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EUPAN Portuguese Presidency Report January - June 2021

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EUPAN's motto

*Working together for high quality public administrations
and public services in Europe*

Introduction

The Portuguese Presidency of the EU was the third one to be held under the current pandemic crisis, which main impact on EUPAN's functioning was on the meetings format. The travel restrictions between Member States (MS) following the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases determined the shift from face-to-face meetings to virtual ones, as observed with the previous presidencies of Croatia and Germany.

Five meetings were initially scheduled, namely, EUPAN 5 Working Level Secretariat (19 March); CAF Working Group (21 April); EUPAN Working Level (22 April); EUPAN 5 Directors-General Secretariat (14 May and rescheduled for 18 May), and EUPAN Directors-General meeting (17 June).



The Portuguese Presidency in partnership with the European Commission also decided to organise an informal meeting of European Union Public Administration Ministers, considering as none had been held since 2014, the date of the last ministerial meeting that took place in Rome under the Italian Presidency.

This informal meeting of Ministers, with a hybrid format, face-to-face and virtual, was held on 22 June.

With the holding of the EUPAN Working Level (WL) meeting, in videoconference format, the Portuguese Presidency wished, as far as possible, to resume normal operation of the network.

Of the five meetings scheduled, the EUPAN 5 DG Secretariat meeting was the only one that did not take place.

Instead of a dedicated report on the DG meeting 17 June, the Presidency opted to incorporate the issues dealt with at this meeting in the final Presidency report. This report is structured into three parts: the first one identifies the deliverables produced; the second part is thematic, focusing on the topics discussed during the Presidency and at the directors-general meeting; and the third part contains the conclusions of the informal meeting of EU Ministers responsible for Public Administration, on 22 June. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Portuguese Presidency's activity between 1 January and 30 June 2021 and its main results and conclusions.

Within the framework of the EUPAN Strategy Paper (SP) July 2019 - June 2022 and in accordance with the Rolling Programme, the Presidency has selected three themes to be addressed, each one in the respective strategic domain of the SP.

Under the first domain – *Digitalization and innovation in European public administrations* – it has been brought up the issue of the accelerators of digital

transformation in public administration. As regards the second domain – *Ethics and organizational culture in public administration* - the focus was on leadership during the pandemic crisis and in the third domain – *Future-oriented strategic, efficient, and effective human resources management (HRM) in public administration* – the choice fell on public employees' motivation and the impact of COVID-19 on it.

The impact of the pandemic crisis was so relevant also in public administrations that it became an unavoidable topic in the work to be performed by the Portuguese Presidency, which included it in the leadership and motivation analysis.

The Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies agreed to develop a study under the Common Assessment Framework scope. The work carried out this semester aims to know CAF implementation state of play in Member States and its impact on public sector capacity building.

To promote and support the exchange of information and experiences within the network, particularly in this remote working environment, the *EUPAN eNews* initiative was launched by the Presidency. Member States were invited to share national latest news and public employment statistical data.

The participation rate in this initiative was high, demonstrating the good reception by network members, which leads us to believe that it will be continued by the forthcoming EUPAN Presidencies.

PART 1 | Portuguese Presidency Deliverables

1.1 - Handbook update

The Portuguese Presidency started its activity by updating the EUPAN Handbook as well as the network's members at the working group and DG levels on the EUPAN website. The last Handbook update was carried out under the Slovak Presidency in the second half of 2016, following the adoption of the "Recommendations for the future of EUPAN". The restructuring of the working groups and the adoption of new strategic documents produced significant changes in the network functioning, which justified a comprehensive review of the Handbook.

In order to preserve the network's memory, all changes within the network since its inception should be recorded. Accordingly, decisions taken over the last 5 years by Directors-General were included in the Handbook and outdated information removed. Among the updates, we highlight the extension of the observer status at the network to Serbia and Montenegro; the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between EUPAN and EGPA to ensure scientific support from the academic community; the possibility to invite organisations or institutions dealing with public administration matters to the network's meetings based on each Presidency decision during the Finnish Presidency; the creation of the EUPAN Summer School by the German Presidency, and more recently, the integration of the eNews as a further EUPAN knowledge sharing tool.

The updated information was made available on the EUPAN webpage in February https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/EUPAN_Handbook_22_fev_2021.pdf

1.2 - EUPAN eNews

To enhance knowledge and experiences sharing between EUPAN administrations, which is one of the network's strengths, the Portuguese Presidency launched the "EUPAN eNews" initiative. In the first half of 2021, has set itself the objective of launching three issues, one of them being statistical. The first and third issues consisted of projects, measures, practices, policies implemented recently or to be implemented in the short term by Member States, the European Commission, observer countries and EIPA.



The three issues of the EUPAN e-News were made available on the EUPAN webpage in March, May and June 2021.

https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EUPAN_enews_01.pdf

https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EUPAN_enews_02.pdf

https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EUPAN_enews_03.pdf

1.3 - Portuguese Central Public Administration Overview publication

The Presidency prepared an online publication entitled *Portuguese Central Public Administration Overview*, so that EUPAN members could have a better understanding of this Member State Administration. It is part of its content information on the Central State Administrative Organisation; Public Administrative Structure; Public Employment Scheme; Human Resources Management; Social Protection and Senior Civil Service.

https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PCPA_OVERVIEW_2021.pdf

1.4 - Employee Surveys Brief

This document presents in a summarised way the status of implementation of employee motivation, satisfaction and commitment surveys at public sector level in EUPAN MS.

The empirical research, based on the results of the 2020 EUPAN survey on employee's motivation in Central/Federal Public Administrations, was complemented by desk research of relevant literature, and EUPAN countries' websites.

https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Employee_surveys_-Brief_2021.pdf

1.5 – Studies

In addition to the above-mentioned deliverables, three studies were carried out. One on public sector leadership during COVID-19 crisis, another on public employee's motivation, an exploratory approach, and the third study on CAF challenges to promote public sector capacity.

https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Paper_Leadership_VF.pdf

https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Study_CAF_Challenges_Promote_PS_Capacity_2021.pdf

PART 2 | Topics discussed during the Portuguese Presidency and at DG meeting

2.1 - Innovation and Digitalization of the European Public Administration

Within the scope of the I Strategic domain, the Portuguese Presidency organized a workshop on *Accelerators of Digital Transformation in Public Administration*, coordinated by the Agency's LabX (Experimentation Lab for the Public Administration), with the aim of encouraging the EUPAN leaders to think about the future of Public Administration in what regards to digital transformation and disruptive innovation.



For this purpose, it was sent a previous questionnaire, conducted break-out sessions in the workshop, and delivered a report that, based on this collaborative work, shows the insightful views of the EUPAN concerning the opportunities and challenges of emerging technologies, as well as what actions should be taken to accelerate the digital transformation

of the EU governments to deliver a more innovative and efficient public service.

It intends to foster the political momentum around the digital transformation of the EU public administrations, which was consensually praised by the participants in the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers of Public Administration, held on 22 June.

Questionnaire - Emergent technologies

EUPAN DGs, prior to the DG meeting, replied to a questionnaire that wanted to know the perspective of the participants and their position towards the application of emerging technologies in the public administration. The questionnaire was divided into ten technologies – Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Virtual and Augmented Reality – Big Data & Analytics, 5G, Drones and Autonomous Vehicles, IOT, Robotics, Biometrics and Wearables & Implantables - and for each one a card was presented with a description of the technology, some of its applications in the public sector and risks.



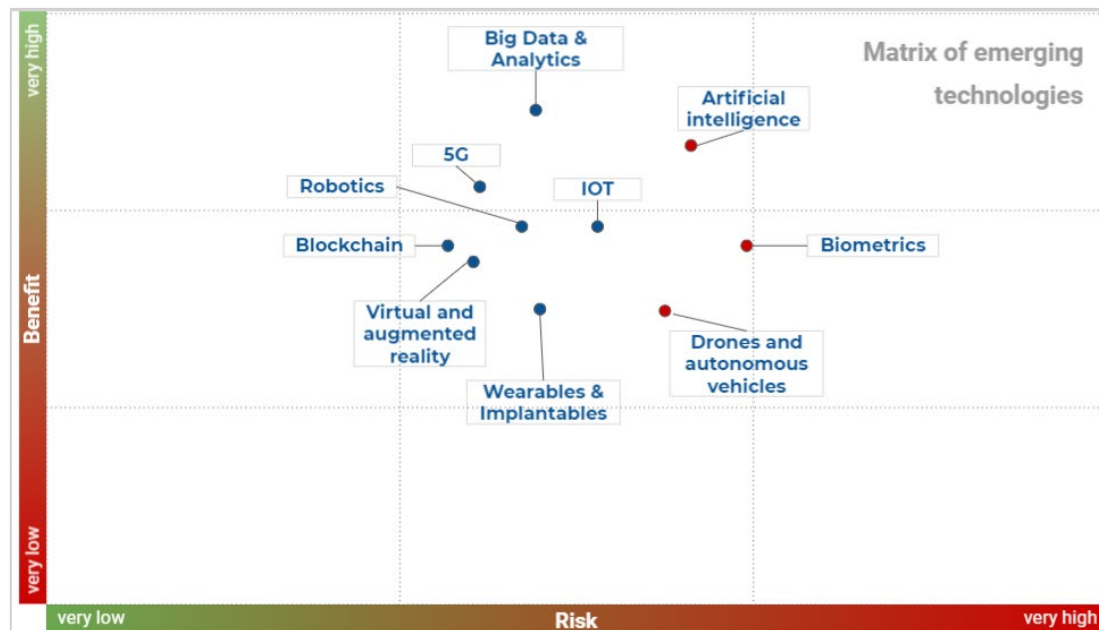


Figure 1. Risk-benefit matrix.

As preliminary results, it can be pointed out that all participants revealed that they knew the ten technologies.

Through the classification of risk and benefit of each technology, it was possible to verify that respondents anticipate more benefits than risks associated with their use. On the vertical axis of the matrix above, it is possible to see a positioning closer to the high benefit, but on the horizontal axis the dispersion is greater, not highlighting a specific trend (Figure 1).

It is also possible to stand out the three technologies that were classified with high risk, however – Biometrics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Drones & Autonomous Vehicles - but it is noteworthy that their benefit was also considered to be high, mainly in what regards to AI. This led AMA to explore and deepen these three technologies in the workshop.

Faced with the question of the current and expected 2030 adoption rate, there is the below read belief that the adoption rate will increase (Figure 2).



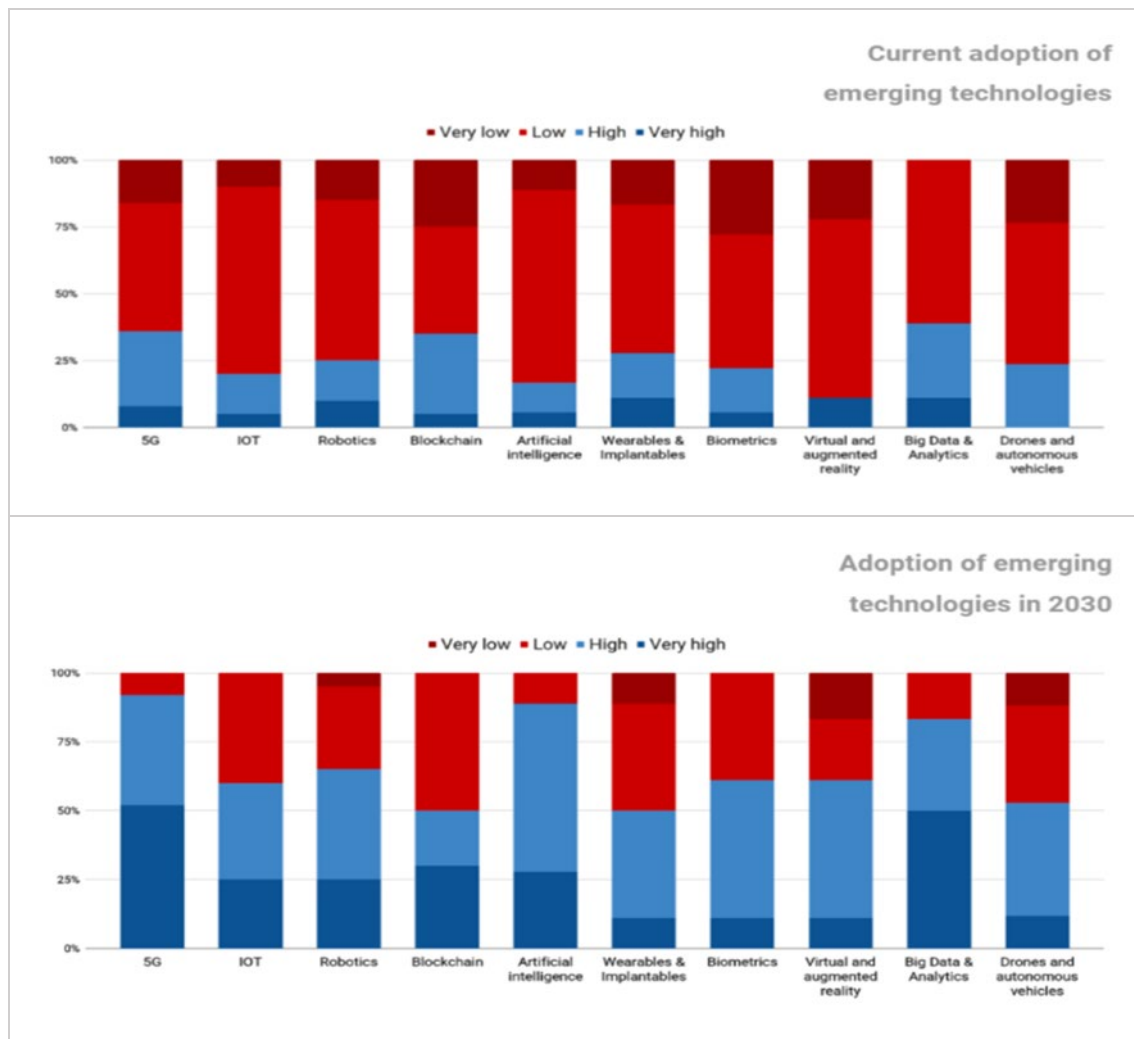
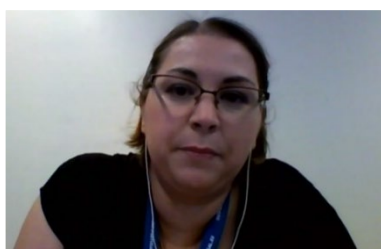


Figure 2. - Current adoption vs Adoption in 2030

In the view of EUPAN DGs, there is a low rate of adoption of almost all technologies, all of which are below 50%. On the other hand, in 2030 the prospect of adoption of all technologies is above 50%.



5G and artificial intelligence stand out, with an expected adoption rate of over 90%. It is also noteworthy that the lowest adoption rate is expected for blockchain, wearables and implantables, and drones and autonomous vehicles.

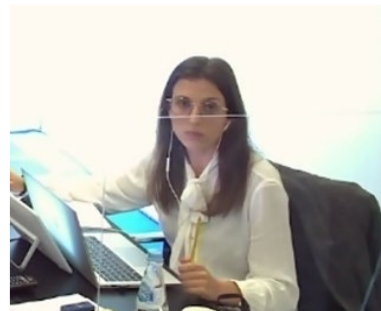
Workshop “Accelerators of Digital Transformation of Public Administration”

Collaborative break-out sessions

The collaborative break-out sessions were held online. As previously mentioned, they focused on the three technologies considered as high risk in the questionnaire –

Biometrics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Drones & Autonomous Vehicles – to better understand the EUPAN views regarding their usage and possible actions to lower their risk and take the most benefit out of them, even if in the medium or long term.

Faced with these technologies, the group was divided into three breakout rooms and each room addressed a technology. In the first part, the discussion explored the consequences that these technologies could have for the public administration and its services. Participants were also asked to rate the consequences as positive or negative.



Please see the preliminary results below:

Highlighted Positive Consequences		
Artificial Intelligence	Biometrics	Drones and Autonomous vehicles
Replacement of heavy, complicated tasks by machine	Streamline identification means and processes (Civil Servants and Users)	Need to requalify public administration employees (part of them)
Provide faster services and with lower costs	Redesign of processes	Less traffic on our streets, more ecological transport
Better quality of decisions and better access to e-services	Easier to use public services, both face-to-face and online	Regulation (new rules for drones, transport, etc.)

Table A - Highlighted Positive Consequences

Highlighted Negative Consequences		
Artificial Intelligence	Biometrics	Drones and Autonomous vehicles
Threats of biased criteria	Security threats, including strict access rules/restrictions	Unemployment
Danger of ethical breaches	Privacy concerns, data protection, and ethical challenges	Protection of data

Table B - Highlighted Negative Consequence

After this first moment of discussion, a second exercise was launched that sought to find actions that the public administration can take until 2030 to implement the technologies.

Artificial intelligence - actions
Develop and implement ethical guidelines/framework for the use of AI
Analyse the right activities to be supported by AI
Fast internet connections in the most remote rural areas
Improving communication channels with the citizens (social media, phone, etc.) and management of databases to provide information and decisions faster and with more quality.
Collect good practices and assess risks

Table C.1 - Artificial intelligence – actions

Biometrics - actions
Full SWOT analysis
Adapt legislation in the light of SWOT
Replace passwords with biometrics identification
Research to identify developments as well as understanding the citizen's expectations
Compare to the private sector, where biometrics becomes kind of natural

Table C.2 - Biometrics – actions

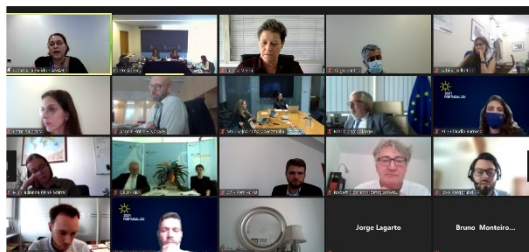
Drones and autonomous vehicles - actions
Technical solutions that comply with our high safety standards and are reliable
Foster public-private partnerships for concrete use cases
Define, under the leadership of the State, the rules for sharing data
Training of public servants and improving the tools
Support innovation and experimentation - Following up and keeping improving technologies, tools, and skills
Develop digital infrastructures and road network connectivity
Encouraging the acceptability of this technology

Table C.3 - Drones and autonomous vehicles – actions

Conclusions

One of the main results of the session is the focus on the need for adaptation and redesign of public administration, which was considered by the majority to be a positive aspect. Providing a better service and being more efficient was also highlighted by the groups, who see technology as the path to achieve this change.

The biggest concerns revealed by the participants were regulation and legislation to ensure a rigorous and beneficial use of these transformative opportunities. It was also established as a prior action, to assess where the technologies can act and what their scope will be. Another concern was how this type of technology is communicated to citizens who use the services, and how to increase their trust in public services.



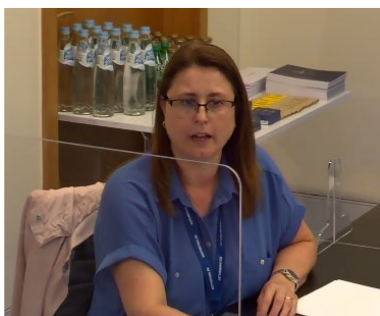
There is an interest in innovating and elevating how public services are provided, with the employees' component often mentioned mainly because of the need to adapt their skills to the fast-evolving society, with citizens increasingly demanding more efficient and innovative public administrations.

As a final point, not only civil servants need to be trained to keep up with new technologies and forms of public service, but also a mindset or an organizational change might be needed to address the rapid transformation of society, so that public institutions are more agile, collaborative, and transparent.

EUPAN representatives consider there is a need to step up collaboration among EU Member States and within each one to perfectly align change of the three components - People, Organization and Technology - to meet the Digital Decade vision while assuring compliance with the Berlin and Lisbon Declarations principles.

2.2 - Leadership during the pandemic crisis

Public sector leadership has grown in complexity as a result of developments in society, the political environment and technology. Citizens are more aware, demanding and increasingly eager to participate and cooperate in governance. The political environment is increasingly characterised by rapidly evolving agendas addressing emergent and more interconnected challenges. Technology it is seen as a support, facilitating and shaping the way of working, but it is also seen as a challenge, and more recently even as a threat (it may be the case of artificial intelligence).



The recognition of the importance of leaders increases in contexts of greater demand and complexity, such as those of reform and modernisation of public administration, or of crisis, such as the one we are currently experiencing due to the pandemic crisis.

The Portuguese Presidency conducted a research on the leadership during the pandemic crisis, where employees and managers' perceptions were identified, and limited in time to the end of the pandemic first wave.

The empirical research, based on the results of the EUPAN 2020 Motivation and Leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic surveys, was complemented by desk research, covering relevant literature and EUPAN countries' websites. Some EUPAN members also contributed by providing the results and findings of national surveys and studies carried out on the subject matter in question, in their public administrations.

Research under this topic was guided by 4 questions:

- What main challenges ethical leaders face during the COVID-19 crisis?
- What are employees' perceptions of their managers' performance during the pandemic?
- How did the crisis influence trust between managers and employees?
- What leadership style is best suited to deal with the crisis context?

Empirical data reveals that the performance of managers during the pandemic period was considered positive and adequate to face these challenges.

Looking in more detail, an analysis of managers' performance can be carried out on three levels: from the perspective of ethics; of work coordination and resource management and from the perspective of building or sustaining trust in the work environment.

Regarding ethics, empirical results show that fair treatment and transparent human resources management decisions was achieved by managers in this pandemic period. Respect and sensitivity for each employee's unique situation and needs, such as the observation of employee rest times and carrying out regular and individual communication practices were behaviours that were also observed. Finally, the display of empathy translated into expressing concern for each employee's physical and psychological well-being was also registered.



Considering work coordination, the opinion that employees had autonomy to carry out their duties, with the necessary amount of guidance, and without being subject to unnecessary pressure, was consensual. In addition, managers proved to be able to quickly solve problems that arose and were reported by employees.

Ensuring the necessary ICT equipment to support the considerable number of employees being placed in telework has been more challenging, especially for Administrations with a low rate of teleworking registered before the pandemic. In fact, there was the need for employees to resort to private technology so that teleworking could be implemented thus helping organisations to comply with the mandatory nature of this type of work provision during this period.

The massive use of teleworking has contributed to the creation of foundations capable of giving rise to a more modernised public sector in its work organisation models, which requires a change in the organisational culture still prevailing in most European countries.

With regard to the last perspective, building and maintaining trust in a remote work environment is more difficult than in a face-to-face one as interactions, common experiences and complicity between managers and employees are affected.

The ability to show support, provide guidance and promote employee motivation through distance communication has been put to the test in this crisis context. The findings of different national studies and empirical data show however, that in general, managers' behaviour in this period was considered adequate to foster trust.

The findings of different studies and reports show a very positive assessment on how public organisations and their managers at the central/federal government administration level dealt with the pandemic crisis and all its constraints. Overall, managers have demonstrated agility, resilience and commitment in dealing with this critical situation.

This positive assessment can be considered as surprising or unexpected, giving the exceptionally demanding and dramatic crisis context. However, in situations of uncertainty and, in this case, widespread fear, leadership has taken on added importance as it required swift and firm decision and action. Similar to what occurred at the political level, where people turned to governments for measures and protection seems to have been the case at the administrative level, with employees expecting action from managers.

Furthermore, this assessment may also be justified by the recognition of a genuine commitment and sense of mission to the respective organisations taken by managers, and employees, given the urgency of the situation and the need, on the one hand, to protect people's health and, on the other hand, to keep public services operational.



As points for improvement, communication and empathy are often mentioned. With regard to the former, the problem does not seem to lie in the frequency of communication but rather in its content, purpose and means used to communicate with the

employees. Considering empathy, there seems to be a need for greater awareness and concern on the part of managers about the employees' physical and emotional wellbeing, and even "happiness" in line with current human-centric business and public management trends.

Another finding from this crisis is the urgent need for leaders to strengthen or acquire e-leadership skills. Digitalisation and the new ways of working, that were reinforced during this period, are a reality and forecasts are that teleworking or smart work will take off. We are not going back.

An integrated leadership style appears to be the best-suited style to better tackle crisis situations and today's public administrations increasing complexity. As the word itself suggests this leadership style integrates many others. Like the transformational style to manage human resources; transactional style to guide the organisation towards the fulfilment of objectives and the achievement of results; shared style to cope with a networking environment, as managers are encouraged to share leadership among stakeholders according to context and circumstances; and ethical leadership to promote trustworthiness and a positive work environment.

Finally, from this crisis, we still learned that we are more resilient than we thought we were, and that we need each other to successfully face adversities that stand in our way.

2.3 - Public employees' motivation

Recognising the importance of motivation for both organisations and employees, the Portuguese Presidency has also decided to work on this topic. Motivated employees show lower levels of absenteeism and turnover, are more productive, innovative, and committed - contributing to the long-term organisational success -, less stressed and conflictual, have a greater enjoyment of work and responsiveness to customers as well as are physically and mentally healthier.

To gain an understanding of public employees' motivational factors is therefore of paramount importance for organisations, when it comes to recruiting young talent, keeping them, but also to understand the decision-making towards transiting from work to retirement. Labour market participation in general and staying in the labour market until or beyond reaching eligibility for pension require some degree of individual motivation.

The motivation of older employees becomes more important in a context of a shrinking working population due to demographic changes and financial constraints that have been aggravated by the pandemic crisis that actively hampers development opportunities.

The fact that the research on the motivation of EU central/federal government employees is scarce was a challenge for the Presidency, which tried to make a first approach to it.

In the analysis of this topic the EUPAN 2020 surveys results were taken into consideration. Through the battery of questions contained therein, an attempt was made to find answers to the following questions guiding the research on motivation:

- What factors motivate public administration employees?
- What impacts do age, gender, and hierarchical position have on motivation?
- What effects do perceptions of digitalisation and AI have on motivation?
- What is the pandemic's effect on motivation?

Despite the subjectivity of motivational factors and their varying impact on each individual, the EUPAN survey on motivation concluded that public employees tend to be more motivated by, in ascending order, learning opportunities, skills development, public service orientation, flexitime, relationship with manager, meaningful work, line manager empowerment, relationship with colleagues, job security, and work-life balance. These are the Top 10 motivational factors, irrespective of their nature.

Regarding extrinsic staff motivational factors, the Top 10 are, in ascending order: the variety of tasks, social accountability, health and safety policy, training opportunities, teleworking, the hierarchy welcoming worker opinions, flexitime, line manager empowerment, job security, and work-life balance. Interestingly, pay does not integrate the Top 10.

As for the intrinsic staff motivational factors, in ascending order, creativity, innovation, responsibility, lifelong learning, learning opportunities, skills

development, public service mission, relationship with the manager, meaningful work, and relationship with colleagues constitute the Top 10 motivational factors most valued by public employees.

As regards the impact of age, gender, and hierarchical position on motivation, the research findings points to younger employees being less prone to agree that reconciling remote work with face-to-face work, responsibility, job autonomy, creativity, and innovation are relevant motivational factors.

The main reasons for older workers to remain active at work appear to be work itself, the satisfaction in using their skills, the sense of achievement from the tasks performed, and the opportunity to be creative.

Factors such as work-related values (social focus on the benefit of others); attitudes towards work, employer and career; skills and knowledge; social and family status; health; family care needs; valuing leisure activities and financial situation are also pointed out as main influencers of the decision to continue working.

The reason for this may be employees' perception of time left to work. With increasing age, goals related to deriving emotional meaning from life are prioritized, as well as activities that allow the transfer of knowledge acquired throughout professional life.

EUPAN 2020 motivation survey results tend to confirm this prevalence of intrinsic factors in the motivation of employees aged over 55. Results show a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic factors as main motivators at work with a slight predominance of



intrinsic ones, namely, creativity, learning opportunities, responsibility, meaningful work, good relationship with line manager and public service motivation.

Of the extrinsic factors chosen, pay or rewards are not included in the Top 10, which is in line with what was stated above. Priority was given to factors related to the organisational climate (social accountability and

employee opinions and contributions being welcomed), working conditions (work-life balance) and work structure (job autonomy).

Looking at the same cohort through a gender lens, women over 55 years old prioritise responsibility above all else. Older women and men only share creativity, meaningful work and their opinions being welcomed as main top 10 motivators. Flexitime, surprisingly, seems to be a motivational factor valued just by men.

In the case of gender without crossing the age variable, women turned out to be more likely than men to agree that PA employees are significantly motivated by, in ascending order: health and safety policy at work; fair performance appraisal; trust in the employee-manager relationship; a good relationship with line managers: and work-life balance.

No evidence of association between hierarchical standing and agreement with the statements regarding motivational factors was found.

The survey also wanted to gauge the impact of digitalisation and artificial intelligence on motivation. And the perception is that younger employees turned out to agree more than their older counterparts that digitalisation will have a positive impact on motivation via, in ascending order: surveillance reduction; creating a fun organisational culture; less teleworker isolation; less stress; trust increase; easier

work feedback; reduction of administrative burdens; work efficiency; and work simplification. A similar result happens regarding AI.

From an intersectional viewpoint, women over 45 years old are the intersectional category that most agrees with this statement. This position contrasts with that of men up to 45 years old. However, there were few differences in terms of (hierarchical) position.

As far as the impact of COVID-19 crisis on motivation is concerned, the survey has allowed some conclusions to be drawn.

Considering the relationship between the pandemic, mental health, and motivation



results from the leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic survey shows considerable portions of the sample agree with anxiety & fear, or stress statements. Still, these are not particularly prominent in the context of all statements considered.

In terms of work organisation, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a massive shift towards teleworking in public administrations that during the lockdown periods became the compulsory modality of

work in most Member States, whenever the employees' functions were compatible with it. This shift was one of the aspects considered in the research. However, as a motivational factor, teleworking does not make it into the Top 10. Nevertheless, the statement that it does significantly motivate employees has 73% aggregate agreement (38% strongly agree). Further analysis found that women are more prone to agree, what can be explained by the greater opportunity they have to reconcile professional and family life.

There is no difference regarding age, but younger employees do tend, more than their older peers, to agree that digitalisation contributes to motivation via less teleworker isolation.

Summing up the evolution of motivation during COVID-19, the outlook is thus primarily stable, although hinting at a declining trend. Multivariate analysis shows that the PA employees whose motivation thrived under COVID-19 are, cumulatively, people who:

- found a new way of doing things and do not consider going back to the old normal;
- are part of resilient organisations capable of leaving no one behind, even when IT fails;
- can bracket their ambition and not let themselves be affected by an apparent drought of training and learning opportunities;
- have good emotional self-regulation in dealing with unavoidable setbacks;
- have survival skills and improvise when stranded, as if on a desert island, but miss their colleagues; and, finally,
- are optimistic regarding the State's and their organisations' ability to cope with an existential threat.

2.4 - CAF activities under the Portuguese Presidency

Under the Portuguese Presidency the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) correspondents' network has developed two main activities, namely, the development of a study on “CAF Challenges to Promote Public Sector Capacity” and the initiative to start a new revision of the CAF Education.

The aim of the study is to evaluate the CAF scope, CAF outputs and main outcomes such as the quality of public management or the governance of public sector organisations. Its scope covers EU Member States and candidate countries of South-Eastern Europe and the methodology used combines the application of two online surveys sent to the CAF National Correspondents (NC) with Interviews to 10 CAF experts.

It should also be mentioned that during the CAF national correspondents meeting, held in 21 April 2021, the final result of the project on the correspondence between CAF 2020 criteria and OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability principles, was approved, and the project “Strengthening the resilience of public administration after the COVID-19 crisis with CAF” was presented.

Study on the CAF Challenges to Promote Public Sector Capacity

The aim of this study, coordinated by the Directorate-General for Administration and Public Employment during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU, is to evaluate the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) based on the common European principles and values to improve the quality of public management and governance of the public sector organizations. The study is structured into three parts.

The first part of the study aims to analyse the scope of CAF in EU Member States and South-Eastern Europe candidate countries. For that purpose, some templates were prepared to be filled out by CAF National Correspondents. Twenty Member States have completed the templates, that cover the following information:

- *CAF at the State level:* To understand which Ministries and Departments are responsible for promoting, coordinating, and implementing CAF at the different levels of the State (central, regional, and local government).
- *CAF network:* To identify which member states belong to the CAF network and which countries do not; which MS have CAF National Correspondent; which MS have a CAF Resource Centre or designated office working on CAF; which CAF versions were adopted; the number of CAF users; and the number of CAF external feedback actors.
- *CAF per sector:* To identify which sectors are covered by the CAF network. These sectors gave us an idea of the number of CAF users and the degree of implementation of CAF in the following services: social services, police & security, schools, higher education & research, customs, taxes & finances, the healthcare system, culture & heritage, economy, agriculture, fisheries and trade, criminal justice & law, environment, general policy, audit, coordination, home affairs, transport, infrastructure & public works, fire services & civil protection services, post & communication, urban & territorial policies (housing, planning, etc.) foreign affairs, energy, local municipality.

- *CAF processes*: To identify the main processes organized by the Member States to promote the CAF. The following activities were covered: CAF 2020 brochure translated into the country language, websites established at national level dedicated to CAF, CAF promotion in social media networks; dissemination of CAF development, communication strategy (news at the national level), national CAF events per year, the national number of participants in events dedicated to CAF, national number of trainers, national number of agents for CAF promotion and training, and processes of external feedback.
- *CAF resources*: To identify the human and financial resources allocated to CAF: human resources allocated to the centre of resources; human resources allocated to CAF at the regional level; financial resources allocated to CAF at the national level; EU funds allocated to CAF by year; costs for consultancy services; the number of CAF external feedback actors; the number of entities as effective CAF users; promotion of CAF training costs for training.

The second part of the study focuses on the Common Assessment Framework implementation process. The Portuguese team prepared an online questionnaire to be filled in by CAF National Correspondents to know their opinion about the CAF content, CAF process, and their experiences in implementing CAF in their home countries: how the CAF process is conducted, how the information is collected, and how it is used in each country. The questionnaire was sent



out on 14 April and was completed by 18 Member States. The 2021 results were compared with the 2011 ones to know which are the main trends and prospects in CAF evolution.

The third part of the study examines the main results of CAF in the public sector quality and the main challenges to promoting the public sector capacity to determine what changes are needed to improve the Public Administration's effectiveness, its efficiency, and its overall ability to fulfil its mission and appropriately serve its citizens. The Portuguese team held ten interviews with CAF experts between 25 May and 4 June, to obtain information for this part of the study. The critical question was how to meet the needs of the citizens, one of the primary CAF outcomes on the quality of the public sector.

As an overall conclusion within the EU, the CAF model implementation has a remarkable diversity in its approach; the analysis shows that significant similarities and convergences have become clear from a cross-country perspective.

In sum, the challenge for government leaders, managers and employees is to find room to create a culture in which all employees think about whether there are better, more efficient, and effective ways to serve the citizens. One of the goals associated with the implementation of CAF is to make it a regular part of how the organisations perform public services and create a management model based on the cycle of assessment, planning and improvement.

The results of this study suggest that political will and the CAF network connectivity may help to promote a perceived need for a strategic policy. Looking at the experiences of CAF, organizational capacity for political engagement can create very powerful policy capacity on the CAF network.

CAF Education revision

The last revision of CAF Education model was carried out in 2013 and therefore the Presidency has taken the initiative to start a new revision of the CAF Education 2013 towards CAF Education 2020. For this decision it was considered the new version of the general model (CAF 2020) that was already published as well as the many changes that school organizations have to face, particularly in terms of innovation and digitalization, which makes it necessary to adapt the CAF Edu model to the new challenges.

A group of CAF network members has been set up on a voluntary basis, composed of Portugal, which will coordinate, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Slovakia and Spain. Administrative support will be provided by EIPA.

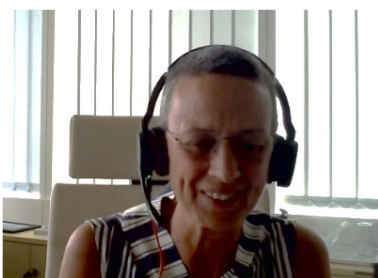
On 14 June, a kick-off meeting was held where a timetable and working methodology were agreed upon. Each MS invites national experts in education, and with knowledge on CAF, to join this working group.

The main goal is to present the new CAF Education 2020 version for approval at the CAF network meeting during the Slovenian presidency.

2.5 - European Commission's new Human Resources Management Strategy

The definition of a new human resources (HR) strategy is part of the modernisation objective of the European Commission, set by the new executive.

An extensive consultation process has underpinned this new strategy, giving all staff and stakeholders the opportunity to put forward their views and enrich the current development. This process, which began in June 2020 and continued throughout the summer, involved workshops, surveys and interviews.



The current disruptive effect of COVID-19 provides also a unique opportunity to re-set the organisation and the HR function.

The overall aim of this HR strategy is to set out the way to attract, retain and develop staff in line with the organisation's objectives, and how the organisation intends to create the right conditions for staff to grow, thrive and deliver.

The following four key areas of this new strategy were highlighted:

Attractive workplace for all

The Commission strives to create an engaging work environment which enables staff to work effectively and collaboratively while reconciling their personal and professional life in a healthy, sustainable and balanced manner.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that it is possible for organisations to adapt to different ways of working, without loss of productivity. This translates into more staff working remotely in a more flexible and family-friendly way where the right to disconnect shall be ensured.

Promoting an inclusive and respectful workplace requires a closer and more regular monitoring of the progress made by Directorates General (DG) towards gender equality, including at each management level, as well as revise the selection of future staff to ensure a greater diversity of candidates corresponding to the DG needs.

Actions will be put in place for the upstream identification of female talents for senior management functions. These identified talents will be offered support through a tailored development programme to help them prepare for the challenges of higher responsibility.

The notion of diversity should now be extended to include other underrepresented groups. This work will be coordinated by the newly created Diversity and Inclusion Office.

The harmonisation and rationalisation of HR policies in executive and decentralised agencies and joint undertakings shall be promoted to ensure the attractiveness of all places of employment.

The promotion of a green working environment will contribute to the objective of becoming climate neutral by 2030. Buildings and mobility which includes professional mobility and commuting are the largest contributors to CO2 emissions. Ensuring a more efficient use of office space and the achievement of the Green Deal's objectives relating to real state policy, alongside with an increased number of staff working remotely, paperless workflows, and a significant reduction in physical meetings, conferences and business travel will reduce the Commissions' environmental impact.



Fast and agile selection and recruitment

The evolving needs of the institution should be taken into account when recruiting, alongside with a better knowledge of the profiles and skills available, as well as expected turnover.

A simpler and more efficient selection and recruitment of talents from all Member States and from a broad range of professional, social and economic backgrounds needs to be ensured.

Improvement and acceleration of recruitment and selection processes require further professionalization of the actors involved and resorting to modern tools. The use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence for screening CVs, shall contribute to speed up and increase the efficiency of recruitment processes.

To attract, recruit and develop junior talents, the Commission shall adopt a decision confirming the “Junior professionals programme” as part of the recruitment toolbox to attract a diverse population of talented young ADs from all Member States.

Commission should be able to recruit staff with definite contracts in a more flexible manner in order to fill temporary positions requiring specific competencies.

A new decision on temporary agents (TAs) would be a vehicle for change their selection, grading and contract duration which would foster both the efficiency and flexibility of the staff intake process and the attractiveness of the Commission as an employer, especially for specialised profiles.

The revision of selection proceedings and use of Contract Agents shall ensure the matching of profiles and skills with DGs needs.

To retain highly qualified talent current staff should be given the opportunity to pass internal competitions to be appointed as officials or to progress in their career.

The value of the European civil service lies in its cultural and linguistic diversity which can only be ensured if appropriate balance is secured regarding officials' nationality.



The Commission report COM/2018/377 concluded a significant imbalance between nationalities among officials occupying non-managerial AD functions in grades AD5-AD12. Furthermore, the report found that 10 nationalities of the pre-2004 Member States [Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland and Sweden] were underrepresented among the junior grade administrators in the Commission (AD5- AD8). Since the publication of the report, the number of under-represented nationalities has grown to 12 (i.e. nationals from the Czech Republic and Cyprus).

The Commission intends to act along the following lines to address this issue:

- Addressing geographical imbalances in entry level grades in the AD function group with targeted measures towards candidates from under-represented Member States to promote communication and employment at the Commission for identified groups of potential candidates.
- Deepen cooperation with under-represented Member States on exchanges and mobility to and from the EU institutions, as well as taking part in information sessions with those Member States.
- The monitoring of geographical balance in particular will be pursued with the revision of the methodology to determine the reference values by Member State, notably following the entry into force on 1 February 2020 of the Withdrawal Agreement concluded between the EU and the United-Kingdom.

Flexible and rewarding career

The Commission should continue to be perceived as an employer offering fulfilling jobs at the service of European citizens, enriching development opportunities and attractive work conditions, including the compensation and benefits package.



The pilot headhunting service will help managers to proactively search for candidates for their vacancies, thereby helping the Commission better explore its talent pool and facilitate staff mobility.

The adoption of a new mobility plan for Commission staff is also envisaged.

A proactive professional career guidance service is essential to support staff in managing their careers. The aim is to support staff to explore their motivation, skills and competencies, clarify their goals, areas for development, interest in the workplace and make well-informed career decisions, while delivering on the Commission priorities.

Performance management will be updated by modernising the annual staff appraisal exercise with the aim of simplifying the reporting format as well as reinforcing the importance of operational objectives set in advance as a basis for appraisal, allowing for a more meaningful exercise.

Learning packages will be developed for the most common job profiles at the European Commission. These packages will combine online courses carried out at the participant's own pace, live classes (virtual or face-to-face) and other learning materials to help staff increase their mastery in their area of work or prepare for mobility to other job functions needed in the Commission.

Finally, regarding management culture, the DG HR objective is to ensure that commission managers are inspiring and inclusive leaders, able to effectively manage, empower and develop their staff to enhance individual, team and organisational performance. An emphasis will be put on transformative experiences and on building a sense of community. Actions proposed will aim at providing a supportive context, developing a culture of adaptation and flexibility; and supporting clarity of vision and an open communication culture.

Going digital

The practical implementation of digitalisation relies on the “HR Modernisation and Digital Transformation Programme”, which addresses both the redesign of the HR services, the underlying business processes and HR IT platforms. In 2021, it is foreseen to start the transformation of two major, core processes: (pre-)selection of recruitment and the medical services.

2.6 - Effectiveness of conflict-of-interest policies for ministers and top-officials in the European Union Member States

The European Parliament's (EP) Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs commissioned, in March 2020, a study on the effectiveness of Conflicts of Interest (CoI) policies and practices for top political appointment (Head of Government, Ministers and other high ranking officials) in the European Union (EU) Member States (MS).

This comparative study was based on a survey carried out in 2020 in the framework of EUPAN. 18 EU-MS participated despite COVID-19. Validation and discussion of results took place at the



EP-Committee of legal affairs and the study was presented in the EP. The study is presented as a follow-up of the 2007 study developed for the European Commission on the same subject.

Ethics in Public Administration has been a recurrent theme in EUPAN. It started to be addressed in 2004, with the Dutch Presidency, and more recently by the Romanian and Finnish Presidencies in 2019. We have been measuring ethics, corruption and integrity in the public sector for nearly 20 years.

When comparing the results of the 2007 and 2020 studies, one of the main conclusions is that there has been a proliferation, deepening and broadening of Col policies.

Results show that MS have been adopting more laws, ethics rules and standards, as well as codes (e.g. codes of conduct and ethics, soft-law approach) in the last 13 years. There are, however, country and institutional differences to register. Member States that entered the EU in 2005 (and later) have a higher level of policy coverage density (more rules and policies in place) than older Member States. Nordic countries have fewer rules and policies in place than other EU Member States, and classical bureaucratic countries have a higher policy coverage density than countries with more (private sector like) managerial types of public administrations.

There are also more issues, persons and circumstances added to the concept of Col compared to 2007, such as definitions of *revolving door*, or “family”/“emotional life”. Examples of this are the EP Regulation No 2018/1046 and Council Regulation of 18 July 2018 on financial rules requiring national authorities’ involvement in the management of EU funds to avoid Col (Art. 61).



A trend towards stricter standards in rules and codes was also registered such as the setting of longer cooling off periods and stricter disclosure requirements (spouse activities being considered).

These developments have led to question whether some policies and instruments (laws, regulations and codes) are effective in combating Col, and what kind of institutionalization of ethics regimes is needed. At present, no EU - and national administration is equipped with the necessary resources, tools and skills to monitor Col in an efficient and effective way.

The most acute Col policies implementation challenges regard the management of disclosure requirements and revolving-door cases (e.g. Ombudsman: European Commission monitors 3000 revolving door cases per year, OI/3/2017/NF) due to side-activities and memberships (the latter mostly applies in the case of parliamentarians).

More rules, stricter standards and broader definitions of Col generate more violations of standards leading to distrust and ever new scandals (and then new rules). Because of the limited effects of traditional compliance based instruments but also codes and voluntary approaches, there is growing insecurity about the right regulatory mix, the role of self-regulation, disclosure policies and the need for other political, behavioural, and economical instruments.

Regulating and managing ever more potential sources of conflicts of interests will impose a heavy burden on HR experts, ethics experts and implementing agencies and authorities. This does not suggest that deregulating ethics policies would be a solution. However, it is important to question the logic: ever more, ever stricter – ever better approach.

Similarly, to the legal situation, the administrative “oversight” is extremely fragmented. Member States have introduced ever more monitoring and enforcement bodies with different and often overlapping roles (e.g. audit bodies, inspectorates, auditing bodies, HR offices, integrity officers, anti-corruption agencies, Ombudsman).

A number of preconditions have been put forward for the effective implementation of Col. First, is the need to improve monitoring of Col and data management, namely because no country has insights into the development of Col (no statistics about Col available). Then, additional investments in expertise and personnel are needed to cope with the trend towards more issues, more policies, stricter standards and the need for stricter enforcement. Thirdly, the individualised approach that characterises Col policies is questioned as effective at all if other causes (e.g. organisational dimensions) for Col are not also addressed. It follows that there is a need to discuss effects of contradictory logics (e.g. more job mobility – more potential Col). Finally, the need to exchange best practice experiences between EU institutions and Member States is stressed (so far no administrative cooperation).

Managing Col of Ministers/top-officials is challenging as countries shy away and act reluctantly when it comes to enforcing it against top-level personnel which seems to be linked to an increasing politicisation of senior appointments. For their part, Ministers and top-officials continuously overestimate their capacity to deal in a conscious and impartial way with their own Col. On the other hand, ethics policies are becoming more and more politicised and slowly emerging as a perfect policy field in electoral campaigns. The downside of this development is that it becomes more difficult to avoid that ethics as a policy issue is abused as moral stigmatisation.

Similar to the field of anti-corruption, we have become more demanding, more aware, we invest more in the fight against Col, but we have no evidence whether the situation is improving at all.

The need for more effective and independent monitoring/control is put forward to tackle the challenges on implementing and managing Col. On the EU and national level there seems to be the need for better evaluation on how the spending and management of EU funds and EU-financial interests is linked to Col on the national, regional and local level. It is suggested that there is a need to better link the spending of EU funds to the respect of ethical principles like the avoidance of Col. Overall, there is the need for more external, independent monitoring of Col that should take place in an independent ethics body as is the case of Col of Ministers. Monitoring should be de-politicised and either carried out by an independent body or other institutionalised forms (independent agency, committees).

2.7 - Public Administration as science, profession, art, and practical humanism: the integrative function of philosophy

According to Professor Ongaro, both in everyday praxis and in perspective, it is helpful to think of Public Administration in four ways (profiles, lenses, dimensions): as a science, as an art, as a profession, and as a form of practical humanism.

This fourfold perspective, which philosophical thought makes whole, helps confront most PA problems, especially the hardest ones. The book *Philosophy and Public Administration: An Introduction*, published in 2017, contributes to better understand how philosophy plays this role.

Public Administration is a science since it configures an interdisciplinary field of scientific investigation and an area of academic work, for which several specialist fields contribute with their findings. It is also an art in that it requires a comprehensive understanding of things for appreciating the unique circumstances of each administration. In turn, Public Administration is a profession given that the notion of public service and associated deontological issues are at its core, with the inevitable corollaries of how to run the State in ways that are as legitimate, fair, effective, and efficient as possible. Finally, it is also a form of practical humanism. It comprises activities carried out by humans and for humans based on both factual and value judgements.



The integrated view of Public Administration to be achieved through philosophical thought should deliver a superior answer to extant problems. The reason for this is that, although several disciplines may contribute to key findings to Public Administration (as science), to deliver an appropriate answer demands an understanding of unique circumstances (art), mobilisation of skills (profession), and wisdom (practical humanism). In turn, the problem-solving potential of appreciation of unique circumstances (PA as art) by itself will also not be enough in the absence of the other perspectives' contributions, so forth.

The COVID-19 crisis was also approached from the perspective of existentialist philosophy. It was pointed out that 'problems' and 'mysteries' differ in that the former is external and can be tackled by techniques, methods and algorithms, while the latter involves the subject and cannot be so plainly approached. This distinction had already been mentioned by Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) that warned of the danger of reducing every challenge once met to the former. In short, coping with the pandemic and preparing for future challenges will require an integrated approach of all the four Public Administration dimensions listed above.

2.8 - Strengthening the resilience of public administration after the COVID-19 crisis with CAF 2020

The OECD will conduct the multi-country project named "strengthening the resilience of public administration after COVID-19 crisis with CAF 2020" funded by DG REFORM. It will be leaded by Belgium, and includes Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Slovak Republic, and other countries.

Building on the CAF, both as a tool and as a network of contact points, the project will collect insights into how deploying CAF during or around the pandemic crisis may have helped maintain resilience. Through a combination of case studies, workshops and analysis, the project will develop new insights into the ways that European public organisations can improve resilience in the face of unforeseen future shocks and challenges.

For this purpose, the project will deploy several perspectives. It will systematically



analyse what went on in public service organisations during the crisis and how it may have affected their resilience in the face of COVID-19. It will prospectively study how public service organisations may bring about a more resilient future. It will also assess how CAF may have helped to cope with the crisis and how it can help public organisations build back more resilient through and beyond the recovery phase.

In practical terms, four types of activities will be developed. First, during the summer of 2021, an online survey targeting organizations who have recently used CAF on their experience of the COVID crisis and how CAF contributed to organisational readiness and resilience. Then, up until the first quarter of 2022, one case study per participating country will deepen the analysis on what responses organisations took in the face of and lessons learned from the crisis. The OECD will facilitate developing a case study template based on the CAF model but adapted to deliver insights on resilience and involve multiple stakeholders (e.g., EUPAN, CAF correspondents' network, EIPA) on their implementation. The third type of activity will occur in the first semester of 2022 and consist of up to four international 'deep-dive thematic (e.g., leadership and people, digital, innovation) workshops fed by the proceedings of the survey and the case studies. Each workshop will produce a distinct paper capturing the insights thereof. Finally, during the second semester of 2022, the OECD will draft a synthesis report, summing up all the project's activity and delivering lessons learned and clear, practical recommendations for all stakeholders involved. The OECD will present the report at a high-level conference at the end of 2022, ideally the Czech Republic DG EUPAN meeting.

2.9 - Slovenia's Presidency programme & priorities

Under the slogan "Together. Resilient. Europe." the Slovenian Presidency will actively contribute to strengthening the EU's resilience to health, economic, energy, climate and cyber crises. The main issues of the further development of the EU will be at the centre of the discussion about the future of Europe. Working together, supporting each other and acting in solidarity for the good of each and every European citizen will be key to strengthening the EU's resilience.



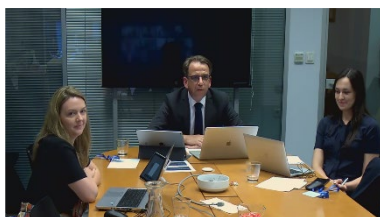
Slovenia's six-month programme of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union is based on four priorities:

- Resilience, Recovery and Strategic Autonomy of the European Union;
- Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE);
- Union of the European way of life, rule of law and equal criteria for all;
- A credible and secure European Union, capable of ensuring security and stability in its neighbourhood.

Regarding EUPAN, “Ageing workforce and talent management”, are the key topics to be developed in the framework of the Strategy Paper 2019-2022, which will have the following approaches per strategic domain:

- Under the I Strategic domain - Digitalization and Innovation - it will look at strengthening digital competencies in public administration and digitalization of HR processes;
- Under the II Strategic domain - Ethics and organizational culture – it will address the themes of promoting employees’ wellbeing and positive work environment, and Values-driven leadership;
- Under the III Strategic domain - Future-oriented strategic, efficient and effective HRM - the focus will be on the attractiveness of jobs in public administration, intergenerational cooperation and knowledge transfer, as well as on new ways of working.

Slovenia's Presidency topic cuts across all three EUPAN's strategic areas and could



not be more pertinent. The issue of ageing populations, reflected in ageing workforce, is a problem that our administrations and governments are faced with, being more acute in Europe. The impacts of an ageing workforce are manifold, from skills required to deal with rapid technological changes, such as digitalization with implications for

new forms of work organization, the growing workflow automation, knowledge sharing, considering the number of employees leaving public administration, mostly due to retirement, to health and wellbeing issues which due to COVID-19 deserved redouble attention.

The ageing workforce in public administrations also poses challenges in human resource management, as well as at leadership level. The way older employees are managed and developed at work contributes to organizational performance improvement.

[Photos of the DG meeting](#)

PART 3 | Informal Meeting of EU Public Administration Ministers

The Portuguese Presidency in partnership with the European Commission organised an informal meeting of EU Public Administration Ministers, which took place in Lisbon, at Centro Cultural de Belém, on 22 June, in a hybrid format.

The motto for the meeting was: *Time for a fair, green and digital recovery.*



In this context the following outcomes were produced and endorsed:

- *A leadership exchange programme* – A proposal for a general framework.
- *A toolbox on new ways of working for public workers* - comprising three guides: Guide for Leading Teams in a Digital Environment; Guide for Experimentation and Collaboration in the Context of Remote Work; Guide to Health and Safety in Teleworking in Public Administration.
- *Guiding principles for a human-rights based approach on public services* - establishes a set of basic principles to be considered by Public Administration in the service design and delivery¹. A human rights-based approach highlights, as key elements, participation and responsibility, non-discrimination and human dignity, transparency and accountability, framed by a rule of law and aiming to provide public services that are available, accessible, inclusive and of high quality for all.
- *Conclusions of the ministerial meeting* – on innovative, participative, open and transparent PA close to people.

Within the framework of the Conclusions of the Ministerial Meeting, ministers agreed on:

Investing in people and developing management - fostering European cooperation and building bridges towards inclusion, diversity and new ways of working in EU public administrations.

On mobility and exchanges:

- Welcoming the general framework proposal by Portugal for a future EU leadership exchange programme as an idea for flexibly and voluntarily fostering exchanges for public managers on a bilateral or multilateral level, between Member States and/or with EU institutions. The idea for an EU leadership exchange programme may complement existing bilateral schemes between Member States, secondments of National Experts to EU institutions and short duration exchange formats like the recently founded EUPAN Summer School.
- Learning more about the pilot project to be hosted by Portugal in 2022 based on this framework. Ministers invite next Presidencies to follow up on this process and to stimulate the sharing of experiences and good practices across EU Public Administrations, namely in the context of the current active

¹ 1. Promote citizens' participation at all stages of the process, particularly from the excluded or disadvantaged groups.

2. Designing, first and foremost, for the communities in vulnerable situation.

3. Analyse, in a systematic way, the expected and unforeseen consequences of service availability.

4. Value the process as much as the outcome

5. Ensure privacy and citizens' personal data security.

6. Consider misuse cases as a serious problem to tackle.

7. Promote a continuous services monitoring and assessment.

8. Developing the right-holders and duty-bearers' capacities.

9. Ensuring transparency on obligations, responsibilities and rights regarding services.

networks EUPAN and DISPA and by promoting common training for public servants.

- Recognizing that the secondment of National Experts constitutes an added value for the Member States and for the European Institutions.
- Acknowledging the importance of promoting learning of foreign languages among civil servants, which is a precondition for effective exchanges.
- Committing to value the experience that civil servants have gained through secondments in other public administrations, including the EU administration, in their career assessment and progression.

On diversity and inclusion

- Underlining the importance of comprehensive geographical balance in the recruitment policies of the EU Institutions, as enshrined in the EU Staff Regulations, and the critical need to take appropriate measures and to promote best practices, including the regular and systematic availability of data on geographical balance in the EU Institutions to pinpoint specific challenges and to measure progress, in view of addressing the existing shortfalls, in closer cooperation between Member States, EU Institutions and other stakeholders, while keeping a merit-based selection system and the transparency of procedures.
- Emphasizing that potent and comprehensive anti-discrimination, equality and diversity policies must be developed and implemented in order to ensure that the public sector attracts the most skilful and best performing staff and talents, thereby breaking down both social and cultural barriers and prejudice and ensuring that the civil service represents the plural and diverse society it serves, both at national and European level.
- Highlighting the importance of public employers leading by example when it comes to inclusion in the workplace offering opportunities and providing adequate working conditions for people with disabilities.
- Welcoming the initiatives already taken by the EU institutions to enhance diversity and inclusion in the recruitment process bearing in mind that diverse and inclusive teams perform better.

On new ways of working and leadership

- Building on the impact that COVID-19 had in the ways of working in public administration, continuing to take advantage of information technologies, digital transformation and their impacts and to address emerging needs and desires related to remote working and office organization, namely by exchanging best practices on new ways of working and on the management of hybrid teams amongst our public administrations.
- Promoting skills and qualification policies for public managers and workers, so that civil service may be equipped with the necessary tools and know-how, in particular managerial and digital skills, to provide a high-quality service to the public.

- Underlining the need for policies and measures that promote women's participation and gender balance in management posts, as well as the relevance of sharing best practices.
- Noting that life-cycle oriented human resources policies can help fostering in work-life balance as well as tackling age imbalance in the public sector so that public administration, remaining an attractive employer for the younger generations.

Ministers also agreed on - **Exploring technology and reinforcing proximity and interoperability - promoting secure digital transformation while leaving no one behind**

On Interoperability and Cybersecurity

- Promoting the work of the forthcoming European Interoperability Policy and its common standards and solutions, towards a digitally transformed and interoperable public administration, at the local, national and European level
- Furthering digital sovereignty, trust and security within the European Union's public administrations, through data protection, a secure digital identity environment and governance.
- Assuring that public administrations stand at the forefront of the continuous strengthening of cybersecurity, including through a closer cooperation between public administrations to address jointly the increasing number and sophistication of cyber-attacks on public administrations, while investing in their strategic autonomy and thus protecting citizens and business.
- Promoting the continuation of a regular cooperation, in particular with regard to the delivery of personal security clearances (PSC) as well as the handling of classified Information (EUCI) based on user-friendly secure tools.

On innovative, data-driven and cross border digital public services

- Promoting innovation towards seamless and proactive services whenever possible and appropriate, namely by serving as pilot or innovation partner, both nationally and across borders and across sectors, answering to the progressively higher expectations of citizens in this digital age, and improving the overall experience for citizens and businesses, in a user-centric approach.
- Committing to the use and reuse of available data, in accordance with ethical and responsible principles, fostering interoperable data-driven and transparent public administrations, mainstreaming of digital audits for the management and control of public finances, accelerating innovation and promoting productivity and growth.

On human-centric, inclusive and value based public digital transformation

- Closing the digital divide by providing services in a coherent and convenient way, Omni channel and assisted digital services whenever necessary, and strengthening territorial cohesion by promoting proximity services.
- Acknowledging the importance of a human-centric and ethical approach to the digital transformation that ensures the inclusion and engagement of all citizens and stakeholders in regards to services' design, usage and evaluation,

going beyond customer experience and focusing on public participation and digital democracy;

- Fostering participation towards a progressive broad and inclusive participatory ecosystem as cornerstone for innovative democratic governance models, improving public sector capacity, people's trust in institutions and legitimacy, contributing to a full digital democracy that frames free, informed, inclusive and secure options.

As follow-up, the Ministers invited all Member States, through EUPAN, DISPA and CIO Network, to support, promote and implement the present conclusion's principles and objectives as well as invited the French Presidency of the Council of the EU to take stock of the implementation of the conclusions in the first half of 2022.

