

THE NETWORK OF DIRECTORS OF INSTITUTES AND SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (DISPA)

1 When it was set up

Following the historic events of 1989, public administrations in the reunited Europe decided to establish various networks for mutual cooperation and the exchange of good practice and experience. The most notable of these is the "European Public Administration Network" (EUPAN) which is composed of the Directors-General for public administration in the member states.

In May 1995, at an EUPAN meeting organised under the French presidency, it was decided to ask the Directors of the institutes and schools of public administration to organise a meeting among themselves later that year.

This inaugural meeting took place on 27 October 1995 on the premises of the European Institute for Public Administration (EIPA) in Maastricht and was attended by the Directors of the schools in the EU and the so-called central and eastern European countries.

2 How it is organised

From the outset, the network has been organised on a purely informal basis with no obligation on the Directors to take part, although the vast majority of them do. Mutual exchanges of ideas flourished and meetings of the network became more regular as time passed, as did the variety of themes that were discussed.

Since 1997, the member state holding the rotating Presidency of the EU has usually organised a DISPA meeting. Since the German Presidency of 2007, the meetings have generally been prepared by a "troika" composed of the schools in the countries of the past, present and two subsequent Presidencies. The European School of Administration is also associated, notably to contribute to coordinating the network's activities and ensuring a degree of continuity.

DISPA has informal links with EUPAN without being part of this network's formal structures.

3 Who takes part

The size of the network has inevitably expanded in line with the successive enlargements of the EU. In addition to the Directors of the schools in the Union, those from neighbouring countries are invited on an ad hoc basis. EIPA, the European Commission and, since its creation in 2005, the European School of Administration participate as well.

The institutes and schools are very varied in terms of their role, status, mission and financing. They vary from commercial or semi-commercial organisations to schools which are an integral part of the government structure. This variety does not however diminish the

usefulness of cooperation among them, which in many cases is considerable, or affect the dynamics of the network.

4 What it does

As a result of the exchanges of experience and best practice that form the basis of DISPA meetings, its members have among other things been able to set up various joint activities on an ad hoc or even more permanent, have commissioned studies, developed common training programmes, offered traineeships and so on.

Some of the principal themes that have been treated during DISPA meetings are: public service reform, learning and development for senior management and leaders, new training methods, public service ethos, the evaluation of the impact of training and development programmes.

5 The Strasbourg Manifesto

In 2008 under the French Presidency, the network adopted this "manifesto" in an effort to provide a common thread to its future activities. Its members committed themselves to adopt a more systematic approach to their work, particularly against the backdrop of the rapidly changing landscape of public administration, the blurring of barriers between the public and private sector, the increasing turnover of public servants on account of demographic and employment trends, the increasingly high expectation of the public vis-à-vis their governments and administrations, and the changing role of senior leaders in a rapidly evolving economic and social climate.

6 The Budapest/Warsaw resolution

Building on the added impetus that the network derived from the Strasbourg Manifesto, its members decided to reinforce their cooperation in very practical ways, as expressed in the resolution that resulted from discussions at their meetings under the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies. The meeting to be held in May 2012 under the Danish Presidency will come back to a more detailed action plan for implementing these ideas.

7 The Lisbon Treaty

This makes the work of DISPA more relevant than ever, introducing as it does a new competence called "administrative cooperation" which encourages the EU institutions and member states to further develop their collaboration, and mentioning specifically common training actions as an effective means for achieving this.