

# EGPA 2023 CONFERENCE

**Zagreb, Croatia 5-8 September**

**Steering the European Union through poly-crises storms:  
The role of Public Administration**

## CALL FOR PAPERS

PSG XV

Public Administration, Technology and Innovation

This year the EGPA **PSG XIV Public Administration and Technology (PATI)** study group calls for papers on:

- a **general theme** of the study group, and
- a **special theme** of Public Administration, Sustainability and Digital Transformation (jointly with PSG I e-Government)

## A general theme: Public Administration for Sustainability

We arguably live in the age of **grand societal challenges**. Tackling such kinds of “super wicked issues” – such as climate change or sustainability transition – force governments to re-think its broader role in society as well as most of the existing policy and administrative tasks as well as organizational processes and routines. Addressing the highly complex challenges such as climate emergency require more directed and coordinated global, national and local actions. There is an urgent need for public sector to play an active role in enabling technological change both in and beyond the public sector. Yet, as the latest Covid-19 pandemic reminded us once again, technological fixes (i.e., from contact-tracing apps to vaccines) alone will not suffice to mitigate grand challenges. Next to technological advances, societies arguably need major institutional and behavioral adjustments, or more precisely: to shape the technological solution according to both societal needs and challenges and also planetary boundaries. A key feature of such shaping processes are governance institutions.

Public administrations form a pivotal yet often neglected cog in the social shaping of technological progress. To tackle complex challenges, governments need to develop new, and redevelop old, **policy and administrative capacities and capabilities**. They should form new kinds of public-private and public-people relationships to tap into these stakeholders' resources and successfully coordinate their activities with these stakeholders in tackling the societal challenges such as climate emergency.

Some of these capacities and capabilities concern **internal government processes** such as setting up new planning and coordination structures while others concern the **politics of technology and related politico-administrative relationships** as well as **external relationships** with citizens and private sector solution/technology providers. We argue that we are at the crucial point in our development where governments need to possess capacities and capabilities for “**agile stability**”, i.e. capacities and capabilities to provide and sustain a long-term and stable vision and direction for socio-economic development while allowing for constant agile search and discovery of ever better ways of doing things and delivering results<sup>1</sup>.

We are looking for papers that provide conceptual contributions and empirical insights (both case studies and comparative papers) on these broader questions and developments in public administration for sustainability as broadly understood:

- a) How should public administrations adjust/reform/evolve to meet the sustainability and climate change challenges?
- b) What are the key public sector capacities and capabilities for sustainable development / sustainability transitions / tackling climate change / staying in planetary boundaries?
- c) How to build the capacities and capabilities for resilient and sustainable governance and public administration?
- d) What lessons can we derive from earlier periods and transformative change events for building more resilient governance and public administration systems?

- e) How should governments relate to and leverage the key technologies of the future (AI, biotech, 'green tech' etc.) for building new capacities and capabilities?
- f) How are public administration systems and processes adapting to different sustainability challenges (food systems, mobility, energy resilience etc.)?
- g) How governments are (re-)organizing technology and innovation policy implementation for sustainability transitions?

## **A special theme: Public Administration, Sustainability and Digital Transformation**

Today's governments are facing the need to meet the sustainability challenges while adapting to and using the opportunities provided by digital transformation. This means that governments face a double transition to be lead and managed, i.e., transition towards more digital and sustainable futures. At the same time, the European Green Deal explicitly states that digital transformation should be at the service of Green Transition. But we (should) know by now that this kind of twin transition will not occur automatically.

Our theoretical and empirical understanding of this 'double transition' is limited. We need strong empirical analyses and new theoretical frameworks to understand how this double transition actually works. This is a huge topic since we aim to connect two large bodies of literature but we feel that building this connection will produce insights that are both societally and academically needed.

We are looking for papers that provide conceptual contributions and empirical insights (both case studies and comparative papers) on these broader questions:

- a) How are governments taking advantage of and steering the digital transformation processes to serve the needs of sustainability challenges?
- b) What the key public sector capacities, capabilities and skills for this task? How to build and develop them?
- c) What are the key digital solutions (and processes) that the PA systems are using or should use for tackling sustainability challenges on local, regional, national or trans-national level?

Papers on other topics in the broad area of public administration, sustainability and digital transformation are also welcome.

This special theme is jointly organized with the **EGPA PSG I on e-Government**.

- (1) See Kattel, R., Drechsler, W., & Karo, E. (2022). Innovation bureaucracies: How agile stability creates the entrepreneurial state. Yale University Press.

## Practicalities

### *Important dates:*

- ✓ Deadline for submission of abstracts: May 17, 2023
- ✓ Deadline for notification to the authors: May 31, 2023
- ✓ Deadline for online submission of full papers: August 17, 2023
- ✓ EGPA PhD Symposium 5-6 September 2023
- ✓ EGPA 2023 Conference: 6-8 September 2023

EGPA 2023 Conference Website: <https://www.egpa-conference2023.org/>

EGPA 2023 Conference Management System: <https://www.conftool.org/egpa-conference2023>

For any questions regarding EGPA 2023, please contact us at: [f.maron@iias-iisa.org](mailto:f.maron@iias-iisa.org)

or [info@egpa-conference2023.org](mailto:info@egpa-conference2023.org)

## Co-chairs of Permanent Study Group XV

### **Rainer Kattel**

Institute of Innovation and Public Purpose  
University College London, UK  
E-mail : [r.kattel@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:r.kattel@ucl.ac.uk)

### **Erkki Karo**

Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance  
Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia  
E-mail : [erkki.karo@taltech.ee](mailto:erkki.karo@taltech.ee)

### **Veiko Lember**

Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance  
Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia  
Public Governance Institute KU Leuven, Belgium  
E-mail : [veiko.lember@taltech.ee](mailto:veiko.lember@taltech.ee)