

Discussion Paper to define the topic of the ReSPA Annual Conference

In the List of Decisions with regard to the 10th SC Meeting held in Zagreb on 27 January 2009, it was decided that the ReSPA Secretariat would prepare a discussion paragraph on the items proposed for the Annual Conference and have this circulated among the SC Members for comments. Based on these comments a final document would be prepared on which a decision could be made during the next session of the SC Meeting. The document below was sent to the SC members on 19 March with the request to comment before 17 April.

First of all it is important to consider the status of the annual conference;

- Do we want a conference with a bigger audience (70 participants or more) or do we want to go for a smaller size.
- This may have an impact on who will attend and how we can deal with the topics

In case of a bigger audience it will be a bit more general. However for ReSPA more visibility. With a smaller audience more possibilities to go in depth on a certain topic.

- Does the conference has the purpose to inform participants and enlarge their understanding about the topic or do we want to do something with the results in terms of recommendations etc.

Based on the suggestions made during the last SC meeting and some own ideas I prepared this document as a discussion paper. I will send this around and ask your reactions based on which we can prepare a document which we can discuss and agree upon on the next SC meeting in Brussels.

HR issues

In periods of economic decline the public administration becomes a more attractive employer. At the same time often initiatives are taken to downsize the civil service.

The population however is still expecting and the politicians are promising an efficient administration with good performance meeting those expectations.

HR management and development has its role related the public performance and is actually an ongoing process of adapting policies and practices to the changing circumstances..

This topic could be put on the agenda of the annual conference and an exchange of European wide experiences could be done on points as:

- How to keep good people and support them in their development
- Experiences with attracting people for the administration other then through the regular recruitment and selection procedures. For instance trainees and internships.
- What has been the proven value so far with performance assessment (appraisal/evaluation) what are the strengths and weaknesses?
- Should it be separated from salary consequences (it this anyhow possible)
- What are crucial conditions for proper implementation?
- What can be done to promote mobility within the public administration? (can we include local/regional administration)

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- Others

IPA issues

Through IPA many programmes have been developed to support the process of EU integration and modernisation of the public administration in the region.

The experiences with the implementation of these programmes may lead to a some questions which could be part of the conference. Such as:

- To which extend is there an overlap of similar programmes on regional or even on national level
- Is it felt problematic that the programmes are implemented by consortia with experts from different EU member states. They all bring their different approaches, systems, procedures etc.
- Do the programmes have sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances?
- What kind of programmes tend to be more or less successful
- What are key conditions for proper implementation?

Topics on governance

With regards to current topics on public administration and in view of the state of affairs in the region the following 3 topics maybe an interesting issue for the annual conference.

- A multidisciplinary approach:
In order to deal successfully with nowadays problems a project oriented approach is more and more seen in public administration. Experts from different field coming from different ministries and public institutes are working together to approach the problems from different ankles in an integrated way.

In view of a successful approach a number of issues are playing a crucial role such as:

- The extend to which objectives are clearly defined
- The extend to which indicators are defined
- The support given by the different actors in the project (ministries, public institutes etc.)
- The clearly defined tasks and responsibilities of the project members in relation to their duties within their organization
- The coordination on higher level between the organizations that are participating
- Etc.....

At the conference we could invite speakers to give presentation and have discussion of some projects and conclusions in terms of lessons learned, critical success factors etc.

- Institutional assessment
The assessment of the performance of the public administration is an issue that can count on current interest.
For this purpose different methods have been developed and applied as weel as research has been done in this area. .
Under the Dutch presidency a comprehensive European wide research has been carried out and published under the title "the performance of the public sector"
With regards to the annual conference this topic could be on the agenda when having presentations and discussions on points like:
- What methods have been used; strengths and weaknesses
 - What indicators have been used
 - What is measurable, what is difficult to measure

- Experiences of the applications of the methods (constraints, difficulties etc.)
 - How relevant has the assessment been for the performance of the administration
 - How have the results of the assessment been used to improve the performance of the administration
 - Conclusions and lessons learned
 - Others.....
- Decentralisation
 In general the principle of subsidiarity has been a leading principle when it comes to implementation of public tasks.
 It might however be interesting to see if decentralisation is a concept that always leads to a more efficient and effective implementation of the public tasks.
 Size, expertise, demography and geography may play an important role when delegating tasks to lower administrative levels.
 At the conference topic maybe presented as:
 Success and failures of decentralization and reasons why.
 - The difference in quality between decentralised public tasks and deconcentrated public tasks.
 - Conditions for successful decentralization
 - The historical and traditional background in the different systems
 - Does one size fits all?

So far one comment was received stating that the audience should not be bigger than 70 participants and that the meeting should have an informal character. In addition some suggestions were made in case the theme would be on IPA programmes.

However, in view of a proper organisation it is necessary that the at least a topic(s) for the conference is decided before the summer break / during the 11th Session of the SC Meeting.

It is therefore suggested that:

- 1. The SC Members make up their mind with regards to a topic for the conference in the next days.**
- 2. During the 11th SC Meeting we discuss and agree upon the topic(s) for the annual conference.**