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24-27 August Rome, Italy

CALL FOR PANELS



Public Governance for the
Common Good: Human Intelligence
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EGPA Permanent Study Group 12 on Public Policy

Policy Implementation and Hybrid Service Delivery: Street-Level Decision-Making in Turbulent Times

Prof. Dr. Anat Gofen; Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israël;
anat.gofen@mail.huji.ac.il

Prof. Dr. Fritz Sager; University of Bern, Switzerland;
fritz.sager@unibe.ch

Dr. Anka Kekez; University of Zagreb, Croatia;
akekez@fpzg.hr

Street-level professionals and organizations play a pivotal role in translating public policy into effective public service delivery and represent the most direct interface between government and citizens. Today, this role is exercised under conditions of growing societal turbulence and institutional strain. Complex and interrelated challenges, such as including multi-problem client groups, declining trust in government, polarization, democratic backsliding, systemic discrimination, digital transformation, and climate adaptation, are reshaping the context in which policies are implemented, and services are delivered. These pressures increasingly affect frontline discretion, organizational routines, accountability relations, and implementation outcomes.

In response, public service delivery is becoming more fragmented, hybrid, and collaborative. Street-level organizations and professionals are required to work across organizational, sectoral, and professional boundaries, often under conditions of resource constraints and shifting mandates. Frontline workers and managers must cope with multiple accountabilities, political pressures, media scrutiny, and rapidly changing policy signals, while maintaining service continuity and fairness in their day-to-day decision-making. Against this backdrop, this year's Permanent Study Group XIII focuses on policy implementation, modes of service delivery, and street-level decision-making amidst contemporary societal challenges. We are particularly interested in how implementation unfolds in turbulent governance environments characterized by uncertainty, cross-boundary collaboration, hybrid governance arrangements, and evolving state–society relationships.



Direct public service delivery is being reshaped by global trends such as polarization, democratic erosion, crisis governance, and rapid technological change. Implementation processes are often affected not only by formal policy reforms but also by political contestation, administrative reinterpretation, and public communication dynamics. At the same time, digitalization and data-driven tools are increasingly entering frontline settings, raising new questions about discretion, accountability, and professional judgement.

A further major development is the expanded role of third-party and external actors in service delivery. Governments increasingly rely on nonprofit organizations, private firms, community actors, and cross-governmental partnerships to design and deliver services. As a result of successive reform waves, many welfare, health, educational, regulatory, and social services now operate through complex mixes of governance modes, including state–third sector partnerships, co-production, relational contracting, commissioning, consultative in-house delivery, insourcing, co-management, and network-based arrangements. However, we still lack sufficient insight into how these contemporary delivery modes and governance conditions shape policy implementation processes and street-level decision-making in practice.

Our PSG invites contributions using diverse conceptual frameworks, analytical approaches, and research designs that examine on-the-ground implementation dynamics, service delivery modes, and street-level and boundary-spanning practices. We particularly welcome papers that move beyond descriptive case studies to develop conceptual, comparative, or theory-building insights that advance understanding of public policy implementation and service delivery.

Topics and research questions include, but are not limited to:

- Implementation arrangements and service delivery modes, and how different governance and contracting arrangements translate into frontline delivery practices and client interactions.
- Hybrid, collaborative, and cross-sectoral service delivery, including relational contracting, co-production, and partnership-based implementation.
- Street-level decision-making, discretion, and coping practices under conditions of turbulence, resource constraints, and conflicting demands.
- The role of street-level managers and frontline leaders in coordinating collaboration, managing tensions, and sustaining service quality.
- Boundary-spanning roles and practices in implementation and service delivery networks.

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- Tools and mechanisms for coordination, trust-building, learning, and accountability in fragmented and hybrid delivery systems.
- Frontline implications of digitalization, algorithmic governance, and AI-supported decision systems.
- Implementation under political polarization, democratic backsliding, and institutional fragility.
- Inequality, bias, and fairness in street-level decision-making and service provision.
- Comparative and multi-level perspectives linking system-level governance arrangements to frontline practices and outcomes.

We welcome empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions that deepen understanding of how contemporary societal challenges and evolving service delivery modes reshape policy implementation and street-level work.



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

- egpa-conference@iias-iisa.org