

# Summary of the Swedish Presidency of the EUPAN

This document is a summary of the main themes and activities of the Swedish presidency of the EUPAN during the period 1 January to 30 June 2023.

## Introduction

The Swedish presidency of EUPAN has been organised by two government agencies – The Agency for Public Management and the Agency for Government Employers. The Swedish EUPAN team has been part of the EUPAN Secretariat along with DG HR at the European Commission, Czech Republic, Spain and Belgium.

During the Swedish presidency, the following meetings have been held:

- **Working level meeting 27-28 March, Stockholm**
  - Working level Secretariat meeting 28 February, digital meeting
- **Director General meeting 1-2 June, Uppsala**
  - Director General Secretariat meeting 5 June, digital meeting

The Swedish EUPAN team have also participated at:

- The CAF correspondents' meeting in Maastricht, 25 April.
- The Working Party for Staff Regulations (WGSR) in Brussels, 8 May.

As stated in the EUPAN Strategy paper “the main purpose of the network is to ensure that cooperation between European public administrations is more relevant, more focused, and delivers clear results, and also to select topics of common interest in line with the priorities of the members and the European Union, while taking into account current developments and debates”.

The Swedish presidency has developed its main themes based on the strategic domains of the EUPAN Strategy paper and anchored them accordingly in the EUPAN Secretariat.

Figure The Swedish EUPAN main themes following the three Strategic domains.



The Swedish presidency of EUPAN has also aimed at aligning its main themes with the priorities of the Swedish presidency of the Council of the European Union:

- **Security – unity:** building consensus towards a robust European security and defence policy.
- **Competitiveness:** forwarding the best possible conditions for a sound and open economy based on, among other things, a successful digitalisation.
- **Green energy and transitions:** delivering ambitious climate goals while boosting growth and competitiveness.
- **Democratic values and the rule of law:** upholding these fundamental principles is essential for any presidency of the Council of the EU.

#### The main themes of the presidency of EUPAN:

- **A good administrative culture and work against corruption.** The interest in exchange on these issues continues to be high within the network. Strong administrative cultures in our public administrations both foster the basic values of democracy and rule of law and prepare our public administrations for crises.
- **Threats and violence against civil servants.** Civil servants' ability to perform their duties in a safe working environment is also a corner stone of a democratic system.
- **Governance of cross sectoral issues.** We seek to exchange knowledge and best practices in the fields of digital transition and crisis management, areas where administrative coordination often needs improving.

## **Working-level meeting – Stockholm, 27-28 March 2023**

The working level meeting was held at Hotell Hasselbacken on the island of Djurgården in central Stockholm. The Swedish EUPAN team used Hotell Hasselbacken as venue during Sweden's last presidency back in 2009.

Hosted late in March, the meeting participants got to experience a typical Swedish "bakslag" (back-lash), which is a late and temporary return of Winter, an utmost unwelcome event to most locals. Due to low temperatures and an icy northerly wind, few participants took the opportunity to stroll the area which is full of parks and museums.

## **Directors-General meeting – Uppsala, 1-2 June 2023**

The Swedish EUPAN team chose to hold the Directors General meeting in the city of Uppsala some 60 kms north of Stockholm. Home to almost 170.000 people, Uppsala is Sweden's fourth-largest city. It is also one of the fastest growing cities in the country.

Uppsala is well-known for its university, dating back to 1477 and the oldest university in the Nordic countries. Throughout Sweden's history, the city and the surrounding area have been of great importance in many respects. Uppsala boasts the largest cathedral in Northern Europe and is the principal bishopric of Sweden since 1164.

In 2023, Sweden commemorates the 500 years' anniversary of the crowning of king Gustav the first, better known as Gustav Vasa. This event marked the break-up of the Kalmar union that united the three kingdoms of Scandinavia between 1397 and 1523, and thus the birth of modern Sweden. An autocratic and sometimes brutal monarch, Gustav Vasa's reign had great impact on Sweden for centuries to follow, especially with regards to the reformation. Gustav Vasa lies buried inside Uppsala cathedral and the meeting participants got the opportunity to see the tomb.

History aside, an important reason for our choice of Uppsala was the opportunity to use the university's Humanistiska teatern (Humanities Theatre) as venue. The Swedish EUPAN team found the concept of holding the meeting in an auditorium, rather than at a rectangular table, interesting and worth a try. To our knowledge, the participants very much appreciated Humanistiska teatern as venue, and especially the good view of presenters and presentations that all participants have in an auditorium.

## **The main themes at the meetings**

### **Good Administration in European Countries**

As the integrity within public administrations has been a theme for discussions within the network in recent years, the Swedish presidency opted to make the concept of good administration one of the main themes of the presidency. The concept is stipulated as a fundamental right on the level of the European Union and has equivalents in member states of the network.

In preparation for the presidency, we conducted a study on the concept of good administration. The study was based on a survey that was sent out to all EUPAN members and interviews with a sample of members. The results of the study were presented in the report 'Good administration in European countries', available on the EUPAN website: [Good administration in European countries \(eupan.eu\)](http://eupan.eu)

The report served as a basis for presentations and discussions on both the Working Level meeting in Stockholm and the Directors General meeting in Uppsala. In Stockholm, a presentation of the study was commented by two members of academia in Sweden: Staffan Andersson, Associate Professor of Political Science (Linnaeus University) and Jane Reichel, Professor of Law (Stockholm University). Maria Geronymaki (DG HR) also presented how the concept of good administration is made tangible in the everyday operations of the European Commission. The meeting attendees were also given the opportunity to discuss the theme in workshops at the meeting.

In Uppsala, the report was presented within the scope of a panel discussion, in which Jane Reichel also attended. Gertrud Ingestad (DG HR) presented the employer perspective of matters connected to good administration within the European Commission.

### **Defining corruption and organising work against it**

In his opening keynote speech at the DG meeting, Professor Bo Rothstein presented the Quality of government framework and emphasised the impact of the control of corruption and impartiality of the public administration on human well-being (e.g., human development, life-expectancy and growth). A well-functioning and non-corrupt public administration are held as more significant than other commonly adopted indicators, such as electoral democracy and democracy indexes, that show weak significance in terms of the well-being of citizens.

Staffan Andersson made contributions to the agenda at both meetings. He iterated the interconnectedness of corruption, integrity, and democratic values. Managing ethics in organisations for good administration is thus vital for achieving high public integrity and is organised in four key functions: defining what is ethical, guiding, monitoring and enforcing such ethical conduct. During the panel discussion, Staffan Andersson brought

attention to the issue of too often resorting to new stricter rules and monitoring activities after instances of serious misconduct. There is a risk of mistaking aversion for effectiveness and that further instances of misconduct lead to the addition of more rules, without addressing other underlying factors to bad ethical conduct.

At the DG meeting, Director-General of the Swedish Agency for Government Employers (SAGE), Christina Gellerbrant Hagberg, shared her experience of work against corruption in government agencies. The process of hiring new employees needs to be based on merit, skill, and clear criteria, as well as being transparent. A system to conduct security checks on new recruitments is also vital and has become increasingly important in many areas. Democratic values and the rule of law are also compromised through corruption induced by citizens' threats. Unreported cases, however, makes it difficult to grasp the extent of threat-induced corruption and poses a challenge in the efforts to provide support for employees.

The DG-meeting also included a presentation by Nejra Wiklund (analyst at the Swedish Agency for Public Management) on the work of the Agency for Public Management in supporting Swedish government agencies in their work against corruption. The presentations of the DG-meeting were followed by two rounds of workshops in which meeting attendees were able to discuss and learn from work conducted in Italy on the matter (presented by Sabina Bellotti of the Italian EUPAN delegation).

### **Threats and violence against civil servants**

The issue of threats and violence against civil servants has gained great attention in Sweden but has not before been emphasised in the context of EUPAN. The aim of the presidency has been to elaborate on common challenges that civil servants across public administrations face when dealing with direct contacts with the public. In Sweden, we have witnessed a hardened and somewhat more offensive approach from certain citizens, towards different parts of the public administration.

The first activity on this theme was to send out a questionnaire to the EUPAN network with the purpose of gaining deeper understanding about common challenges and solutions across EUPAN members. The results were distributed in the form of a EUPAN newsletter. (Read more in the part dedicated to EUPAN eNews).

At the WL-meeting in March, the Swedish EUPAN team presented the initial findings from the questionnaire. To exemplify from other countries, we also invited our colleague from the Netherlands, Marilette van As, to talk about the work on safe working norm in the Dutch public administration. Thereafter, the delegates were divided in smaller groups to continue the discussions and share experiences about potential presence of threats and violence, along with national preventive work and legislative framework on combating it.

At the DG-meeting, the Swedish presidency continued on this topic by inviting the Director-General of SAGE, Christina Gellerbrant Hagberg, to talk about the work that has been made in Sweden. As her previous role being DG at the Swedish Enforcement authority, Mrs Gellerbrant Hagberg could draw on practical examples from a government agency where threats and harassments against civil servants is reoccurring. We also invited Marilette van As, to once again spread the word about the Dutch model on this topic.

The Swedish presidency is pleased with the outcome of the activities regarding threats and violence. We hope that this priority has lifted concrete measures, shared experiences and increased the awareness among those who were not previously in touch with these problems. We hope that threats and violence will be discussed in further meetings of EUPAN and stay at your disposal if you wish to develop further collaboration on this issue.

### **Governance of Cross-sectorial issues**

On the topic of cross-sectorial issues the Swedish presidency held two sessions at the DG-meeting: *Crisis management and coordination of capacities in EU countries*, presented by Daniele Dotto (Deputy Director and Head of Unit, Governance and Public Administration at DG Reform) and *A resilient public administration – Strengthening public management in times of crisis*. The latter aimed to provide the perspective and example of public management action and innovation in Ukraine during Russia’s attempted full scale invasion of the country. The session began with a presentation by Martins Krievins of OECD/SIGMA, presenting the work with Ukraine on administrative service delivery and public governance both prior to and during wartime.

Mr Mstyslav Banik (Director of the Directorate for the Development of Digital Public Services at the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine) gave an in-depth presentation of the Ukrainian state Diia-app and how its implementation has helped overcome public service delivery deficiencies and how it has served as a vital tool since the start of Russia’s attempted full scale invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022. The app gathers documents and certificates as well as a carry out of a wide variety of services (e.g., tax declaration, benefits, assistance, banking). Previous issues of too many different digital services of varying standards, lack of interaction between sectors, complex procedures and “offline visits” has been mitigated through a joint digital platform. During wartime the app has served as a flexible tool to provide services such as reporting damaged property, seek assistance, donations, and reporting enemy movement, as well as keeping service delivery in operation when physical service was limited.

At the WL-meeting we held the session *Rule of law in digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence*, presented by Markus Naartijärvi, Professor of Law, and Lena Enqvist, Assistant Professor of Law, both of Umeå University. The presentation served as a starting point

of a discussion on the possibilities and threats of using artificial intelligence in public administration, including decision-making, and especially the risks this poses to the overarching principle of rule of law.

## **Workshops at the WL-meeting and the DG-meeting**

At the meetings the Swedish EUPAN presidency has held a total of eight different workshop.

### **Threats and violence against civil servants**

At the WL meeting, all delegates were divided into smaller groups with the purpose to share experiences and measures to combat threats and violence against civil servants. Across the EUPAN members, there were different experiences as to what degree this is a widespread problem. While some countries had not yet faced the problems extensively, it can be noted that an awareness was spread and it was emphasised that the problems might be more prevalent than what is known, due to the nature of civil servants being reluctant to report incidents, considering some levels of threats being “part of their job”.

Many member states have introduction programs to educate newly recruited staff and raising awareness. Experiences gained are incorporated into operational and scenario training. Training might be offered to specific target-groups, such as officers in contact with the public.

Employers are also required to have their own clear guidelines on how to deal with the harassment cases and provide support to the employees. In some member states, organisations have their own guidelines in managing threatening situations. In the public sector there is often general guidelines. Specific measures have been put in place, in particular for security personnel, for health care workers and in social and medico-social establishments and services.

Information-sharing, building network and cooperation are practised in some member states to prevent corruptive behaviour and strengthening civil servants in handling unauthorized influence attempts. The experience is that transparency and openness on the part of authorities, e.g., in explaining decisions and measures, towards the public has a calming effect and reduces aggressive feelings.

In the round of workshops at the DG meeting, delegates who chose the workshop session about threats and violence got the opportunity to continue the discussions in a group moderated by Patricia Jonasson, Associate, Södertörn University. Her research is on Public Law and European Law, and she has specialised in threats and violence against civil servants as a threat to the rule of law. In the workshops, different angles of threats



and violence was emphasised, such as awareness, work environment, rule of law and solutions.

### **A resilient public administration – Strengthening public management in times of crisis**

This workshop was led by Director General Juha Sarkio of the Finnish EUPAN delegation, and based on a presentation of Finland's comprehensive concept of crisis and security. This concept entails a strategic diamond that in an organised manner connects functions vital for society. It further involves stakeholders and actors at all levels, private sector, NGOs, and church, to name a few, that collaborate through committees and trainings.

A recurring reflection during the workshop revolved around the tendency in many Member states to organise crisis responses in narrow sectors. Sectoral steering might constitute missed opportunities to draw on the resources and knowledge beyond directly concerned government bodies and agencies. Examples of this was given by the Croatian, Czech and Irish representatives regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, accommodation of Ukrainian refugees and weather-related crises. It was also identified that sectorised systems lack efficient coordination with non-government actors that in turn become less prepared to contribute with government capacities.

Further, an insight from the discussions was that learning from previous crises and constructing responses doesn't necessarily constitute a resilient system. Resilience requires a system that is dedicated to respond to crisis as its main purpose. It helps generate multifaceted tools for problem-solving when faced with adversity. In response to a question regarding responses to less known and unforeseeable crises, Juha Sarkio argued that crisis management is a way of thinking and being diligent and prepared to react to any crises at hand.

### **Other workshops held at the meetings:**

- **Defining corruption and organising work against it (DG)**
- **Creating and managing a common digital administrative infrastructure (DG)**
- **Application of European principles of good administration in a national context (WL)**
- **Tools to promote a good administration in public administrations (WL)**
- **Rule of law in digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (WL)**
- **Service and accessibility at the National Government Service Center (WL)**



## **Discussions on EUPAN matters**

### **EUPAN and other networks**

On the back of similar discussions held during the working level meeting, 27-28th of March in Stockholm, the Swedish presidency put forward a suggested additional wording to the current formulation in the handbook that seeks to ensure that EUPAN remains an informal network for exchange of knowledge and best practices, and not a forum for the agendas of other networks.

“To avoid duplication, EUPAN is not to serve as a forum for preparing practical implementation of the agenda of other networks”

Whilst there was a consensus on the importance of maintaining the informality of EUPAN among the members, some concerned voices were raised about the suggested formulations being too firm and that they could potentially lead EUPAN to distance itself from other networks and become insignificant. The presidency took the input from the network to heart and drafted a new proposal of amendments that would ensure the maintained informality as well as good relations to other relevant networks and organisations. The new proposal was approved by the network.

### **Procedure to accept new members with observer status within the EUPAN**

Based on the lack of clear procedures and criteria in the handbook on the acceptance of new members into the EUPAN network, the Swedish presidency put forward a suggestion on an additional wording in the handbook based on the general application of the principle of consensus within the network.

“The principle of Consensus, as stated on p.10 of this handbook, is to be applied when the network considers admitting a country observer status”

Some members agreed to the need of clarification and the suggested amendment. Objections was, however, voiced concerning the actual need for clarification and that the current wording was sufficiently clear, and that the amendment would therefore not necessarily make the process more efficient. Given the remarks, the presidency decided to suggest a new amendment which was approved by the network.

## **EUPAN eNews**

During the Swedish Presidency, two EUPAN eNews have been published. The two editions contain different content but share the ambition of spreading knowledge about public administration and HR policy in Europe.

### **Qualitative eNews – Threats and violence against civil servants**

Ahead of the EUPAN WL-meeting, the Swedish presidency send out a questionnaire regarding preventive work regarding threats and violence against civil servants. The purpose was to gain deeper understanding of the issue, as it was one of the main themes of the Swedish presidency.

The questionnaire was sent out in February, receiving answers from 26 EUPAN members (Including the EU Commission and observer countries).

Three questions were asked, with a possibility to develop the answers freely:

1. In which sub-sectors within the public sector would you assess that the problem of harassments, threats and violence towards the staff are most common? Do you have examples of actions taken to minimise the presence of such behaviour in those sub-sectors?
2. Have you witnessed an increase of these kinds of problems in sub-sectors of the public service where the problems typically not have been as common as, for example, within the police force?
3. Do you have a list of general procedures to be applied when threatening situations arise or are such procedures pending on the nature of the public service (e.g., does it differ between the police and a desk officer)?

The final results of the questionnaire was presented briefly at the WL meeting, and distributed to the network shortly after. As for the presidency, the report containing solid and descriptive information about threats and violence in European countries have not only been an immense support in facilitating work shop discussions, but also for giving comparative insights in a previously relative unresearched area.

**The full report of the EUPAN eNews is available on the EUPAN website:**  
[PowerPoint-presentation \(eupan.eu\)](http://eupan.eu)

## Statistical eNews – Workforce composition in Central/Federal Public Administrations

As stated in the EUPAN handbook "A statistical issue of EUPAN eNews is launched biennially, by the Member State that holds the presidency in the first half of the year." The data collected refer to 31 December of the previous year. The issue contains the data of the workforce composition of the central/federal governments.

A survey was sent out to the Network in May 2023, receiving answers from 28 EUPAN member states (including observer countries). The questionnaire followed the form of the latest EUPAN eNews from Portugal 2021.

### The following questions were asked:

1. What is the share of employment in central/federal public administration in the:
  - a. *Total population?*
  - b. *Working population?*
  - c. *Employed population?*
2. What is the *share of women versus men* in your country's central/federal public administration?
3. What is the *share of civil servants versus contractual staff* in your country's central/federal public administration?
4. What is the *average age* of the staff in your country's central/federal public administration?
5. Which *sector* within the central/federal public administration in your country has the largest amount of staff?
6. *Education levels* among staff in central/federal public administration: share of staff that have their maximum education at low education level, medium education level, and high education level.

**The full report of the EUPAN eNews is available on the EUPAN Website:**  
[Workforce composition in central/federal public administrations \(eupan.eu\)](http://eupan.eu)