



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

EGPA2026 CONFERENCE

24-27 August Rome, Italy

CALL FOR PANELS



Public Governance for the
Common Good: Human Intelligence
Serving the Global Community

iias-iisa.org/egpa-2026-conference/



EGPA Ad Hoc Group 2 on Creativity, Innovation, and Digital Transformation in the Public Sector: A crossroads between internal HRM and external sources of knowledge

Prof. Andrea Tomo; University of Naples “Federico II”, Italy;
andrea.tomo@unina.it

Dr. Manuela Barreca; Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano, Switzerland;
manuela.barreca@usi.ch

Prof. Manuel Castriotta; University of Cagliari, Italy;
manuel.castriotta@unica.it

The Ad Hoc Group (AHG) on Creativity, innovation, and digital transformation in the public sector: a crossroads between internal HRM and external sources of knowledge invites scholars, researchers, professionals, and policymakers to submit their contributions to the EGPA Conference 2026, hosted by Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, from 24 to 27 August 2026.

In line with EGPA Conference theme, “Public Governance for the Common Good: Human Intelligence Serving the Global Community”, our group places particular emphasis to the capacity of public institutions to mobilize, develop, and sustain human intelligence in contexts marked by digitalization, complexity, and societal transformation—all-embracing skills, creativity, ethical decision, and predict and adaptive capabilities—in order to generate public value and address organizational and collective challenges.

In this perspective, HRM emerges as a strategic governance function that goes beyond regulating work to enable learning, innovation, inclusion, and well-being.

Creativity, innovation, and digital transformation as collective, relational, and knowledge-intensive processes in which, human capital in public sector is positioned as key agents of democratic value creation in service of society at the intersection between internal HRM practices and external sources of knowledge, within citizens, civil society, academia, private sector, and the new digital ecosystems.

Digital transformation has profoundly reshaped public organizations, affecting workflows, leadership styles, organizational cultures, and modes of service delivery



(Bunker, 2020; Mascio et al., 2020; Schuster et al., 2020; Välikangas & Lewin, 2020; Yang, 2020). In the public sector, these transformations are increasingly driven by societal expectations for high-quality, transparent, and real-time digital services that serve the public interest and the common good, pushing administrations to redesign governance arrangements and organizational practices (Mergel et al., 2019). Digital technologies operate simultaneously as enablers of service transformation, organizational culture change, and new forms of public value creation (Scupola & Mergel, 2022), while also accelerating pressures on public employees and institutions (Sudarmo, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified these dynamics, exposing structural vulnerabilities in public administrations and placing human resource management (HRM) at the center of organizational resilience and adaptive capacity (Van der Wal, 2020; Wang et al., 2009). The rapid diffusion of flexible and hybrid forms of work—such as smart working—has expanded autonomy and performance opportunities, while simultaneously demanding new creative, flexible, and experimental practices from civil servants (Gratton, 2021; Jeyasingham, 2016; Petani & Mengis, 2021; Todisco et al., 2023; Tomo, 2023; Houtgraaf et al., 2023). Yet, persistent bureaucratic rigidities and reform legacies continue to constrain creativity and innovation within public organizations (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2009; Lapsley, 2009; Tomo, 2018).

In response, public organizations increasingly rely on external and marketized sources of expertise to pursue innovation and flexibility, a trend that raises critical concerns regarding accountability, organizational learning, and the long-term development of human intelligence within public governance systems (Furusten & Werr, 2017; Kirkpatrick et al., 2018; Ylönen & Kuusela, 2019). Despite extensive reform rhetoric (Kickert, 2011), limited attention has been paid to how these tensions shape micro-level organizational processes, such as HR policies, leadership practices, skills development, and professional identities, precisely where creativity, ethical judgment, and public value creation are enacted in practice.

Session format. Inspired by innovative formats developed within the EGOS community, this AHG aims to create an interactive and experimental space within EGPA. Sessions will go beyond traditional panel presentations by fostering cross-paper dialogue, collective sense-making, and shared agenda setting. The objective is not only to discuss individual contributions, but also to stimulate methodological exchange, collaborative thinking, and future research collaborations. Conferences can be conceived not merely as venues for academic dissemination, but as living laboratories of knowledge creation



aimed at fostering deeper theoretical dialogue, methodological exchange, and collective sense-making (Bertella & Castriotta, 2024).

Rather than focusing solely on individual paper presentations, sessions will be designed to:

- Foster collective sense-making around emerging research questions;
- Encourage cross-paper dialogue and thematic clustering;
- Actively involve participants in shaping a shared research agenda, projects collaborations and co-authoring papers (last session).

The AHG invites contributions that focus on a wide range of issues, including, but not limiting to, the following:

- The impact of HR strategy on nurturing workforce and place embracing creativity and innovation;
- The transformation of working practices and organizational models in the public sector after the pandemic and the spread of digital technologies;
- The effects of agile forms of working on management practices, knowledge management, leadership, strategy, sustainability, and recruiting;
- The implications of new forms of working on individual well-being, work-life balance as well as on their identities;
- The effects of algorithms, artificial intelligence, and other advanced forms of technology on HRM and other organizational practices;
- The logic, practices, and values involved in replacing human-centric creativity with creativity generated by artificial intelligence;
- The role of collaboration with external partners in creative and innovative processes within the public sector;
- The power/resistance dynamics, reactions, and identity processes related to digital transformation;
- Strategies to overcoming barriers to innovation in a bureaucratic system;
- The comparison of the outcomes of internally and/or externally driven innovation in the public sector;
- The challenges of managerial competence development and the role of civil servant training, HRM policies, and organizational strategies in managing conflicting objectives and demands and coping with innovation, reforms, and macro changes such as digital transformation;
- The presentation of case studies for talent development, training, and retention in the public sector



- The comparative analysis of cross-sectoral and cross-national experiences of public management reforms, focusing on the deconstruction/reconstruction of cultural, professional and creative paradigms and identities within administrations.

Abstract format. When submitting your abstract, please make sure that you follow the following guidelines:

- **Title:** mention the title of your paper.
- **Authors:** mention the names and affiliations of all the authors. Use an asterisk (*) to indicate the corresponding author.
- **Abstract:** provide a brief and concise summary of your work. The abstract should be between 800-1000 words and state the objectives, methodology, results, and implications of your research.
- **Keywords:** Please include 3-5 keywords that represent the content of your paper.



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