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EGPA2026 CONFERENCE

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CALL FOR PANELS



Public Governance for the
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EGPA Permanent Study Group 7 on the Governance of Ecological Sustainability

Governing Ecological Sustainability in and through Public Administration: Framing, Power Struggles and Spatial–Institutional Dynamics

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Positioning and aims of the Study Group

Ecological sustainability has become a central concern for public administrations across Europe and beyond. Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, resource depletion, and ecosystem degradation increasingly challenge public authorities, who are confronted with uncertainty, interdependence, and contested priorities. These challenges are not only environmental, but fundamentally socio-political, mobilising public administration, public management, public policy, and related disciplines.

This Study Group provides an interdisciplinary forum for scholars interested in how ecological challenges shape public action, administrative processes, and governance arrangements across different institutional contexts, including countries, levels of government, and policy sectors. It brings together theoretical and practice-oriented research, fosters critical debate, encourages interdisciplinary exchange, and welcomes methodological pluralism. The Study Group does not function as an expert body or advocacy platform, but as a space for critical inquiry, dialogue, and collective reflection.

For the launch of the study group, we have decided to structure this call around two broad themes relating to the Governance of Ecological Sustainability. The first theme relates to the definition, understanding and interpretation of ecological sustainability and the grand challenges it aims to tackle. The second theme relates to the actors of ecological sustainability governance, how they interact, negotiate, and co-create public decisions and policies.

Conceptualising the Governance of Ecological Sustainability

Ecological sustainability is often framed as a long-term political objective or normative horizon. In contrast, for public administrations, ecological sustainability and its underlying challenges materialise as concrete governance problems that call for immediate action, cross-sector and cross-level coordination, and the engagement of a wide array of actors.

These Ecological Grand Challenges are frequently described as complex, wicked, or pernicious problems, characterised by uncertainty, contested problem (re)definition, conflicting interests, and long-term consequences. Within public administrations, such



challenges may also be instrumentalised to legitimise political decisions, reforms, and even organisational restructuring.

To better understand, define and conceptualise the Governance of Ecological Sustainability, we welcome contributions that critically examine how ecological sustainability is framed, prioritised, and governed in public administration. Relevant questions include:

- How does ecological sustainability affect public action, administrative capabilities, and governance arrangements?
- How do public administrations coordinate ecological policies across sectors and levels of government?
- What intersections exist between various ecological challenges addressed by public administrations?
- How do the economic, political, civil and intimate spheres and their interests interact, influence or are ousted from ecological governance?
- In what ways do spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts shape the governance of ecological sustainability?

We particularly welcome contributions engaging with wicked problem theory, institutional complexity, and governance under conditions of deep uncertainty.

Governance arrangements, actors, and instruments

The governance of ecological sustainability involves a wide diversity of actors, instruments, and institutional arenas. Public administrations interact with political authorities, private actors, civil society organisations, trade unions, experts, and citizens through regulatory, economic, deliberative, and organisational devices. The Study Group welcomes contributions exploring, for example:

- Policy instruments addressing ecological sustainability, including regulatory, economic, and hybrid approaches;
- The making and implementation of ecological policy, law and regulation;
- Political–administrative–scientific interfaces;
- The role of public administrations as drivers, mediators, or obstacles;
- Pro- and counter-movements surrounding the development of labelling, certification schemes and regulatory oversight mechanisms;
- Deliberative arrangements, including citizen participation and consultation mechanisms;



- Bottom-up initiatives and their potential for institutionalisation or scaling;
- The role of infrastructures and technical systems in enabling or constraining ecological action.

Issues of power, conflict, coordination, resistance to change, and accountability are central to these analyses.

Disciplinary and methodological openness

The Study Group explicitly adopts an interdisciplinary perspective. Contributions are welcome from public administration, public management, political science, sociology, geography, law, history, communication studies, and related fields.

A wide range of approaches is encouraged, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research; comparative studies; historical and longitudinal analyses; conceptual papers as well as empirically grounded case studies.

The Study Group encourages contributions from early-career scholars, including PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers, as well as confirmed scholars. Submissions presenting work in progress are welcomed, provided that research questions, empirical material, and analytical perspectives are clearly articulated.

Language and inclusiveness

While English is the main working language of the Study Group, communications in French are also welcome, and linguistic mediation may be arranged where appropriate. However, to ensure balanced and inclusive panels, submissions written in French may be redirected to the French-speaking Ad Hoc Group, in coordination with the conference organisers. Authors are encouraged to contact the co-chairs of our Study Group and/or the French-speaking panel if they are unsure about the most appropriate panel for their submission.



Practicalities

If you wish to present a paper in one of the Permanent Study Group's, Ad Hoc Group's, or Specialized Panel's sessions at the conference, please upload an abstract outlining your proposed conference paper. This may be done through the conference website.

Important dates

- Deadline for submission of abstracts: April 6, 2026
- Deadline for submission of EGPA Booster Grant applications: April 15, 2026
- Acceptance notification and opening of registrations: April 20, 2026
- Deadline for submission of EGPA Travel Grant applications: April 26, 2026
- Full paper submission deadline and registration deadline: July 19, 2026

Website

- <https://www.iias-iisa.org/egpa-2026-conference/>

Submission

- <https://www.conftool.org/egpa2026/>
- Unless specified otherwise, 500-words limit for abstracts

Contact

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