, informed the Member States of a new initiative of the Commission providing co-funding to the Member States for using Generative AI in public administration, and its relevance to public administration.

Finally, meaningful exchanges were held with Member States on the topics and the format for the next Conference on Public Administration. **Mr BJÖRNSSON** suggested to focus on the need to reduce administrative burdens and enhance interoperability in the single market and the use of competences framework (together with the JRC). The topics of shared interest ranged from examples of successful digital projects in other countries (HU), to methodologies for measuring the impact of public policies and reforms – possibly inviting the World Bank (IE, EL), the Eurobarometer, a maturity model/timeline for citizens participation and the digital and skills agenda (IE), including the leadership programmes (EL).

Concerning the future meetings, two online meetings will be organised in 2024 (November and December), on new metrics for sustainable and inclusive well-being in policymaking and on reporting requirements for ESGs by large companies and SMEs including the role of public administration. For 2025, there will be three in-person meetings: March (Brussels), combined with the project on evidence-informed policymaking, June/July (Brussels), combined with the ComPAct Conference, and October in Lithuania. Calendar will be completed with three online meetings to be defined in October.

Mr BJÖRNSSON closed the meeting by thanking all colleagues involved (logistical team and TAIEX, the JRC, and his team) and the members of the Expert Group for their participation. **Next steps** after the 8th High-level Expert Group meeting include: to create a repository for ideas (topics, formats, speakers) for the next meetings and the Conference on Public Administration, and to send the detailed calendar of meetings for 2024 and 2025 and the invitation to the advisory group for the passport of competences.