

“Weathering the storm – Creative solutions in a time of crisis”

In the past five years, public administrations across Europe have been facing mounting strain on their public finances. In turn, this has led to pressure for changes in the way public services are delivered, as well as a re-assessment of the scope and nature of services to be provided by public authorities, independently of how they are delivered. Yet, it is precisely in times of economic crisis that citizens have a greater need for public services.

In response to these pressures, public administrations are trying out innovative ways of problem-solving in service provision, by designing better processes, as well as through new structural solutions in cooperation with partners.

Some public authorities are responding well to the challenges of the crisis with measures targeting effectiveness, efficiency and productivity gains, whilst trying to maintain the high level and quality of their operations. This theme will give them the chance to be proud of their achievements and to showcase how they are dealing with these tough challenges.

Outcomes that need to be demonstrated

Successful cases could, for example, demonstrate one or more of following outcomes:

- improved quality or volume of service delivery at the same or lower cost;
- maintained service delivery at a lower cost;
- delivery of higher levels of service standards at a proportionately lower level of cost increase;
- achievement of sustainable debt/deficit levels;
- achievement of wider citizen involvement in decisions;
- high economic and/or financial returns from public investment or high levels of private investment levered by well-directed public investment.

Equally, cases could demonstrate structural or process changes leading to successful outcomes such as:

- re-organisation or relocation of services (e.g. mergers, centralisation or decentralisation) ;
- changes to service methods (e.g. from internal to external service delivery, between different types of external service delivery, public-public cooperation (including shared services), cooperation between the public sector and civil society or public-private partnership for new or upgraded infrastructure);
- different ownership models (e.g. use of mixed capital entities or privatisation);
- better external or internal communication;
- blending use of new technologies;
- using social media more effectively;
- more effective procurement.

Different levels and forms of cooperation

There are also different dimensions within which success can be demonstrated, such as, in particular:

- between different levels of public administration within a Member State or between different Member States;
- between different regions/municipalities in the same or different Member States;
- public sector-to-business or public sector-to-citizen interaction;

- by the public sector acting as a platform for business-to-business collaboration or citizen-to-citizen collaboration;
- by the empowerment of communities by a public administration.

The above is merely indicative and allows for many different ways for public administrations to celebrate their achievements.