



Public Administration and Governance in the EU - Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Introduction to the newsletter

DG REFORM and more widely the Public Administration and Governance community across the European Commission have shown **incredible dedication and resolution** in putting public administration reform high on the reform agenda.

To deliver on our objectives to recover from the COVID crisis and to build a resilient, greener, and digital Europe and maintain respect for our values of rule of law, democracy, respect for human and social rights, public administrations must adapt to current and future challenges. The last two decades have already presented us with a series of crises that have destabilised our values, our economies and have had substantial social impacts.

The pandemic has illustrated the important role played by public administration to overcome the crisis. Skilled, well-functioning, resilient institutions are vital for the health of all the systems that underpin our modern world. **Good public administration is more important than ever.**

The current situation represents a profound challenge, but also a **unique opportunity** for administrations to rethink, redesign and redeploy themselves. An opportunity to reflect on what we want for tomorrow's public administrations.

Over the past few years, we have **worked intensely** to support Member States, ensuring that public administrations and their key role is reinforced amid multiple crises:

- We continue to support Member State reforms through the [Technical Support Instrument](#) (TSI).
- We have published a [Staff Working Document](#) highlighting the key challenges ahead for governments and have worked tirelessly to improve the European Semester and Rule of Law exercises.
- We have built a country and thematic knowledge base through the [EUPACK project](#).
- We have established a dedicated [Experts Group on Public Administration and Governance](#).
- We have also organised the conference: "[Fit for recovery and transition – Supporting Quality of Public Administration in the European Union Member States](#)" in November 2021 to raise awareness of the key trends in Public Administration and engage with interested stakeholders.



This newsletter is a **recognition of those efforts** and will serve to inform the wider community of the key developments in public administration and governance. Over the next few years, we hope to continue to work with all interested stakeholders to improve our capacity to deliver on reform and build knowledge.



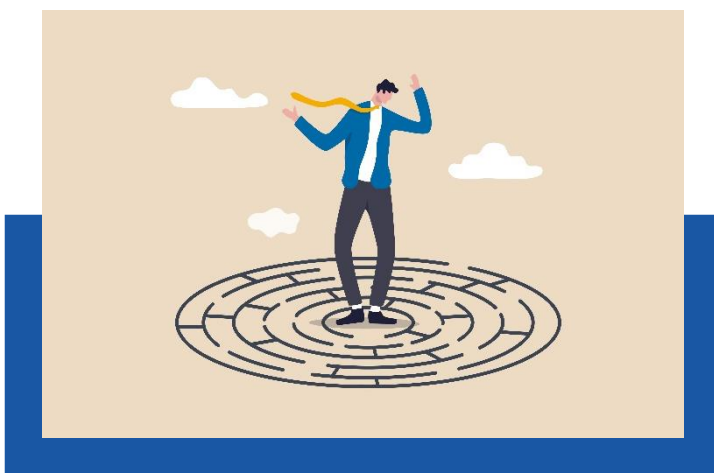
To deliver on our objectives to recover from the COVID crisis and to build a resilient, greener, and digital Europe and maintain respect for our values of rule of law, democracy, respect for human and social rights, public administrations must adapt to current and future challenges. The last two decades have already presented us with a series of crises that have destabilised our values, our economies and have had substantial social impacts.



Key challenges for public administrations

In the 2021 [Staff Working Document](#) “Supporting public administrations in EU Member States to deliver reforms and prepare for the future” we have identified **five specific challenges** ahead for public administrations at every level to consider:

1. **The unprecedented speed of technological change** affects every function of the public administrations’ work. Administrations need to find new ways to offer better services, simplify processes, and have human capital that can keep up with the new digital era.
2. **The impact of demographic changes.** Some Member States will see up to 30% of their workforce retire in the next 10-15 years.
3. **The increasing complexity of policy issues**, such as sustainable growth, or dealing with super-wicked problems, require innovative administrations and stronger international cooperation.
4. **The importance of the green transition.** We will require new skills for our European goal of becoming the world’s first climate-neutral continent. From green transport systems to smart energy grids, to new ways of arranging public spaces.
5. **The increasing competition for limited public funds.** Technological change, population ageing, and of course the Covid crisis has put additional pressure on funds. Public administrations are now called to streamline their functions and leverage digital solutions to increase the efficiency of public spending.



The TSI remains an ideal instrument to deal with the challenges Public Administrations face

Member States are not alone in tackling these challenges. DG REFORM is strongly committed to supporting public administrations in ensuring they are fit for purpose for a green, digital and resilient future.



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The European Commission has established an ongoing dialogue with Member States in the context of the European Semester and more recently within the Recovery and Resilience Facility. This is the framework where important needs and specific country challenges are identified. Over the last 10 years, weaknesses in public administration, anti-corruption and social dialogue have been flagged in the European Semester through 170 Country Specific Recommendations to the EU Member States.

Consistent with European priorities, the reflection on public administration has been integrated into key strategic sectors such as the rule of law mechanism. This investigates issues of "accountability" of the institutions, the quality of the legislative process, and the right of access to information and public consultations.

Beyond these determining fora for dialogue, European instruments like the TSI, specifically support such transformation efforts. The TSI helps Member States in advancing their national reform agendas by providing tailor-made technical expertise to local and national authorities to design and implement reforms.

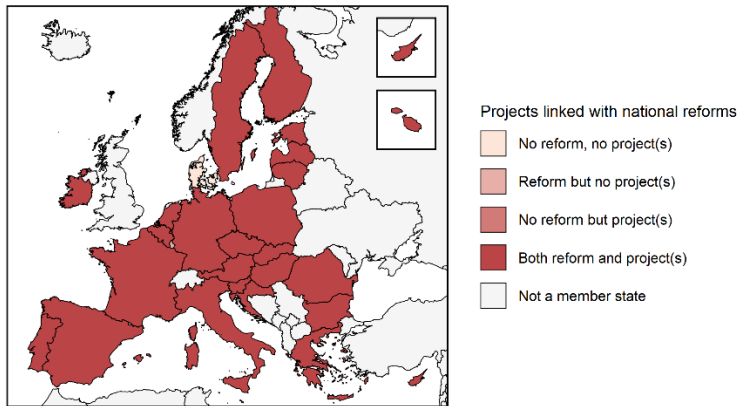
We have provided over 160 technical support projects over the past few years in the governance and public administration area in all Member States. We are committed to continue providing support.

Mario Nava
Director-General, DG REFORM

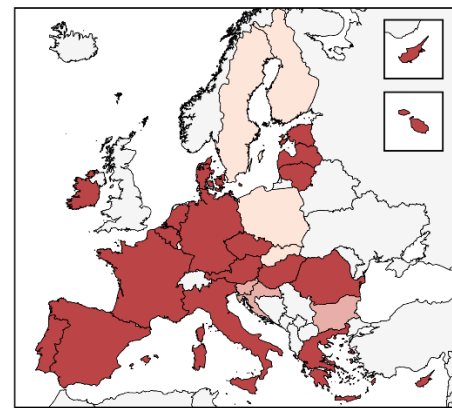
THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT INSTRUMENT IN ACTION

Between 2017 and 2022, the TSI supported 217 projects in 26 Member States focusing on: policy-making, service digitalisation and service delivery, organisational change and human resource management. These often reflected both national and EU assessments on Member States reform priorities and reflected the demand driven aspect of the TSI.

Policy area: Organisation and Management (85 projects)



Policy area: Services and Digitalisation (29 projects)



Organisation and management

Since 2018, in 25 out of 27 Member States, the TSI supported reforms related to **Organisation and Management**, which is an area that was prioritised by all Member States. The projects focused on issues such as the improvement of the allocation of functions in the central administration in Bulgaria, the optimisation of the institutional framework of public sector organisation in Lithuania, the internal re-organisations of specific services and/or ministries of Italy and delivering good governance in local administrations in Lithuania.

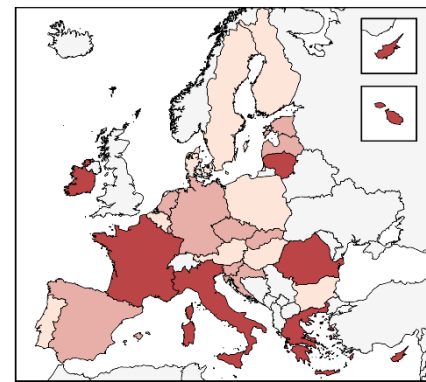
Digitalisation

Digitalisation and Service provision is likewise an area of priority for many Member States. Reforms in this area include France's new law on the 'Acceleration and simplification of public action', Austria's digitalisation Action Plan, the E-Croatia 2020 Strategy and the reform strategy 'Client-centred public administration 2030' in Czechia, as well as the establishment of the Strategic Council for Digitalisation in Slovenia.

HRM

Human Resource Management projects have also been prevalent amid an increasing awareness among public administrations for skills shortages. DG REFORM supported such reforms in 8 Member States. HRM reforms include setting up an examination centre for the Cypriot administration, the digital transformation of the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel in Greece or strengthening policy development and foresight skills in the Irish Civil Service staff.

Policy area: HRM (19 projects)



RRP

The TSI also supports the design and implementation of Member States' national Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs): in particular, since 2019 around 30% of projects are directly (i.e. providing a direct input for achievement of a milestone/target or indirectly (i.e. indirectly contributing to a milestone/target) linked to the RRP. These include both projects supporting horizontal implementation and monitoring and projects supporting specific measures. Additionally, TSI projects are supporting Member States addressing country-specific recommendations. This corresponds to approximately 40% of the projects.

TSI 2022 FLAGSHIP

A new initiative proposed in 2021 for the TSI was the concept of flagships. Given their success, DG REFORM has proposed to Member States three new flagship project initiatives in public administration and governance this year.

While the TSI remains a Member State demand driven instrument, flagships leverage DG REFORM's unique position to scan persistent gaps across Member States and propose projects that caters to their needs in a simplified format. These flagships not only cover needed areas for reform in particular Member States, also allows the creation of multi-country projects.

This year we have proposed [flagship projects in three key areas](#).

Digital transformation for regional and local public administrations

Many Member States are very advanced in the digitalisation of their public administrations. However, local governments are usually left behind in reform drives. This is particularly undesirable as regional and local administrations are often responsible for most of the public service delivery to citizens.

The proposed flagship targets three areas that are highly relevant for regional and local administrations:

- Sustainable connectivity, including cybersecurity,
- Development of smart cities,
- Interconnectedness with digital systems used by other authorities, including in other Member States.

By focusing on these three areas, the flagship will support local and regional administrations to implement EU and national digital policies, and strengthen the range of digital services offered to citizens.



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Public Administration Cooperation Exchange (PACE)

The PACE flagship aims at promoting cooperation and cross-border exchanges among Member States to build administrative capacity and prepare the next generation of policy makers in the EU.

Public administrations across the EU are confronted with common challenges, therefore cooperation among national administrations can best leverage all the knowledge available.

The flagship will provide an opportunity for sustainable capacity building and sharing of working methods in public administrations. The exchange will then take the form of a targeted study visit to an EU peer administration and may include specific assignments (such as the participation in joint workshops and training or the preparation of targeted notes). Participating Member States will be paired according to their interests and capacity to host civil servants.

Professionalisation of public procurement personnel: fostering strategic methodologies, integrity and transparency

Every year, over 250 000 public authorities in the EU spend around 14% of GDP (around EUR 2 trillion per year) on the purchase of services, works and supplies.

In many sectors such as energy, transport, waste management, social protection and the provision of health or education services, public authorities are the principal buyers.

This proposed draft flagship initiative aims at building capacity in Member States to design and implement structural reforms in the field of public procurement and the fight against corruption, by providing technical support on:

- Assessing the organisational structure and public procurement processes,
- Addressing training needs and career management of public procurement practitioners,
- Developing tools to use strategic procurement methodologies (e.g. green procurement criteria, e-procurement tools, guidelines, templates).

EXPERT GROUP ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

In 2021 the European Commission established the Expert Group on Public Administration and Governance, an advisory group made up of key experts from each Member State on the topic. This is a testament to the rising awareness of the importance in the Commission as well as the Member States that Public Administration and Governance issues deserve further attention and its own dedicated expert group.



The Expert Group is a platform to facilitate the dialogue between the European Commission and representatives of the Member States in Public Administration and Governance. This platform for open dialogue will allow the Commission to create synergies and tailor its support instruments on Member States' needs and challenges.

The members of the group are representatives from the Member States' authorities responsible for horizontal issues, policy, coordination or modernisation in the area of public administration. International organisations and research institutes can attend the meetings as observers.

Established in late 2021, the Expert Group has already convened three times, discussing among other things the flagship proposals, trends in public administrations, assessment methods and how these may impact reforms.

For more information on the Expert Group as well as the summaries of the meetings, please visit our [website](#).

THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

Triggered by a series of public administration discussions in the context of the Economic Policy Committee's (EPC) work on the Semester in 2018, the EPC asked the European Commission to propose a methodology for the benchmarking of Member States' public administrations. The European Commission has since been working on developing an Assessment Framework for Public Administration and Governance.

DG REFORM is also expanding its country specific and thematic knowledge to maintain and support the knowledge base necessary to understand the trends and challenges that the Member States face. Maintaining a repertoire of up-to-date and consequential knowledge of Member States' public administrations and substantive knowledge allows DG REFORM to better understand, guide and implement technical support in the Member States. This is done notably through the **European Public Administration Country Knowledge (EUPACK) project**. We already published [yearly country reports](#) and [studies on thematic issues](#) with more to follow.

DG REFORM is uniquely placed to contribute to the European Semester in Public Administration and Governance. The thematic and country knowledge through the EUPACK project provide us with information on the situation in each Member State.

The Assessment Framework for Public Administration and Governance allow us to have a quantitative basis for our assessments while our project knowledge and on-the-ground experience in Member States help provide deep and comprehensive assessments in the context of the European Semester.

SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLICATIONS/EVENTS

PUBLICATIONS

[Quality of Public Administrations Toolbox](#)

- The Toolbox aims to support, guide and encourage those who want to modernise public administrations in support of prosperous, fair and resilient societies. It is intended as a reference and resource by pointing readers to existing EU policies and international practices, illustrated by inspirational case studies.

[European public administration country reports](#)

- The country reports present an overview of the characteristics and recent developments in the public administrations in the Member States (EU-27) from a qualitative and quantitative perspective, based on analytical work carried out under the EUPACK project. 2021 reports will be published soon!

[European Thematic Studies](#)

- The Thematic studies present a comparative thematic overview of recent developments in the public administrations in the Member States (EU-27), focusing on important thematic analyses of issues that affect public administrations across the EU. They are based on analytical work carried out under the EUPACK project.

EVENTS

First Thursday of every month- [The Creative Bureaucracy Festival: Digital Workshop Series](#)



THE TEAM

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