



PRESS RELEASE

During a spectacular event last night in Maastricht, the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) presented the European Public Sector Award 2009! This prestigious award recognises the best and most innovative performers in European public administration. After a long process of assessment, the four prize winners were finally announced.

The winners in the four categories are:

e-Bourgogne (France), Regional Platform for e-Services for All. This is a time- and money-saving online system that facilitates enterprises accessing public markets. This innovative project which has shown to save time and money for business society won the first prize in the theme for *Performance Improvement in Public Service Delivery*.

The **Cologne Participatory Budget** (Germany) received the first prize in the theme of *Citizen Involvement*. This project created the opportunity for citizens to participate in designing the municipal budget, focusing on three areas – playgrounds, streets and sports – by setting up an e-Platform. Through using this new method, a new culture of participation was created based on transparency and the ability to actively involve huge and different target groups in the region.

The winner in the third theme of *New Forms of Partnership Working*, is the **Oldham Local Strategic Partnership** (United Kingdom). This project aims to build a partnership between statutory bodies, third sector agencies and the private sector with the long-term objective of reviving the declining local economy, raising the level of local aspirations and addressing underlying ethnic tensions, which goes well beyond their statutory obligation to cooperate.

In the fourth theme, *Leadership and Management for Change*, the winner is the **Management in the San Cugat City Hall** project (Spain). The traditional expenses culture of this municipality was changed into a cost culture by introducing contracts between politicians and top public managers (PACTE). This project led to both the politicians and public managers thinking in the same direction and having the same values, therefore making better policies.

In addition, two projects received honourable mention, namely the **Gdynia Civic Sector project** from Poland and the **Present in School, Absent in Jail project** from Romania.

More than a year ago, the EPSA 2009 was launched by EIPA with the purpose of bringing together the best, most innovative and efficient performers at all levels of public administration in a fair and open competition. Now, one year later and after an extensive, as well as impartial and independent evaluation process, the EPSA 2009 trophy has finally been awarded. Over 200 people attended the Awards Ceremony, including special guests: Mats Odell, Swedish Minister for Local Government & Financial Markets; Ank Bijleveld, State Secretary of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior & Kingdom Relations; Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the European Commission; and Gerd Leers, the Mayor of Maastricht. All prize winners received a unique EPSA trophy, designed by a local artist from the Limburg region to reflect European excellence and innovation.

The Director-General of the European Institute of Public Administration, Marga Pröhl, stated in her opening remarks that “this project shows that public administrations have an increased focus

on citizen orientation; the use of new technologies is nowadays a key element in public administration innovation; reduction of administrative burden is high on the agenda of all governance levels and organisational development and leadership are increasingly being seen as key factors for success". The EPSA 2009 project highlights interesting insights among the demand- and process-driven changes in public administration, which can also teach the same administrations how to serve the citizen even better in this time of reducing resources.

The Awards Ceremony was the highlight of a wide range of events. On Wednesday 4 November, Gerd Leers, Mayor of Maastricht, welcomed the group of nominees and other guests to the Maastricht Town Hall where he presented the EPSA Best Practice Certificates to 40 organisations, who received recognition for their achievements. On Thursday 5 November, an international symposium was attended by 250 persons, bringing together a range of experts, politicians and European Commission representatives. "I am glad to participate in this event. An efficient and innovative public sector that is able to develop services focusing on the needs of citizens and businesses is important for creating a better Europe. EPSA plays an important role in this work by highlighting good examples and encouraging the exchange of knowledge and best practice", says Mats Odell, the Swedish Minister responsible for central government administration and local government issues.

At the Award Ceremony, Vladimir Spidla, European Commissioner, stressed that "strengthening the administrative capacity in Europe is one of my main concerns as it makes a significant contribution towards the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. Moreover, administrative capacity building is one of the key priorities of the European Social Fund – the main European financial instrument for investing in people". Although the prize winners for this year's competition have now been revealed, this is not the end of the road. Alexander Heichlinger, EPSA Project Manager, explained in a statement that he is working with his team to fulfil three dreams for the future of EPSA. "I wish that the knowledge and know-how gathered and acquired during this exercise will be made accessible in the near future to a larger audience via transfer workshops. In addition, we will pursue the idea of further developing an interactive electronic platform to remain at the service of all public administrations". Lastly, he has already sketched out some ideas for new logos for the EPSA 2011, assuring us that the mission for the next edition of EPSA has now started.

Finally, in her closing remarks Marga Pröhl said that "from here we will continue the process of further improving European public administration. Quality improvement, better performance, partnership working, citizen involvement and change management are all key issues that we have to continue addressing, and all this with a keen eye on the well-being of the European citizen."

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