

**Speech of the DG of EIPA
at the Reception at the Municipality of Maastricht
(Monday, 20 November 2017)**

Dear Deputy Mayor,
Dear Representatives of Governments
and of the EU Commission,
Dear EPSA Participants,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

- A warm welcome also on behalf of the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA).
- It is wonderful to have you all here in the beautiful historic town hall of the City of Maastricht.
- Many thanks to you, Deputy Mayor, André Willems, for receiving us here once again in this hall that shows the historic dimension of this city.
- And it is very interesting to note that awareness of the long history of this part of the world is not in contradiction with innovation and openness to Europe and the world.
- For EIPA, Maastricht is a special place. It has hosted the Headquarters of EIPA since 1981. We also have offices in Barcelona, and Luxembourg, but the basis of EIPA has always been the City of Maastricht. As you probably know already, EIPA was established in order to help public administrations with their questions related to European integration. During the more than 35 years of EIPA's existence the questions have of course changed a lot and EIPA's programme has thus changed accordingly over time. But it is still the place where civil servants come to find high quality answers to their questions.
- With its location close to Belgium, Germany and France as well as the international university and the European institutes, in combination with the beautiful old streets and facades – this is attractive for the many guests that come to follow EIPA's seminars. By the way, last year EIPA had all together more than 11,000 participants in the wide range of seminars that we offer to civil servants of the EU MS and to the EU institutions.
- In any case, Maastricht has become a meeting place for representatives of public administration in Europe. Just like today!
- The European Public Sector Award is also another good reason to come to Maastricht.

- Dear EPSA participants, all of you have participated in the EPSA process. You may have found the idea of a European Public Sector Award to be a bit challenging; maybe you consulted with your colleagues about it. Possibly you found it a bit hard to present your story in English language. Maybe you called the EPSA Helpdesk to find out more information. In any case, you followed our invitation to describe your practice, your project, your creative solution. You registered on our website and you got in touch with the EPSA team.
- Your application was very successful! All of you are already winners of the European Public Sector Award!
- You are here, ready to share your experiences and ready to hear about the stories of the other applicants. Thanks to people like you, public administration is also a place where innovation is taking place. Innovation needs thinking, inspiration, a good team, transpiration, trial and error, frustration, tolerance and also a good deal of persistence.
- You seem to have all these characteristics. Our evaluation process gave us evidence that your projects are of top quality. And it was very difficult to decide between the individual projects. Our evaluation process was very refined and every project was checked by independent evaluators + the jury members. In case of doubt, every case was intensively discussed during the evaluators' consensus meeting.
- Sometimes it was very challenging to take a decision. But in the end we selected 34 applicants that represent the top group from the 149 eligible applications in total.
- Out of this 34, we selected in a second step the 12 nominees for the EPSA awards, 3 per award category (the European and national, the Regional and the supra-local and local level).
- As I said earlier: all of you are already winners in this award. Because you participated and because you have succeeded in the evaluation process to receive a high recognition through the Best Practice Certificate.
- Now, Deputy Mayor Willems and I would like to hand over to you a certificate that proves your success and which you can also use at home as some evidence of the success of your application.
- We will deliver these recognitions according to the respective administrative category under which your project was submitted.
- Before starting the ceremony, please allow me to thank Deputy Mayor Willems for the warm welcome here in the Town Hall of Maastricht and for his kind and continuous support to EPSA.
- Dear Deputy Mayor Willems, many thanks for all your support that we have enjoyed so far. Many thanks also to your staff for their advice and

good ideas throughout the preparation process. We appreciate this cooperation with you and your team very much.

- But now, let us start the ceremony....