

The European Public Sector Award 2019: Three categories, three innovative winners

On 6 November, EIPA presented the European Public Sector Awards 2019 to the three winning projects in the three administrative categories – European and National, Regional and Supra-Local and Local. The winners received their EPSA 2019 trophies during the final award ceremony, which took place at the Provincial Government House in Maastricht, where the Maastricht Treaty was signed in 1992.

This prestigious award – the only award scheme open to all public sector bodies across Europe – recognises the best and most innovative performers in public administrations. Over 120 guests from 15 different European countries and the European institutions participated in the range of EPSA 2019 events held in Maastricht on 4-6 November 2019.

The three EPSA 2019 winners showed how innovation in the public sector can really help to make life better for citizens. As Marco Ongaro, EIPA's Director-General said, "We are very proud at EIPA to have hosted EPSA for the last ten years – it's at the heart of our mission to serve the public sector in Europe by sharing good practice which everyone can learn from".

Three EPSA 2019 award winners:

European and National category:

Simplex+Program – Portugal's way of helping government work better for citizens

The project "Simplex+ Program", submitted by Portugal's Administrative Modernisation Agency (the Agency) is a national programme for the simplification and digitalisation of administrative procedures across all parts of government.

As independent reviews have shown, the programme measures make it easier for citizens and businesses to use public services in Portugal and save them time when they do. Many of them have also saved working time for the public sector.

The Simplex+ Program has led directly to other excellent projects from the Agency which have won Best Practice Certificates in EPSA 2019 such as Citizen Spots (supported assistance for citizens to access digital services) and ASET – Automatic Social Energy Tariff (automatically offering affordable energy tariffs to low income consumers).

"This programme has been running for many years and still keeps coming up with new ideas. There's no complacency at the Agency – they want to keep moving forward with continuous improvement". (Michael Burnett, Category Leader and EPSA 2019 Project Leader)

Regional administrative category:

Groeipakket – Equal treatment for all children in Flanders

The project "Groeipakket" (Growth Package) was submitted by Kind en Gezin, Agentschap Informatie Vlaanderen and Agentschap Uitbetaling Groeipakket (BE). It offers an integrated family policy with competences of education, care and childcare together with child benefits. One basic principle in achieving this is the automatic granting of rights, which reduces administrative burden for the families and ensures that no child is left out.

This project is the result of the collaborative efforts of all departments in Flanders connected to family policy, breaking silos and working in

self-organising teams. The results are already evident, resulting in less poverty and equal treatment between the working and non-working poor. Other regions in Belgium are adopting the Groeipakket model, based on allowances granted automatically and expansion to more children to minimise the risk of child poverty.

‘Groeipakket is the example of a strong leadership team, where a wide range of stakeholders were brought together to determine the infrastructure, the processes and the technology to establish a more efficient support of children and families. This project creates new solutions through smart use of new technologies, while promoting social inclusion and reducing administrative burdens.’ (Gracia Vara Arribas, Category Leader)

Supra-Local and Local administrative category:

Rooftop Gardens – Taking social inclusion to a new level

The project “Rooftop Gardens: Growing greens for social inclusion” was submitted by the Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities of the City of Barcelona (ES). This project takes advantage of unused public space, such as rooftops of municipal buildings, to set up rooftop gardens with innovative urban farming methods that are operated by people with disabilities. It fosters social inclusion and increases quality of life of the participants by changing their role from that of being beneficiaries towards being contributors producing goods for the community.

The Rooftop Gardens also support the circular economy as food waste is minimised by

donating any surplus of fresh vegetables to local food banks and associations. They also enrich the local community by creating networks between the occupational centres managing the rooftop gardens, local food banks and associations as receivers of fresh food.

‘In Rooftop Gardens people with disabilities become contributors as well as beneficiaries. The project is also a good example of innovative urban farming puts formerly unused rooftop terraces of municipal buildings to good use and opens them to citizens and distributes surplus food to food banks for those who need them.’ (Julia Bosse, Category Leader)

In different ways, these three winners have shown why the EPSA 2019 invited the public sector in Europe to show how they can be citizen-centric, sustainable and fit for the future.

Access the new EPSA 2019 publication for the key outcomes of this year’s award:

New solutions to complex challenges – A public sector citizen-centric, sustainable and fit for the future

For images of the EPSA Awards 2019 have a look at our Facebook page:

Monday, 4 November – handing over of Best Practice Certificates

Tuesday, 5 November – presentations of the 9 EPSA 2019 Nominees

Wednesday, 6 November – Keynotes and celebratory EPSA 2019 Award Ceremony