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8-9th February 2023

**THE EXPERT GROUP
ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE
3rd HIGH-LEVEL MEETING**

Executive summary

On 8-9 February 2023, the 3rd High-Level meeting of the Expert Group on Public Administration and Governance of the European Commission (the “Expert Group”) took place in a hybrid format with participants attending a 1.5 day-event both in Brussels and online. The meeting was organised by the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM). It brought together high-level experts from the Member States and the representatives of relevant Commission services, including the Secretariat General, the JRC, DG RTD, DG NEAR, DG DIGIT and DG HR. The representatives of the Member States’ authorities are responsible for horizontal matters in the field of public administration and governance (PAG) in the Member States. Furthermore observers of the Expert Group - including representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Expertise France, the European Public Law Organization (EPLO) - attended the meeting. In total, more than 60 participants on-site and more than 50 online participants attended the meeting.

The aim of the meeting was: a) to present the activities and priorities of the Commission services in the area of PAG for 2023; b) to discuss the PAG priorities of the Member States and c) to decide on the objectives and the work programme of the Expert Group for 2023 in cooperation with the European Commission and the Member States, including selection of topics, outputs per topic and timeline of the meetings.

The first day of the event was opened by Mr **Mario NAVA**, Director-General of DG REFORM, who warmly welcomed the participants and congratulated the Expert Group on one year of successful cooperation since its establishment. He highlighted the main achievements accomplished by the Expert Group (DG REFORM and other Commission services in collaboration with the Member States) in the area of PAG throughout 2022, including thematic meetings of the Expert Group, presence of DG REFORM in international fora, concrete initiatives of Commission services in response to the Strasbourg Declaration¹, the design of flagship projects echoing the needs of the Member States (e.g. PACE), the cross-fertilisation of ideas between the Expert Group and the Member States (e.g. multi-country projects proposed by the Member States) and the inclusion of public administration in the Work Programme of the European Commission demonstrating the highest political commitment of our President to support the efforts of the Member States in the area of public administration.

¹ On 16 and 17 March 2022, under the French EU-Presidency, the 27 EU ministers in charge of public administration, public transformation and civil service, alongside with the European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa Ferreira and the European Commissioner for Budget and Administration Johannes Hahn adopted the Strasbourg Declaration outlining the coordination strategy for public administrations.

The core session of the first day, entitled “**Public Administration policy priorities for 2023**”, moderated by Mr **Daniele DOTTO**, Deputy Director of Directorate B of DG REFORM, framed the discussions including presentations on the work of the Expert Group conducted in 2022 (Ms **Athina MANTA, DG REFORM**), the initiatives of DG REFORM in the area of PAG in 2023 formulated in the ComPAct package (Ms **Mina SHOYLEKOVA, DG REFORM**) and thematic initiatives in the area of evidence-informed policy-making (Ms **Agnieszka GADZINA KOLODZIEJSKA, JRC**), crisis management (Ms **Scira MENONI, DG RTD**) and principles of public administration (Mr **Florian HAUSER, DG NEAR**). The priorities presented by the Commission services were complemented by the presentation of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Ms **Annelie Roswall LJUNGGREN** - Director General, Swedish Agency for Public Management).

The panel was followed by a collaborative and participatory session during which representatives of Commission services and the Member States exchanged on seminal national and European reform priorities for preparing resilient public administrations for the future. The session entitled “**Exchange of views on members proposals for priorities for 2023**” was led by representatives of DG REFORM and moderated by Ms **Mina SHOYLEKOVA**, Ms **Athina MANTA** and Ms **Nicole DONKERS**. The participants (both on-site and online) were invited to put forward the three most important issues (policy priorities) with which their public administrations are faced. The topics that the participants put forward were grouped in eleven generic categories including several sub-topics as follows:

- 1) Crisis Management;
- 2) Multi-Level Governance;
- 3) Resilient Public Administrations – Green and Digital Transitions;
- 4) Evidence-Informed Policymaking;
- 5) Digitalisation (Artificial Intelligence, Big Data);
- 6) The Future of Work;
- 7) Skills (Upskilling, Reskilling, Green Skills, Digital Skills);
- 8) Human Resource Management (HRM) Processes;
- 9) Attractiveness of Public Administration;
- 10) Coordination; and
- 11) Trust and Democracy.

Out of these eleven topics, three were identified as of the highest importance on which the Expert Group work should focus during 2023, namely:

- 1) Skills (Upskilling, Reskilling, Green and Digital Transition and Resilient Public Administrations);
- 2) Evidence-Informed Policy- Making, including links with Trust and Democracy; and
- 3) Attractiveness of Public Administration for recruiting and retaining talented professionals.

These topics are fully aligned with the Commission priorities and will form the work programme of the Expert Group for 2023.

A formal dinner was offered at the end of the day at the presence of Mr **Mario NAVA** and Mr **Daniele DOTTO**, where the members of the Expert Group had the opportunity to exchange on the next steps and their impressions from the sessions of the day.

The second day of the meeting was opened by Ms **Nathalie BERGER**, Director, DG REFORM, who stressed the key role of European public administrations – the citizens’ first direct interface – when it comes to supporting the functioning of strong democracies. In this context, Ms **BERGER** emphasised the need for public administrations to provide and support resilient infrastructures (electoral,

participative, deliberative, digital and open data) and increase accountability in this respect, as well as to equip public civil servants with relevant democratic and public administration skills. She also highlighted that DG REFORM through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) can help to empower European public administrations and democracies through reforms in the areas of good governance, digitalisation, anti-corruption, rule of law, financial sustainability and governance for better inter-institutional coordination. The TSI support was further elaborated during the following sessions “**Outcome of the preliminary prioritisation of 2023 TSI round requests**”, and “**The projects pre-selected for the flagship PACE 2023 (Public Administration and Cooperation Exchange)**” both presented by Ms **Nicole DONKERS**, DG REFORM. Ms **DONKERS** provided an overview of the pre-selected TSI 2023 requests, including a breakdown of the projects supporting the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plans, the flagship projects, the multi-country projects, country coverage and policy areas. The session was concluded with an overview of the requests concerning the TSI 2023 Public Administration Cooperation Exchange (PACE) flagship and main areas of cross-border exchanges and knowledge transfer among the Member States.

The following session, under the title “**The skills agenda for Public Administration**”, was moderated by Ms **Ciresica FEYER**, Deputy Head of Unit, DG REFORM and featured insights on the European Year of the Skills 2023 and related activities. This session addressed a specific request that the Expert Group expressed during the October 2022 meeting on exploring competency frameworks on digital skills for public administration (to be) developed by the European Commission. In this context, representatives from relevant Commission services presented the work that is being carried out concerning support offered through the TSI to the Member States ranging from upskilling, reskilling, skills for managers and life-long learning (Ms **Ciresica FEYER**, **DG REFORM**). The topic of digital skills for the public sector was treated separately. Representatives from DG DIGIT and the JRC presented the Digital and Interoperability Skills and Competences in the Public Sector (Ms **Viktorija KALOGIROU**, **DG DIGIT**) and the European Framework for Digital Competence respectively (Ms **Jude COSGROVE**, **JRC**). The session was completed by a presentation on the External Mobility programmes of the European Commission (Ms **Marta SILVA MENDES**, Head of Unit, DG HR).

In his closing remarks, Mr **Daniele DOTTO** reiterated the three reform priorities which will form the basis of the work programme of the Expert Group in 2023 and summarised the potential outputs that the Member States would find beneficial based on the structured discussions of the previous day, including:

- a) conceptual frameworks for each topic allowing the Member States to have the same understanding on each policy area;
- b) the organisation of dedicated meetings of the Expert Group where existing frameworks of the European Commission would be presented;
- c) the collection and exchange of practices amongst the Member States where certain strategies are already considered (e.g. existing policies or strategies for attracting and retaining talents in the public sector); and
- d) the development of practical tools, indicators and non-binding guidelines that can be used by the Member States for measuring performance of public administration and for increasing its quality.

At the end of this two-day productive event, Mr **DOTTO** also announced that the next Expert Group meeting would take place in June 2023 but that dedicated meetings would take place by then.