

Projects in European public administration that are changing citizens' lives right now

Every two years, we organise the European Public Sector Awards (EPSA) in Maastricht, to reward exemplary work done in the field of European public policies.

The bigger vision is to share best practices in various European public administrations, to encourage governments to modernise their administrative structures and address the essential topics of administrative reform in Europe.

In 2017, three major and current challenges for public administrations were addressed across the award categories, and winners were chosen accordingly:

1. The need for effective and efficient digitalisation for the benefit of SMEs and innovation, and thus, for economic growth
2. The importance of an interactive, bottom-up approach, for the flourishing development of cities
3. The role of administration in successfully supporting social integration by involving the target group and civil society

The projects related to these topics and their results set examples of how a few small improvements with an innovation mindset can make a big impact on people's lives.

1. **The need for digitalisation to enhance economic growth**

'**The Co-operation Fund**', submitted by the European Union Intellectual Property Office, has

digitised and standardised the registration of trade marks and designs at EU and national levels across the EU, improving transparency and facilitating the enforcement of actions against infringements of trade marks and intellectual property rights.

This has contributed to the emergence of a coherent and streamlined pan-European IP landscape, enabling valuable savings. Consequently, trust and reliability between EU citizens, their national Intellectual Property administrations, and the EUIPO, has improved and strengthened.

Powerful databases containing over 40 million global trade marks and 10 million global designs are now at the reach of anyone who wants to use them.

2. **Interactive approach for the flourishing development of cities**

The project "**Nordwärts**" of the City of Dortmund (DE) demonstrated how it is managing the developments within a part of the Dortmund city that underwent substantial changes after the dissolving of the Steel and Coal Industry.

Based on the involvement and commitment of the civil society, a development strategy is being devised to cultivate needs-oriented projects, which are suitable for developing certain districts of the city. It aims at increasing the quality of life of inhabitants, by identifying and implementing projects initiated bottom up.

The project helps people identify better with their own neighbourhoods, develops available space to be future-proof and sustainable, safeguards jobs and creates new jobs by attracting companies to locate there.

3. **The role of administration in successfully supporting social integration**

The "**Open.Heart Project**", of the Ombudsoffice for Children and Youths Salzburg (AT), is a mentoring scheme for unaccompanied minor

and young refugees, and it includes a 6-module preparatory programme for volunteers over 28 wanting to become mentors.

Additionally, an alternative foster care scheme, which is closely linked to the Open.Heart project and in which young refugees can live together with a host family, has also been developed by the Ombudsoffice. The first results show that the project is making a vital contribution to the processes of integration and social inclusion.

It is ideas like this that are discussed at EIPA, and the results celebrated and disseminated. Since its launch in 2007, our EPSA award

scheme has received, assessed, and made accessible more than 1200 public practices from 39 European countries and the European institutions.

These cases form a rich database of valuable experiences at the service and disposal of all European public administrations, to generate highly valuable know-how and vital results that can be used for the benefit of providing innovative solutions and learning opportunities.