

**Welcome of the DG of EIPA  
for the EPSA 2017 nominee presentations  
in the three administrative categories of the award**

Dear EPSA Participants,  
Dear EPSA Steering Committee members and evaluators,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the premises of the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) on the occasion of the final event of the EPSA 2017.
- 2017 is actually a special date for the EPSA as it is the award's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which we are also celebrating this year. In 2007, this prestigious award scheme was launched by the Bertelsmann Foundation together with the European Grouping of Public Administration (EGPA) and the University of Administrative Sciences of Speyer, in cooperation with Germany, Austria and Switzerland.
- I had the pleasure of being involved in this first round of the EPSA back then and believed in its big potential right from the start. Learning from best practices across Europe for modernising one's own public institutions and processes is essential. Since then the EPSA has come a long way to become the Europe-wide and internationally recognised award scheme it is nowadays. This is why I am particularly proud that EIPA became the institutional home of EPSA in 2009 and has since then carried out this important award scheme every two years, with the support of the European Commission and various Member States.
- So, for almost two years my colleagues and I have been taking the various steps towards the EPSA award process. We started with the first discussions with Government representatives and the European Commission, as well as our local partners – the City of Maastricht and the Province of Limburg –, without whom the EPSA would not be possible. In this respect, I would like to thank the Steering Committee members of the participating governments for their support, their confidence and the very direct and positive cooperation. And now, we finally arrived at this celebratory EPSA event today. The time has finally come that you are here and it is a special moment for the EPSA team and the whole EIPA.

- Thanks to the cooperation with the European Commission, one person per delegation of the 12 nominated projects was able to come to Maastricht at our expense. The Award Ceremony is also financially supported by the European Commission. You will understand that this support was crucial in the process, not only financially but also in the motivation and encouragement that my team and I got from this support.
- I trust that you will enjoy today's programme, which will contain – very importantly – the parallel workshops during which the 12 nominees will present their respective projects, an interactive EPSA Café where you will all exchange your ideas in an inspiring, but relaxing atmosphere, and finally the wrap up and conclusions of all the different working solutions and ideas we will have heard by the end of this day.
- These parallel workshops, the EPSA market place and the EPSA Café offer a unique opportunity to not only talk about the projects but also to exchange information with colleagues from all over Europe. We will listen to their experiences, get inspiration, inspire others, pose questions and hopefully get some useful answers. These workshops and the EPSA Café are in line with the EPSA spirit of providing an exceptional learning arena about innovative solutions in the public sector in Europe.
- However, without the enthusiasm and courage of the public administrations to contribute to EPSA, no exchange of know-how and information could take place today. Therefore, I would like to express my warm thanks to all of the EPSA 2017 submitters present today, as you are at the forefront of innovation in your respective organisations.
- The result of this year's EPSA is again proof of the need for such an award. A total of 150 applications were received this year (out of which 149 were eligible). This gave us the basis for the final EPSA 2017 publication that contains first a Trends and Practices Report analysing the findings of this edition, and then the Best Practice Catalogue where all the 34 Best Practices are briefly described and their contact details are given. You all have a printed copy of this publication in your bags. This publication is a real source of information for all public administrations throughout Europe, as well as being enjoyable to read through.

- Today we also have the opportunity to make use of the results of EPSA. We do not yet know who will actually win the 3 trophies. That will be announced tomorrow during the award ceremony. But my opinion is that we are all winners already – for different reasons: The EPSA participants and Best Practice Certificate recipients not just because of the certificates you received yesterday; no, but because with your innovative practices, you have joined the European network of public sector excellence and are all innovators and change agents in your public entities. By sharing, one always wins: new insights, valuable feedback and new ideas.

And all the others present here are also winners, because we will learn from the experience of the EPSA participants.

So let us make the most of today, but let me now hand over the floor to my colleague and EPSA 2017 Project Leader, Mr Harrie Scholtens.

Thank you for your attention!