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## **EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE (CDDG)**

### **REPORT ON GREEN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Adopted by the CDDG at its 18<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
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Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by the  
Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity  
Democratic Governance Division

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## Introduction

1. The 2023 Reykjavik Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe reflected the urgency of addressing climate change and encouraged member States to act without delay to counter the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Considerations of green issues are therefore an essential dimension in the pursuit of Good Democratic Governance at all levels.

2. With the challenge for public institutions to steer towards sustainability in a world characterised by multiple crises, the quality of public administration and governance is higher on the political agenda than ever. After decades of relative neglect, countries have realised that sustainable development and green public administration can only be achieved with strong, effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Well-formulated goals and policy targets have their limits if governance systems are inadequate.

3. Therefore, public administration can and should lead the way to promote and enforce the reduction of carbon emissions, protection of the environment, and better management of natural resources. Decisive action on the part of the public administration in turn will encourage individuals, organisations, and businesses to play their part.

4. This report is inspired by the Reykjavik Declaration, by the discussions at the Conference on Green Public Administration organised on 26 April 2023 by the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) in cooperation with the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, and by the Principles of Good Democratic Governance, adopted in September 2023. It was prepared by the CDDG Working group with an expert support of PS4SD – Public Strategy for Sustainable Development.

5. The report contains practical guidance, it is addressed to the practitioners working on the green transition. Case studies are taken mainly from the CDDG Rapid Response Service No 55 on experiences with green public administration.

6. Chapter 1 places green public administration in the context of the dynamics in which administrations must perform and introduces the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as comprehensive framework for action. It explains that for effective green public administration both policy and governance are needed. Chapter 2 briefly describes a context in which GPA is pursued at the international, national, regional and local levels and provides examples of administration at each of those levels. Chapter 3 introduces a three-step Guidance and presents typical challenges to green public administration. Chapter 4 contains conclusions and key findings.

7. The Report is meant to be shared widely with local, regional, and national governments throughout Europe, so that the virtuous circle of green learning and practice can help us all build a better and sustainable future.

# 1. What is Green Public Administration and why do we need it?

8. The term “Green Public Administration” (GPA) is commonly used to describe action plans, measures, policies and governance, by public authorities and bodies in a variety of areas, such as:

- *tackling climate change*, for example by enacting climate laws, implementing net zero policies, investing in renewable energies, promoting circular economy, developing green jobs;
- *protecting biodiversity*, including forests, wetlands and the sea; implementing environmental impact assessments;
- *protecting other aspects of the environment*, such as through measures to reduce pollution levels; ensuring clean water; limiting and managing waste, including plastic;
- integrating environment and climate in *ex ante regulatory impact assessments* and *ex post evaluations*;
- *using fiscal and other financial instruments* to promote green/sustainability transitions, for example by shifting the tax base from labour to pollution and fossil energy; by stepping up green public procurement; and by making greening and sustainability visible in the annual budgeting cycle;
- *greening the internal organisation*, for instance by minimising carbon and environmental footprint of running and managing public administration itself;
- *strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development*, including addressing the environmental footprint on developing countries (spill-over effects).

9. For the purposes of this report, Green Public Administration refers to a process of decision-making at all levels of government (international, supranational, national, and subnational) which integrate considerations of environmental and climate change issues, in order to achieve a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the obligations under the Paris Agreement.

10. GPA is an integral part of the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5 on the Principles of Good Democratic Governance, where the principle of sustainability and long-term orientation stipulates that “*There should be an effort to maximise the sustainability of decisions and actions of government, public institutions and public officials and take into account their potential impact on future generations.*” True to this principle, addressing environment and climate should be linked to social and economic challenges, domestic and external impacts, and current as well as future challenges.

11. Public administration translates legislation and policies into concrete actions. It provides essential services, manages public spending, steers investment and innovation among others. To effectively deliver and serve the people, public administration has to have the ability to react and respond to changing and evolving needs, while at the same time maintaining the

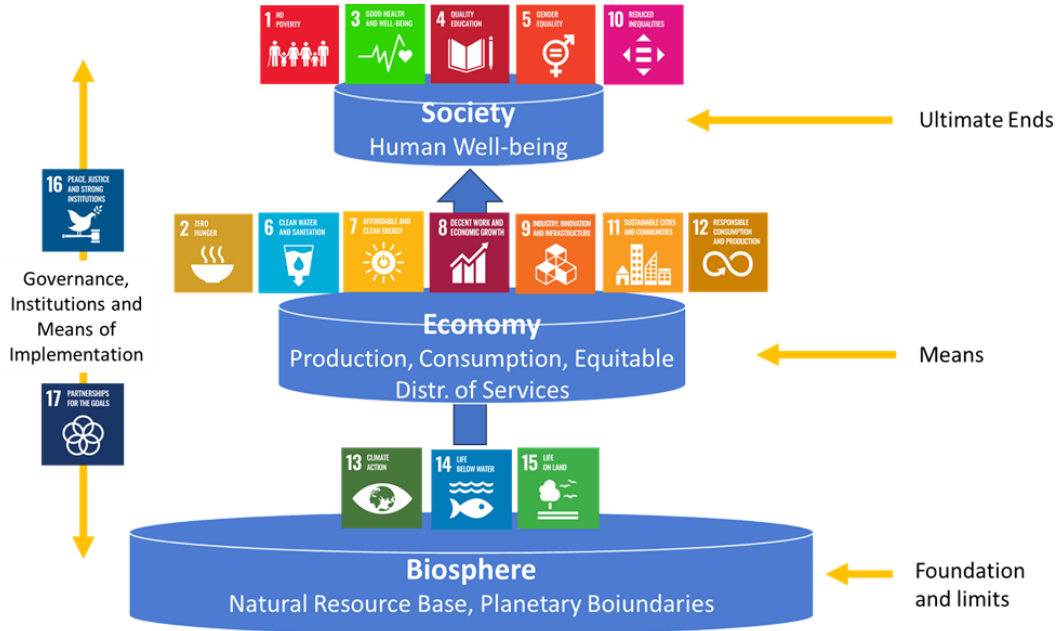
standards set out in the principles of good democratic governance, so as to ensure trust and be reliable and credible.

12. Whereas *policy* gives the direction to achieve objectives and to deliver services, it is the *governance* that enables implementation. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to 2030 present a very comprehensive, and accepted by all member States, framework for action on green and social challenges, as well as the economy needed (as a means, not an end) to achieve these goals. The SDGs include policy and governance goals and targets. SDGs 1-15 are primarily *policy* Goals. They include one Goal on climate action (SDG 13) and two Goals on biodiversity (SDGs 14 and 15).

13. Goals 16 and 17 focus on the *governance*. In SDG 16, rule of law and quality of public institutions are central. This sets basic conditions for democracy. SDG 17 contains targets on the 'means of implementation', including on 'policy coherence for sustainable development', technology and finance. That the transition to sustainability should also be fair and just, is expressed in several targets of the SDGs.

14. The policy Goals can be represented as three subsets, each representing one dimension of sustainable development: environment, social and economic. In the spirit of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the environment is the foundation and represents the planetary boundaries in which humanity has to stay to prevent disasters. The economy is a key means to reach the objectives of the SDGs. On top, the ultimate end, is human wellbeing: the social dimension. The governance Goals 16 and 17 are enablers of all three levels and ensure coherence and consistency. The below represents this 'hierarchy of goals'.

*A hierarchy of Goals: between foundation, means and ends*<sup>1</sup>



15. With regard to climate and environmental matters, public administration acts as both decision maker/service provider and as a consumer/user of products. It is thus in the position to play a leading role with regards to the reduction of carbon emissions, better management of energy and other resources, and other environmentally impactful factors. Leading by example has the potential to encourage individuals, organisations and businesses to play their part. All levels of government are concerned: local, regional and central, as well as supranational and international.

16. As the mid-term review of the SDGs at the UN Summit in September 2023 has shown, progress on most of the SDGs is lagging, while attaining the environmental SDGs risks moving into the wrong direction. The fact that for the past several years most countries are facing a cascade of environmental and other crises makes the challenge for public administration even more complex, important and urgent. Some of the crises – such as climate change – are at the same time complex and even ‘wicked’ problems. Wicked problems are difficult to define, they have a non-linear dynamic and seem unsolvable. They are ambiguous and the list of potential solutions is endless. No single country or public sector organisation – from a solitary city to the central government – can tackle these issues alone.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Elaborated based on PBL (2018).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Home/Blog> Can crisis governance drive out the capacity for complexity governance? By Louis Meuleman, Vice-Chair of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and Visiting Professor at Public Governance Institute, KU Leuven University, Belgium.

17. One of the central challenges today is to combine 'fast' crisis management and 'slow' complexity governance. If crisis management becomes a 'new normal' in the current era of poly-crisis, governments need to find ways to address the tendency that a crisis-focus can pull away, and at times partially undermine, resources from complexity governance; it can result in abuse of fast-track legislative procedures, and in absence of stakeholder engagement. To counter this, public administrations at all levels should be able to use a balanced set of tools and mechanisms, mixing capacity of collaboration with more traditional forms of maintaining the rule of law and law-making. It requires institutional learning and skills, systems-thinking and innovation.

18. Green public administration represents an important step forward, but to be successful it should be flanked by addressing social challenges of sustainable development such as inequality at the same time as green issues. The European Commission has integrated the SDGs, including the social dimension, into its economic governance cycle (the European Semester) and Better Regulation guidelines, followed by several EU member states<sup>3</sup> and has published a report with general guidance on how the SDGs can be integrated in public management and administration in a thematic report under its EU Public Administration Country Knowledge (EUPACK) programme.<sup>4</sup>

19. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) of SDG implementation underline the fact that the social dimension is crucial to engage stakeholders. A recent good example is the 2<sup>nd</sup> VLR of Helsinki.<sup>5</sup>

20. As mentioned, green public administration includes policy and governance challenges. Although it is important to distinguish policy (WHAT and WHEN: the visions, goals, targets, timelines) from governance (HOW: the mechanisms, instruments, tools, skills, etc., and WHO does what), they are intertwined and even can overlap (as illustrated below). For example, promoting environmental taxation is a policy decision about a governance tool.

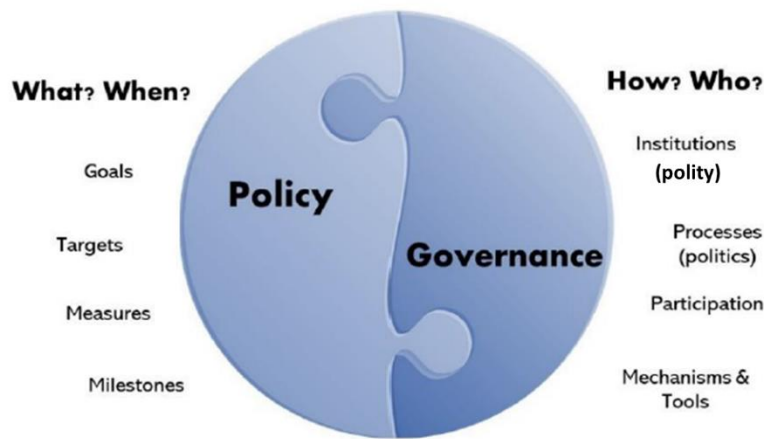
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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.ps4sd.eu/projects/project-peer-to-peer-for-sustainability-in-impact-assessment/>

<sup>4</sup> Niestroy and Meuleman, 2022. [Managing the implementation of the SDGs](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-06/helsinki-from-agenda-to-action-2023.pdf>

*Policy and governance cannot be separated<sup>6</sup>:*



21. There are several reasons why distinguishing policy and governance aspects of public administration is important. For example, policy is often more politically and societally sensitive than governance. Governance structures and mechanisms may be longer-lasting and more resilient against disruption than policies. When a government initiative fails, the first reaction is often to blame the policy goals, targets or timelines. However, many failures are governance failures rather than policy failures.

22. The contribution from **Slovenia** to the survey for this Report formulated the challenge of green public administration in the following way:

*"Due to the scale, speed, and unpredictability of changes, governments are now forced to introduce new governance models that will be able to successfully and timely design viable solutions to climate change, pandemic risks, rapid technological change, depletion of natural resources, large-scale environmental damage, war and violent conflict, extreme poverty, demographic change, and global migration flows. In order to achieve this, new approaches to management and organization in public administration are necessary, and sustainability must be incorporated into the institutional structure of public administration, so that it can generate cooperative and feasible solutions. Therefore, transformative management is focused on building the capacity of employees in public administration to be able to develop and codesign initiatives and solution that can keep in step with constantly changing circumstances."*

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<sup>6</sup> Meuleman 2022



23. GPA inherently touches upon politically sensitive issues, often because of the conflict of interest between long-term climate and environmental protection goals and short-term economic goals of the polluters. It is therefore important to be aware that the same policy goals can be attained through very different governance frameworks, and that the most effective governance framework may not be the first that springs to mind when setting it up. This is linked to the fact that governance – which is about *the way how* problems can be solved – has a strong cultural dimension.

24. Three basic governance styles are usually distinguished: hierarchical governance (formal structures, rule of law, accountability); network governance (informal structures, consensus, partnerships); and market governance (self-regulation, empowerment, competition, fiscal incentives, and contracts).<sup>7</sup> Public servants should be able and encouraged to select, blend or switch between the most suitable governance style, according to circumstance, each having pros and cons.<sup>8</sup> This approach is called ‘metagovernance’<sup>9</sup>.

25. Different administrative values and traditions may result in different ‘default’ green governance frameworks. A policy to promote separation of household waste may need a legal obligation (hierarchical governance) in countries in which people are used to a government that provides and enforces rules to change behaviour; awareness raising campaigns and partnerships in countries with a consensus culture (network governance); and financial incentives (or disincentives like penalties) where administrations are primarily seen as service providers (market governance).

26. Combining the governance styles can make GPA more successful, as illustrated by the example of separate collection of biodegradable waste in the **Slovak Republic**. This became mandatory for all municipalities (based on the Law prepared by the Ministry of Environment) in 2021 (a hierarchical governance measure). The implementation of this legal measure demonstrated a high separation rate in municipalities that had distributed special containers directly to households (to every house and every apartment). Municipalities that introduced collection without distribution of baskets or bags to citizens had three times lower results. This example shows that changing behaviour may require more than only legislation. Offering concrete tools such as containers helped raising the awareness that this should be a collective change of behaviour. This measure showed an understanding of the principles and tools of network and market governance.

27. Hierarchical governance may work well when there is a general trust that government makes laws that are necessary. The OECD publishes periodically a **trust in government** index.<sup>10</sup> Applying network governance requires a high level of trust in society, as this style is

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<sup>7</sup> See e.g., L. Meuleman 2008; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2017), [Toolbox Quality of Public Administration](#), p.214-215

<sup>9</sup> Meuleman 2008

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/governance/trust-in-government/>

based upon informal rules, institutions and collaborations. It is no coincidence that the capacity to exercise network governance is higher in high-trust societies than in low-trust societies.

28. To conclude, the three typical governance styles can be used as a GPA toolbox.

## 2. Examples of policies and governance at all levels of government

### 2.1 International and supranational GPA initiatives

29. Green public administration should support tackling the current environmental problems in their wider context. As UN Environment formulated in 2022, we have a “triple planetary crisis consisting of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution; we have deepening inequality; SDGs achievement is off-track; institutional siloes at the national and internal levels; weakening multilateralism and the consequent need for global solidarity (UNEP 2022).<sup>11</sup> To address these problems, there is a rich landscape of multilateral, international, and supranational initiatives and agreements. Together, they form the context in which GPA operates and needs to be developed further. The following major initiatives and agreements are examples.

30. At the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the **Council of Europe** held in May 2023 in Reykjavik, the member States underlined the urgency of additional efforts to protect the environment and address climate change. The Summit initiated the “Reykjavík process” of strengthening the work of the Council of Europe in this field, with the aim of making the environment a visible priority for the Organisation. It also encouraged the establishment of a new intergovernmental committee on environment and human rights - the “Reykjavík Committee”.

31. While the **European Convention on Human Rights** does not include a specific right in relation to the environment nor a reference to climate change, the **European Court of Human Rights** has so far ruled on over 300 environment-related cases, applying concepts such as the right to life, free speech and family life to a wide range of issues including pollution, disasters of a natural origin or caused by human activity, and access to environmental information. The Court regularly updates its Factsheet on Environment<sup>12</sup>.

32. Furthermore, the **European Social Charter** guarantees the right to a healthy environment as part of the right to protection of health. Judgements from the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the European Committee of Social Rights have found that

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<sup>11</sup> UNEP 2022. Delivering on the vision of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/fs\\_environment\\_eng.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/fs_environment_eng.pdf)

environmental harms violate a range of human rights, including the right to life and the protection of health.

33. The **Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)** works on the interconnection between the protection of human rights and the environment. The 2022 Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment<sup>13</sup> calls on member States to recognise, at the national level, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right.

34. Council of Europe has several other legal instruments which help protect the environment. These include the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, which prevents such things as the construction of highways, bridges, and airports in protected areas, and the Landscape Convention, which ensures sustainable development based on a balance of social needs, economic activity, and environmental concerns.

35. The new tools being prepared by the Council of Europe include a new Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law. Cross-border environmental crime is often motivated by profit, at the expense of the planet and future generations. The new Criminal Convention will define environmental crimes, it will ensure punishment and deterrence, as well as prevention, with better training for law enforcement officials, and more education and awareness-raising on environmental issues. Public authorities should also be able to reclaim some of the profits of environmental crime, for which they often foot the bill, and this new legal instrument might also help them do that with fines and other penalties.

36. A separate case was presented at the PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) and at the GPA Conference regarding the ecocide committed by the Russian Federation in **Ukraine**, and the devastating consequences of the loss of biodiversity, forestry, and water and air pollution. There is a need for an environmental tribunal, registry of the environmental crimes, and creation of the reparations mechanism.

37. The 2015 **UN** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been introduced as a comprehensive framework for action that is adopted by all member States. After the mid-term SDG Summit in September 2023, it became clear that major investments are needed to strengthen public sector capabilities to unlock accelerated delivery of the SDGs.

38. On 17 September 2023, the UN Secretary-General launched a 'High-Impact Initiative on building public sector capabilities for the future (FutureGov)'.<sup>14</sup> The Initiative is designed to support countries on their path to strengthening public institutions to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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<sup>13</sup> [CM/Rec\(2022\)20](#)

<sup>14</sup> <https://unpan.un.org/sites/default/files/events/2023/230901%20Brochure%20-%20FutureGov.pdf>

39. Another important context factor for the development of GPA is the **Paris Agreement** (2015) which is a legally binding international treaty adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference. It details climate objectives and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel dependency and thereby to limit the global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels.

40. The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC) is the scientific advisory body that oversees the process. In its Sixth Assessment Report published in March 2023, the IPCC pointed out that "Effective climate action is enabled by political commitment, well-aligned multilevel governance, institutional frameworks, laws, policies and strategies and enhanced access to finance and technology. Clear goals, coordination across multiple policy domains, and inclusive governance processes facilitate effective climate action. Regulatory and economic instruments can support deep emissions reductions and climate resilience if scaled up and applied widely."<sup>15</sup>

41. While the IPCC describes enabling factors, progress towards ensuring enabling factors as well as fulfilling the targets remains slow. Overall, the IPCC stressed the sense of urgency and the need to accelerate implementation, as states are not on track to keep rise of temperature below 2 degrees.

42. In 2020, the **European Green Deal** (EGD) was adopted. It is a good example of Green Public Administration because it has changed the priorities of the **European Commission** down to the very core of the organization. The EGD is an overarching framework and a roadmap for the EU to achieve sustainability by 2050. It aims at transforming "*the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy*".

43. The **EU** member States have committed to turning the EU into the first climate neutral continent by 2050. To get there, States pledged to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. An **EU Climate law** came into force in 2021 making this goal legally binding.

44. Thus, on the international and supranational levels, regulatory and legal frameworks have integrated climate and environmental considerations, offering decision-makers a starting reference point. However, the ambitions expressed in the international legal standards need to be translated into concrete requirements and administrative actions at the national and local levels.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/resources/spm-headline-statements/>

## 2.2 National, regional and local GPA initiatives

45. Governments are responding to the impact of climate change and environmental degradation with policies and governance frameworks that should steer and guide a transition towards sustainability. The Council of Europe's Principles of Good Democratic Governance are crucial to ensure a peaceful, just and fair transition.

46. One of the principles of Good Democratic Governance is the need for "efficient, effective and sound administration". This principle also relates to good multi-level governance: it is important to have an adequate distribution of power, responsibilities, and resources across all levels of government, based on the principle of subsidiarity and respect for local democracy, as stipulated in the European Charter for Local Self-Government. There should also be efficient inter-institutional co-ordination with effective oversight mechanisms.

47. Effective multilevel governance (MLG) has become essential for GPA. The CDDG Report on MLG<sup>16</sup> illustrates the requisite variations across countries, while a common requirement seems to be to make the MLG systems less formal and rigid by introducing more collaborative aspects.

48. One common challenge to MLG is silo mentality. Many national and subnational strategies and action plans are targeted at a specific issue, sector or process. Public administration is also structured alongside sectors. The silo approach is not only visible in institutions and in parallel processes, but also in the mindsets of policymakers: there is limited cross-sectoral collaboration. In the light of the cross-cutting challenges such as climate change and environmental protection, public administrations need to align and integrate their different policies better and seek to ensure policy cohesion. To achieve this, the silo mentality must change into a mindset of collaboration.

49. Some of the most popular current trends in GPA include green public procurement; green budgeting; green fiscal policies and taxation; incentives for enterprises and consumers; smart digitalisation; agile working methods; innovative education practices; cross-border cooperation for environmental protection; youth and civil participation in the green decision-making. Some of these trends are introduced in more detail below, with a focus on national government but also on the links to subnational administrations.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-multilevel-governance-final-2768-6653-0568-v-1/1680ad9120>

## Tackling climate change: laws, net zero policies and sustainability strategies

50. The Paris Agreement sets out clear targets for decarbonisation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. States are called upon to implement necessary changes to meet these targets. Many states have started enacting climate laws and establishing institutional and organisational structures to manage the transition.

51. **Germany** enacted a climate law (*Klimaschutz-Gesetz, or KSG*) in 2019. The Federal Constitutional Court stroke down parts of the KSG as incompatible with fundamental rights for failing to set sufficient provisions for emission cuts beyond 2030 and also ruled that "one generation must not be allowed to consume large portions of the CO<sup>2</sup> budget while bearing a relatively minor share of the reduction effort, if this would involve leaving subsequent generations with a drastic reduction burden and expose their lives to serious losses of freedom". The ruling is interesting in many ways, not least as it introduces the principle of generational equity.

52. Research shows that **climate litigation** is used by a variety of actors to either accelerate or slow down the implementation of ambitious climate policies. As per 2023, climate cases of all types have been documented in twenty countries in Europe. The **UK, France, Germany** and **Spain** are the countries with the most cases filed before their domestic courts and collectively account for more than half the total number of cases. More than sixty cases have now been filed before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)<sup>17</sup>. This means that governments and decision-makers should consider the litigation risks when developing climate laws and aim for consensus building and stakeholder involvement, legal clarity and certainty, as well as policy cohesion.

53. The **UK** recently created the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero with the responsibilities to delivering security of energy supply; ensuring properly functioning energy markets; encouraging greater energy efficiency; and seizing the opportunities of net zero to lead the world in new green industries.<sup>18</sup>

54. **Slovenia** highlighted that to achieve the 2050 vision, environmental protection policy cannot be implemented in isolation from policies in other sectors such as agriculture, transport, energy, tourism. It is inextricably linked to the broader economic and social development.

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Climate-change-law-in-Europe-what-do-new-EU-climate-laws-mean-for-the-courts.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-energy-security-and-net-zero/about>

55. Having a robust and clear national regulatory framework in place is a first step. It is at **local and regional level** that implementation happens. In addition, this level is closest to the citizens. It is therefore not surprising that the local and regional authorities are adopting their own climate policies, strategies and action plans, in line with the national plans, and often even more ambitious.

56. The **Flemish** Local Energy and Climate Pact<sup>19</sup> encompasses nearly 300 municipalities and revolves around four key pillars: nature-based solutions, with a focus on urban greening; mitigation policies, with a focus on energy efficiency and RES; mobility and development of shared, active, and sustainable solutions; and water management, including re-use and up-use. The Pact envisions to hold a stakeholders' climate dialogue every two years to co-design climate objectives and actions.

57. In **Hungary**, the 2016 Operational Programme call supported the development of a methodology for municipal climate strategies, on the basis of which a number of municipal climate strategies have been developed, although they were not legally required.

58. The international organisation of Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) developed the concept of **local green deals**. Local green deals are delivery routes allowing cities and towns to accelerate and scale up their transition towards more sustainable economic models. They are based on four principles:

- Governance: joint governance and shared responsibility to coordinate sustainable actions more effectively.
- Partnership: changing the role of Local Government, from delivering sustainability alone to convening local actors: leveraging energy, resources and ideas.
- Integrated goals: cutting across silos and ensuring that objectives do not conflict with each other.
- Action: adopting long term agreements to cooperate, with set goals and timescales.

59. Addressing climate change is a broad and cross-cutting challenge, at all levels. The Towards Carbon Neutral Municipalities (Hinku) network in **Finland** has brought together municipalities, businesses, citizens and experts to create and carry out solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions<sup>20</sup>; the *Circwaste* project has produced a tool aimed at making it easier for municipalities to promote circular economy between different sectors on a large scale. Experience gained in the municipality of Riihimäki with circular economy audits will be used to develop the tool further<sup>21</sup>. Addressing climate change is a broad and cross-cutting

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<sup>19</sup>[https://www.climate-chance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/bt2022\\_cas-detude\\_belgique\\_flandre\\_eng.pdf](https://www.climate-chance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/bt2022_cas-detude_belgique_flandre_eng.pdf)

<sup>20</sup><https://hiilineutraalisuomi.fi/en-US/Hinku>

<sup>21</sup>[https://www.materiaalitkiertoon.fi/en-US/Current/New\\_ideas\\_from\\_circular\\_economy\\_audits\\_f\(57644\)](https://www.materiaalitkiertoon.fi/en-US/Current/New_ideas_from_circular_economy_audits_f(57644))

challenge, at all levels. There is also a dedicated online portal to disseminate information on good practices and solutions<sup>22</sup>.

## Protecting biodiversity and tackling pollution

60. Protecting the environment is the ultimate objective of GPA. For the past several decades, most countries have focused their ambitions and resources, with more or less ambition, to take measures to reduce pollution levels; ensuring clean water; limiting and managing waste, including plastic; protecting biodiversity, including forests, wetlands and the sea; implementing environmental impact assessments, etcetera.

61. **Effective environmental integration**<sup>23</sup> in other policy areas has been and still is one of the greatest challenges. It is there where conflicting interests must be dealt with. GPA should enable this, through dedicated instruments such as ex ante environmental impact assessments and regulatory impact assessments, standards and permitting procedures, organisational mechanisms, promoting a 'green' mindset, and actions to implement SDG target 17.14 on policy coherence for sustainable development. The European Commission's Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) country reports contain challenges and good practice examples from the 27 EU countries.<sup>24</sup>

62. The success of environmental integration depends among others on effective organisation and coordination. Each country has its own constraints and opportunities. In **Italy**, environmental policy is integrated with the broader sustainable development agenda. The Ministry of Environment was incorporated into a new enlarged Ministry of Ecological Transition in 2021 combining environmental and energy responsibilities. The Minister also has the role of co-ordinating the new Inter-ministerial Committee for Ecological Transition (CITE). A national ecological transition plan (PITE) was adopted in 2022, and the CITE is also in charge of the national sustainable development strategy (NSDS) which was revised in 2022/23 with a strong focus on policy coherence for sustainable development and on other enabling tools to empower participation and promote a culture for sustainability.<sup>25</sup>

63. Many environmental challenges and their causes come together at the local level. Cities are therefore keen to find integrated solutions and have often developed inspiring, positive narratives that show what the benefits are for citizens. **Estonia's** capital **Tallinn** gained the title of sustainability and innovation champion linked to its selection as 'Green Capital of Europe' in 2023 due to their systemic approach to green governance and interlinked strategic

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<sup>22</sup> <https://kestavyysloikka.ymparisto.fi/en/>

<sup>23</sup> In this report the term 'integration' is used as synonym of the term 'mainstreaming' which is used more often in the context of sustainable development.

<sup>24</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/environmental-implementation-review\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/environmental-implementation-review_en)

<sup>25</sup> EIR country report Italy 2022. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=comnat%3ASWD\\_2022\\_0275\\_FIN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=comnat%3ASWD_2022_0275_FIN)



goals. Tallinn's main themes are biodiversity, sustainable governance, and climate and green innovation.<sup>26</sup>

### Green public procurement

64. According to the World Bank, public procurement represents on average 13% to 20% of GDP<sup>27</sup> across the world. By using their purchasing power to choose goods, services and works with a reduced climate and environmental impact, governments could thus substantially contribute to achieving sustainability goals. A recent report by the Stockholm Environment Institute showed that at the EU level "Government purchasing accounts for 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions. It follows, then, that building environmental requirements into these purchases can drive down governments' share of this pollution and help countries meet their climate goals."<sup>28</sup> **The Netherlands** and **Belgium** are among the countries with good practice experience on green public procurement, and the European Commission has developed voluntary GPP criteria for use by national and subnational administrations.<sup>29</sup>

65. Green public procurement (GPP) can also become a driver for innovation, providing the industry with incentives to develop environmental-friendly and climate neutral products and services. However, the potential also depends on the size of the market and the level of economic development and integration.

66. The OECD publication "Going Green: Best Practices for Public Procurement"<sup>30</sup> offers a collection of successful practices in the field, covering topics such as: Green Public Procurement Legal and Policy Framework; Understanding Market Capacity and Assessing Costs and Benefits; Introducing Environmental Standards in Procurement; Professionalising Green Public Procurement; Raising Awareness and Monitoring Green Public Procurement. The EU has developed a catalogue of Green Public Procurement criteria<sup>31</sup>. The World Economic Forum's Green Public Procurement: Catalysing the Net-Zero Economy<sup>32</sup> also offers a framework and guidelines. Considering extensive work done by other organisations, this Report will not go into details regarding green public procurement.

67. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that member States are increasingly using the instrument of green, sustainable public procurement to integrate climate and environmental considerations into their purchasing activities. Examples include **Greece, Slovenia, Germany, Lithuania** and **Latvia** to name a few. The Public Procurement Office in **Lithuania** opted in addition for an open data approach.<sup>33</sup> Opening the data led to an increased

<sup>26</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/tallinn-starts-2023-european-green-capital-2023-01-20\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/tallinn-starts-2023-european-green-capital-2023-01-20_en)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/03/23/global-public-procurement-database-share-compare-improve>

<sup>28</sup> Green public procurement: a key to decarbonizing construction and road transport in the EU: <https://doi.org/10.51414/sei2023.007>

<sup>29</sup> [https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/green-public-procurement/gpp-criteria-and-requirements\\_en](https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/green-public-procurement/gpp-criteria-and-requirements_en)

<sup>30</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/gov/public-procurement/Going\\_Green\\_Best\\_Practices\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Procurement.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/gov/public-procurement/Going_Green_Best_Practices_for_Sustainable_Procurement.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu\\_gpp\\_criteria\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_gpp_criteria_en.htm)

<sup>32</sup> [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Green\\_Public\\_Procurement\\_2022.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Green_Public_Procurement_2022.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> <https://vpt.lrv.lt/en/e-public-procurement>

competition between suppliers as well as amongst purchasing bodies. This also resulted in enhanced competence in purchasing bodies as well as in a better-informed society overall. Citizens can now see where public money is spent and how much is spent on green and sustainable products, for instance.

68. Member States are also continuously developing their green public procurement measures, for instance in **Latvia** requirements for GPP so far consist of 7 mandatory and 15 voluntary products and services groups. Currently, amendments are being discussed to make construction works and transport groups mandatory, as well as improving the existing requirements in food and lighting. **Slovenia**'s public authorities seek to purchase goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle. Green public procurement is defined in more detail by the Regulation on Green Public Procurement Act, which has been in force since 2018, and where GPP is mandatory for 22 items.

69. At the regional and local level, public administrations are also making use of the GPP. In **Denmark**, a National Procurement Officer Network was established, hosted by the Danish Ministry of Environment and chaired by the municipality of **Copenhagen**. The aim is to share knowledge, encourage and inspire each other. The city of **Strasbourg** in **France** uses sustainable procurement by emphasising the social dimension of the green transition.

70. The Government of **Flanders** focuses on sustainable and *innovative* public procurement. In the case of innovative public procurement, the contracting authority develops new innovation or includes smart requirements in the specifications that stimulate the provision of existing innovative solutions. Project proposals with sufficient relevance and potential innovation impact can count on guidance and co-financing from this programme.

71. It is sometimes argued that environmental criteria can sometimes mean higher initial purchasing costs, but the overall costs can decrease since the higher purchasing prices of green goods and services are compensated for by lower operating, maintenance or disposal costs. The full life-cycle cost of green products and services can thus be cheaper than non-green products and services. A lack of long-term vision with regard to public procurement can therefore be expensive.

72. A lack of legal expertise in applying environmental criteria makes it difficult to know (all) the environmental and social impacts of purchasing particular products or services. It may also be difficult to define what an environmentally "preferable" product or service is. Related to this is the difficulty of how to assess and verify information provided by tenderers.

### ***Ex ante* Impact Assessments and *ex post* Evaluations**

73. Using *ex ante* Impact Assessments is a well-established practice to integrate the best available evidence into an early stage of decision-making. Different types of impact assessment are used for decision-making on policies and laws, plans, programmes or projects.

74. In **Greece**, as in all other EU member states, when considering a new large-scale development project, the government must assess the potential environmental impact and take measures to mitigate them. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of **Armenia** is working with the EU through "EU for the Environment" project to revise the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) laws. Likewise, the Law of **Ukraine** on strategic environmental assessment sets up as mandatory strategic environmental evaluation of state planning documents in the drafting stage in form of a SEA for defining, describing and evaluating the consequences of the implementation of state environmental planning, including consequences for public health, justifying alternatives, developing prevention measures, reducing and mitigating possible negative impacts.

75. Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is often undertaken for most or all laws and regulations. **Luxembourg** uses a checklist that focuses on administrative burden and enforcement costs, which does not explicitly consider environmental impacts or benefits. Instead, a "sustainability check" for all draft laws is being put in place. The sustainability check, based on priorities of the country's Sustainable Development Plan, would be an information and transparency instrument: it will be submitted to parliament and made available to the public. Its use will be mandatory, but its conclusions would not be binding. Germany already has a sustainability checklist linked to its RIA process.<sup>34</sup>

## Participation and leadership

76. Turning public administration green implies a change of mindset. It means formulating a vision to be shared with and by the people and upholding a commitment to sacrifice short-term interests to ensure long-term sustainability. Leadership, good communication and raising awareness are thus key elements for successful implementation of the change. In addition, the involvement of citizens is instrumental given that climate change and the 'green agenda' associated with it, are sometimes highly contested and divisive issues. Politicians and local authorities at times face considerable resistance, and moreover, the benefits of political decisions might not manifest themselves within the electoral cycle.

77. Therefore, when embarking on 'green' projects, public authorities at all levels should involve all relevant stakeholders from the start. GPA can benefit from the use of **deliberative democracy**, to create a larger support for greening measures. GPA could become a 'living laboratory' for deliberative initiatives, as described in the CDDG Report on Deliberative Democracy, and in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6. In this respect, several member States of the Council of Europe, such as **Ireland**, **France**, and **UK (Scotland)** have organised Citizen Assemblies on questions related to climate change.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/a647f0e5-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/a647f0e5-en> OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Luxembourg 2020

78. In **Poland**, social organisations have the right to join any administrative proceeding, which is guaranteed by Art. 31 of the Code of Administrative Procedure. In practice, this right is often used by environmental organisations.

79. The Ministry of Environment in the **Czech Republic** made a public call to participate in a questionnaire to assess public opinion on the strategic plan of climate protection policy. According to the Ministry, this participation tool, so far, a very rare practice on national level, was opted to guarantee a wide consensus as public opinion polls show that most of the population perceives climate change as a major threat.

80. A **multi-stakeholder platform** can be instrumental in creating a consensus between different stakeholders. The consensus can be supportive of government initiative, but also opposed to it. It is a crucial way to stimulate stakeholder engagement with policy decisions, which often makes implementation easier.

81. There is clearly a need for further democratic innovation to deliver on climate change for the benefit of all. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) as well as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities also called for increasing the use of participatory democracy in multiple resolutions and recommendations on environment and climate change. PACE launched the initiative #EnvironmentRightNow to anchor the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

82. Governments and public authorities at all levels can raise awareness amongst the general public in many different ways. Education on the impact of climate change and environmental degradation is vital. Public campaigns, debates, surveys, special awards, publication of relevant brochures and reports can be organised.

83. Participation of stakeholders requires institutional **leadership** from all actors. For complex, multi-actor processes which are common in green public administration, capacity-building and training on 'participatory leadership' could increase the collaboration skills.

84. Strengthening GPA needs input of knowledge, experiences, and ideas from civil society and business groups and should be seen as part of a broad societal transition towards sustainable development. Public institutions should not only be effective and accountable but also inclusive, as SDG target 16.6 states. This means that for each aspect of GPA, all forms of participation should be considered and then used as appropriate.

### **Cross-border cooperation**

85. Erratic weather conditions and environmental pollution have an impact regardless of borders. However, the capacity of states to deal with the impact can differ widely amongst the countries affected. Cross-border cooperation (CBC) therefore enables better addressing of the problems shared by communities and local authorities.

86. Empirical evidence shows that cooperative approaches to border-related problems are one of the most efficient ways to reduce the intensity of the so-called border-effects. The Council of Europe and the European Union have developed legal and financial reference frameworks and tools<sup>35</sup> in order to facilitate such processes between border communities. For example, the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106)<sup>36</sup>, also known as the Madrid Convention, and its Protocols.

87. Initiating a CBC process can be difficult due to both non-existent or, at times, conflictual relations encompassing border areas (i.e. historical and cultural factors often determine the lack of willingness to cooperate of border communities and their representing local authorities). Even when such processes are initiated, it is often difficult to ensure their long-term efficiency and sustainability. At the same time, there are also success stories. For 30 years, Finland, Norway and Russian Federation cooperated around the river Pasvik. With the start of the full-scale aggression of the RF on Ukraine, the cooperation with RF stopped. However, **Norway** and **Finland** continue the collaboration between managers of nature protection areas. There is a 10-year action plan and working groups and advisory board meet in annual cycle. Further examples can be found on the Council of Europe's EDEN platform for cross-border cooperation<sup>37</sup>.

88. A recent report by Adaptation Without Borders<sup>38</sup> explores transboundary climate risks and highlights possible "blind spot" with regards to climate policies and solutions. Its key takeaways include recognition that *"Transboundary climate risks can affect any country, at any time, regardless of its level of development. They combine with non-climate drivers such as poverty and conflict to undermine our collective wellbeing."* Furthermore, the report underlines that *"Transboundary climate risks have the greatest impact on the poorest and most vulnerable people, exacerbating inequities and the root causes of their vulnerability."*

89. Decision makers thus need to develop awareness and an understanding of the interlinkages of climate and conflict/security, so as to be able to design, plan and implement appropriate responses. The Council of Europe Resilience Building Strategies (ReBus) toolkit<sup>39</sup> helps local authorities to withstand, recover, adapt and persist in the face of environmental and climate change.

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<sup>35</sup> The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance (CEGG) has produced a toolkit dedicated to Cross-Border Cooperation and runs several projects in this field in several member States.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treaty-num=106>

<sup>37</sup> [E-DEN – Platform for sharing good practice in democratic governance and cross-border cooperation](https://eden.coe.int/en/web/eden-platform)

<sup>38</sup> <https://adaptationwithoutborders.org/knowledge-base/adaptation-without-borders/the-global-transboundary-climate-risk-report>

<sup>39</sup> [ReBus - Resilience Building Strategies](https://www.coe.int/en/web/eden-platform)

## Environmental Management of public administration

90. Public administration provides key services to residents in a variety of fields, from health to education, from transport and spatial planning to municipal wastewater treatment to name a few. In doing so, public administration at all levels of government have started to think about ways to reduce their own climate and environmental footprint.

91. For example, public administration implements policies and actions aimed at ensuring the sustainability of offices (e.g. energy savings) and reducing employees' environmental impact. This course of action not only decreases the environmental impact of the public administration but also shows to staff and the public that the public administration is serious about sustainability and can act as leading by example and as an enabler for much larger environmental performance improvements at the scale of the territory on which the public administration acts.

92. In 2019, a Science for Policy report by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Commission's science and knowledge service, published a comprehensive review entitled 'Best practice environmental management for the public administration sector'<sup>40</sup>. The report describes instruments, measures and actions that can be implemented by public administrations to minimise their direct and indirect impact on the environment. Furthermore, with regards to the functioning of public administrations, the report outlines successful practices around:

- Making office buildings more environmentally sustainable
- Minimising the impacts of meetings and events organised
- Promoting sustainable commuting and business travel
- Adopting green public procurement.

93. One of the key components of green public administration in **Greece** is the adoption of environmentally friendly policies and practices. This includes initiatives such as promoting the use of renewable energy, reducing waste, and promoting sustainable transport. For example, the Greek government has implemented various policies to promote the use of electric cars and has invested in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

94. The **Finnish** Ministry of Finance published a Strategy on Climate and Nature<sup>41</sup> in 2022 which had been prepared through a stakeholder's consultation. The strategy clarifies the Ministry of Finance's approach to and role in the preparation of climate and nature policies and the related influencing activities. The Ministry makes use of its cross-sectoral approach, intersectoral knowledge and expertise in public administration when assessing the economic and administrative effects of measures.

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<sup>40</sup> [Best Environmental Management Practice for the Public Administration Sector](#), 2019

<sup>41</sup> [https://vm.fi/-/ilmasto-ja-luontostrategia?languageId=en\\_US](https://vm.fi/-/ilmasto-ja-luontostrategia?languageId=en_US)

95. Another approach is building and investing in the capacities of civil servants to be able to identify, develop and implement effective and appropriate policy instruments and projects. **Slovenia** is currently preparing a Strategy for Sustainable Public Administration aiming to integrate principles of sustainable development into the institutional structure of the public administration. This approach is also directed at building capacity at the level of employees, so they are capable of developing solutions in changing social and other circumstances. Greece mentioned awareness raising campaigns to educate the public and decision makers in order to overcome resistance to change.

96. The various bodies of the Council of Europe have also embarked on a road to reduce their own climate and environmental impact. For instance:

- The Parliamentary Assembly started modernising their working methods and practices, including making greater use of digital technologies. The PaceApps allows members to register for meetings, table motions and amendments and access documents. Printing costs have been reduced significantly
- The Council of Europe Advisory Youth Council has developed a sustainability checklist<sup>42</sup>, serving as guidelines for youth initiatives across Europe to make environmentally conscious choices. Suggestions include privileging travel by train rather than planes, offering vegetarian options, reducing waste and using recyclable materials for instance.

97. At the local level, municipalities are also increasingly investing in energy efficient buildings. In **Latvia**, for instance, the central library of Ogre municipality is a newly built passive house with zero energy consumption, through the use of intelligently controlled lighting, solar power providing heating and build of wood.

98. The CDDG Study on the impact of the digital transformation, including artificial intelligence and automated decision-making, on democracy and good governance<sup>43</sup> highlighted among others that *"Digital transformation does not happen in a vacuum, it is influenced among others by the type of political system, the capacity for innovation in the public sector, the standing of the private sector delivering IT solutions to the public sector and the legacy systems in the public administration."* Furthermore, it pointed out that *"Digital transformation emphasises the cultural, organisational, and relational changes and different forms of public value creation as a result. It is about rethinking processes and services."* Parallels could be drawn for the greening public administration, as it too will require re-thinking public value creation, breaking down silos within public administration, cooperating with the private sector etc.

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<sup>42</sup>[https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/other-publications#portlet.com.liferay.portal.content.web.portlet.JournalContentPortlet\\_INSTANCE\\_gT3NwSe86fL0](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/other-publications#portlet.com.liferay.portal.content.web.portlet.JournalContentPortlet_INSTANCE_gT3NwSe86fL0)

<sup>43</sup> Study on the impact of the digital transformation, including artificial intelligence and automated decision-making, on democracy and good governance

99. In addition, while digitalisation clearly offers many benefits, it is important to keep in mind that digital technologies are not climate or environment neutral. Setting up, maintaining, and developing the (physical) infrastructures and digital eco-systems often contribute to negative environmental and climate impacts. Therefore, the impact of digitalisation on climate change and the environment needs to be further explored.

100. Overall, greening the functioning and operations of public administration will not happen overnight. It requires time, leadership, commitment, capacity building, and investment. It also needs a shared vision and change of mind set. Good communication is required. Public administration needs to seek answers to the question how to mainstream climate and environmentally responsible practices across the entire public sector.

### **Incentives and innovation**

101. **Green budgeting** is a practice which uses the tools of budgetary policymaking to help achieve “green” objectives, i.e., those relating to the climate and environmental dimensions such as biodiversity, air quality and water. In a publication on “Green Budgeting in OECD countries<sup>44</sup>” published 2021, the authors presents the findings from the first survey on green budgeting and analyse to what extent “*Countries use green budgeting as a tool of budgetary policy making to provide policy makers with a clearer understanding of the environmental and climate impacts of budgeting choices, while bringing evidence together in a systematic and co-ordinated manner for more informed decision making to fulfil national and international commitments.*”

102. **France** has developed a comprehensive approach to green budget tagging. This involves classifying budget lines according to their impact (either positive or negative) on six environmental objectives: climate change adaptation, climate change mitigation, biodiversity and sustainable land use, circular economy and risk prevention, water resources management and pollution abatement. This approach also helps to assess potentially negative or positive spill-over effects from one environmental sphere to another. The analysis was presented for the first time as part of France’s Budget for 2021.<sup>45</sup>

103. Another instrument available to public administration is **fiscal policies, including taxation**. The OECD recently conducted a study on fiscal policies that showed that environmental protection expenditure often remains below 1% of GDP and more than half of it is carried out by the subnational institutional level.<sup>46</sup> This means more could be done in this regard, e.g. earmarking money.

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<sup>44</sup><https://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/green-budgeting-in-oecd-countries-acf5d047-en.htm>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/green-budgeting-and-tax-policy-tools-to-support-a-green-recovery-bd02ea23/>

<sup>46</sup> Consolidated expenditure by government function: an extension of the Fiscal Decentralisation database, By Sean Dougherty and Andoni Montes (2023)



104. As people increasingly demand 'green' or 'sustainable' financial products, options for investments and the market for this is growing. Numerous organisations and financial institutions aim at establishing sound standards. However, like with corporate social responsibility approaches, there is a danger of green washing. This needs to be avoided.

105. **Finland** conducted a study to assess the impact of climate change on the economy. Preliminary conclusions suggest that "Preventing and minimizing negative economic impacts depends about how well the steering and politics of the transition phase are also successful at the regional level. Among the risks of climate change identified by municipalities, the biggest are related to water management and the unpredictability of energy security."

106. Member States are also experimenting with innovative approaches, including social innovation. In **Iceland**, a toolbox<sup>47</sup> for municipalities has been developed to promote and support Icelandic municipalities in preparing an action orientated policy in climate matters. In the United Kingdom, the West Midlands adopted a framework for inclusive growth building on inter-municipal cooperation, economies of scale and civil participation<sup>48</sup>.

107. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, many organisations embraced teleworking and other **flexible working arrangements**. Teleworking in the public sector has many well-documented benefits for employees, organisations and the environment. If correctly implemented, coupled with a range of available resources such as training and appropriate technology, it can be a very effective and environmentally friendly working arrangement.<sup>49</sup>

108. Furthermore, to raise awareness, some mayors make use of digital technologies. For instance, the mayor of municipality Trojanovice in the **Czech Republic** started a **podcast** called „mayor“ where he invited experts to share their knowledge and experience on emerging topics like energy communities, how to build a city for different generations, or challenges of digitalisation.

109. Many green public administration initiatives are formulated as **pilots**. This is an often a successful way to start innovation while recognising that it may not be a success. The construction of a "pop-up park" with trees and wooden banks at the old townhall square in Tallinn in 2023 is an example of a temporary green innovation which citizens like so much that there are calls to make it permanent.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> <https://loftslagsstefna.is/sveitarfelag/>

<sup>48</sup> See the video recording of the GPA Conference: [Good Democratic Governance Goes Green - Good Governance \(coe.int\)](#)

<sup>49</sup> See the Council of Europe Toolkit on Teleworking, <https://rm.coe.int/tpa-toolkit-on-teleworking-in-public-administration/1680a11fc1>

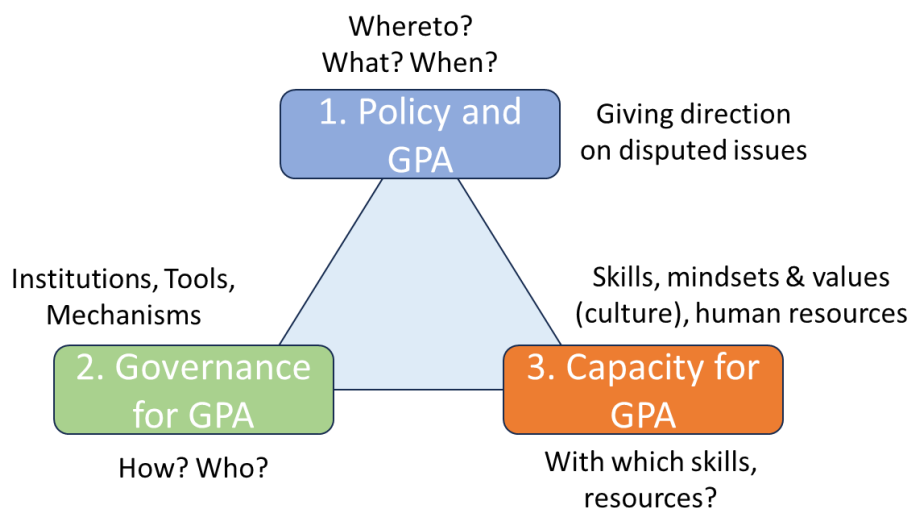
<sup>50</sup> <https://www.sustaineurope.com/tallinn-european-green-capital-2023-20230925.html>

110. Green public administration is an award category in the **European Public Sector Award**. It welcomes projects directly addressing climate change, energy and sustainability challenges in their own activities and projects, including for the reduction of emissions and other pollutants, reduction in use of resources, promotion of efficient use of resources (including natural resources) including recycling and waste reduction and clearing up the effect of pollution.<sup>51</sup> The organiser of the Award, EIPA, published in 2021 a report on the challenges of greening PA (Klika 2021).

### 3. Guidance for practitioners on implementing and strengthening Green Public Administration

111. This Chapter presents some typical challenges that may make transition to green public administration difficult depending on the specific circumstances in a country, and therefore need to be addressed. It proposes some guidance to member States, based on current examples of good practice. It further identifies some practical steps, suggesting what can be done to deliver effective green administration, and thus ensure a healthy living space for all. The guidance covers three interrelated themes: policy, governance, and capacity:

#### *Three cornerstones of GPA guidance*



112. As this is a broad area and comprehensive guidance would need a level of detail that would exceed the ambition of this report, references to existing guidance such as from the EC, the UN and the OECD are included where applicable.

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.eipa.eu/epsa-green-public-administration/>

## A vision and strategy for GPA

113. Greening the public administration will be a combination of small, concrete actions and longer-term initiatives. In addition, actions like stepping up green public procurement may be fast, while changing mindsets within the organisation may be much slower. To drive the greening process, it is important to have a shared vision. What does a public administration look like if it is dedicated to environmental sustainability? What is the general approach in terms of strategy and planning, and what are the expectations in the short, medium and long term?

114. There are many definitions of strategy, all of which can be relevant under different circumstances.<sup>52</sup> In a stable environment, a strategy can have the form of a report with a comprehensive vision and clusters of actions. But in a dynamic environment, it may be more logical to consider strategy as a continuous learning process. Strategy can also be the way of how competitive advantage is achieved. An appropriate way to develop a strategy and/or a process of 'strategizing' that works well in practice is probably to consider the political and societal context of public administration before a choice of strategy is made.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.1 Guidance on policies supporting green public administration

115. What are the 'good' GPA-supporting policies? The three requirements from SDG 16.6 on public institutions could be used to define 'good GPA': effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness. Eleven 'principles of effective governance for sustainable development' have been developed on this basis and constitute a framework that has been endorsed by UN countries through the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2018.<sup>54</sup>

116. Firstly, policies supporting GPA should be **effective**. They need to deliver what they promise, if only to be credible and to show that administrations are leading by example. Effectiveness requires, among others, 1) competence, 2) sound, evidence-informed policymaking, and 3) optimal collaboration between administrations. A lesson about effectiveness can be learned from the introduction of low emission zones (as seen in **London, Brussels** and many other larger cities). As they have a significant impact which can lead to strong political and citizens' opposition, they should be introduced with a broader strategy and narrative, with recognition of people especially affected, compensatory mechanisms. Effectively introducing a low emission zone needs a new positive narrative about what life in a city will look like, with a greener and healthy atmosphere, and less traffic. It is not just about combatting climate change, but also living and working in a healthier and more pleasant city.

117. Secondly, such policies must also be **accountable**. This includes the principles of integrity, transparency and independent oversight. Green budgeting helps identify and track green expenditure and green revenues to increase **transparency** on the environmental

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<sup>52</sup> Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel 2005

<sup>53</sup> Meuleman 2018

<sup>54</sup> [UNCEPA Principles of effective governance for sustainable development](#).

implications of budgetary policies. In the **Netherlands** this was established through the 2017 Climate Act, which requires the government to report on progress towards the goals in the climate law on an annual basis, including details of the budgetary impact of climate- and energy-related policies. RegWatchEurope is a network of eight independent national European advisory bodies that play a significant role in scrutiny of the impacts of new legislation, including environmental legislation or other legislation with impact on the environment.<sup>55</sup> The members currently include the regular impact assessment scrutiny boards from the **Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden** and the **United Kingdom**.

118. Thirdly, GPA policies should be **inclusive**. This concerns the principles of 'leaving no one behind'- the basic principle of the UN 2030 Agenda, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, and intergenerational equity. Renewable energy policy offers good practice examples about the benefits of inclusiveness. When landowners become co-owners of windfarms installed on their land (as it is the case in **Denmark**), they tend to be much more supportive of this policy.

### **Environmental taxation**

119. According to the International Monetary Fund, tax and expenditure policies are an important part of a government's toolkit to address environmental issues, including climate change. Environmental taxation can help reduce environmentally harmful behaviour, while generating revenue at all levels of government.<sup>56</sup>

120. Many countries, including **Malta, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Romania**, have incorporated a 'pay as you throw' tax that applies to the weight or volume of waste generated by households and businesses and collected by the waste collection authorities. That instrument supports the waste prevention principle.<sup>57</sup>

121. Taxation is a politically sensitive area, but taxing negative behaviour can be a very effective means to achieve goals. Introducing environmental taxes (usually on pollution, and energy) is more difficult to sell than re-balancing the tax base towards '*taxing bads, not goods*'. A successful example is **shifting taxes from labour to environment**. During the first years of the European Commission's European Semester of economic governance that started in 2011, environmental taxation was mentioned in country reports and recommendations. Economists had shown that environmental taxes, property tax and VAT generally are not detrimental to economic growth. At the same time, taxes on labour were very high in many countries, which was detrimental to employment. Around 2015, synergy

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.regwatcheurope.eu/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/display/book/9798400217296/CH003.xml>

<sup>57</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:784da925-2f5e-11ed-975d-01aa75ed71a1.0005.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:784da925-2f5e-11ed-975d-01aa75ed71a1.0005.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

was found in calling countries to lower labour tax while increasing environmental tax: the 'tax shift' became part of the narrative of the Semester.

### **Green public procurement**

122. As mentioned above, green public procurement (GPP), sometimes called sustainable public procurement (SPP) with inclusion of the social dimension, is a powerful policy tool to promote the environment. As stated, public procurement represents 13-20% of national GDPs. The challenge is how to define what is 'green', and to provide specifications for all product groups. OECD and the European Commission have published relevant guidance, which, however, does not cover all product groups, and the market is continuously evolving.

123. Challenges mentioned by member States in this field include lack of quality data in part due to limited data collection and need to develop shared international databases; need to develop standards with regards to monitoring, evaluation and impact measurements, including post procurement assessments; need to develop capacities of procurers. Public entities need to be persuaded that while green products may entail higher initial costs, over the course of their life cycle, they can prove to be more cost-effective than non-green alternatives. The experience in Malta also suggests that, in addition, workshops and other initiatives need to be organised for economic operators for them to improve their knowledge when participating in bidding processes to effectively facilitate evaluation and verification of submitted information.

124. In order to achieve the Federal Government of **Germany's** decision to make the federal administration climate-neutral by 2030, the Federal Government is offering support through the Competence Centre for Sustainable Procurement. This competence centre also facilitates the implementation of sustainability and resource efficiency requirements for public authorities. For the (state-wide) procurement of supplies and services, the German region of **Saarland** adopted a Procurement Guideline setting out procurement principles that define environmentally sound procurement. For example, No. 4.3 of the procurement guideline restricts the procurement of paper to recycled paper with the "Blue Angel" eco-label.

125. Peer exchange and learning between administrations is useful, as sharing experiences can accelerate GPP. **Denmark** has a National Procurement Officer Network, hosted by the Danish Ministry of Environment and chaired by the Municipality of Copenhagen, with the aim of sharing knowledge and encourage and inspire each other.

126. One of the objectives of GPP is to stimulate new, innovative products, but GPP is not all automatically innovative. The contracting authority in **Flanders** develops innovation or includes smart requirements in the specifications that stimulate the provision of existing innovative solutions.

127. An Assessment Report on the implementation of the National Action Plan 2021-2023 on green public procurement in **Greece** showed that the percentage of contracting authorities incorporating green criteria in the total number of contracts was less than 10%. This

demonstrated that the requirements of the NAP, but also the importance of GPP are not yet widely taken into account by the country's various entities. It is therefore necessary to strengthen educational and information activities in order to communicate the objectives and methods of the National Action Plan for GPP to a wider range of actors, as well as to draft and provide Uniform Technical Specifications to the entities, including green features, in order to facilitate them.

## Digitalisation

128. Digitalisation can make GPA more effective and efficient, among others by providing for online services, data management, and sharing data sources (open data). However, the energy consumption inherent to digitalisation is having increasing environmental impacts.

129. In order to fully tap into the potential of digitalisation for environmental protection, climate action and resource conservation, its own ecological footprint must be as low as possible. However, the growth in the development and use of digital technologies also increases energy and resource consumption. Users do not really have access to transparent or verifiable information on the environmental impacts of digitalisation. That is why companies, manufacturers and hardware, software and data centre operators and policymakers have a particular responsibility to limit the ecological footprint of digitalisation. It is essential for data centres to become more efficient. The federal Environment Ministry of **Germany** plans to create incentives to bring about this change, for example, with mandatory efficiency standards, visible labels like the Blue Angel ecolabel or financial support.

130. Digital transformation has in some areas overturned **Iceland's** criteria for approaching various projects. The location of jobs is a good example. Previously, it was assumed that all jobs were 'local' (meaning that they were considered place-based) unless otherwise specifically stated. Currently, the assumption is that all jobs are non-local unless they need to be processed in a certain place. The next step is to implement the government's decision that all meetings organised by the governing council and state institutions will be held online, unless otherwise specifically stated. These changes in focus will strengthen the settlements in the country as well as decrease pollution due to unnecessary travel.

131. The lack of regional and local data for green indicators is a problem. National data cannot just be translated into subnational numbers as this would ignore important local/regional differences. New studies try to develop regional sustainability indicators based on the available data at each level and for each region.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC131581>

### Summary of guidance on selected GPA policies:

Policy	Challenges/Obstacles	Responses / Examples
Strategic Plan for GPA	Political leadership does not want a strategy (e.g., the European Commission as regards an SD Strategy)	Switch to making an Action Plan (e.g., <b>Cyprus</b> on the SDGs) and make that dynamic (strong engagement process)
Action Plan for GPA	"Too many action plans" "Too short-term"	Call it differently (e.g., a Roadmap) Make a rolling action plan with 3–5-year time horizon (e.g., <b>Cyprus</b> on the SDGs)
Process for GPA	External stakeholders (business, civil society) may not be ready to be strongly engaged as they are used to lobby and advocate	Organising mutual gains approach sessions with stakeholders, using innovative participation techniques can result in richer solutions and at the same time change of mindset and skills
Scenario approach for strategy development	Developing future scenarios can be seen as resource-intensive but they are crucial to build resilient strategies	Malta is using a systemic approach to develop its new Environment Strategy. Starting with determining critical drivers, future scenarios were developed after which, in a consultative process, the most preferred scenario was selected to base a strategy on.
Ensure that GPP standards are shared and permanently updated.	Limited data collection and need to develop shared international databases, standards with regards to monitoring, evaluation and impact measurements	Use this report and case studies collected by the Council of Europe; <b>OECD</b> good practice; <sup>59</sup> and the <b>European Commission</b> Voluntary GPP criteria <sup>60</sup>
Make GPP innovative	GPP can support innovation when procurement criteria are designed with innovation in mind	The government of <b>Flanders</b> develops new innovation or includes smart requirements in the product specifications, that stimulate the provision of existing innovative solutions.
Advertise the long-term cost-saving of GPP	Public entities are not convinced that while green products may entail higher initial costs, they can prove to be ultimately more cost-effective than alternatives	<b>Belgium</b> communicates that the overall procurement costs can decrease since the higher purchasing prices of green goods and services are compensated for by lower operating, maintenance or disposal costs.
Share experiences and expertise on GPP	Scaling up GPP requires (peer) learning mechanisms and networks. This is also needed in order to increase expertise.	<b>Denmark</b> has a National Procurement Officer Network, hosted by the Danish Ministry of Environment and chaired by the Municipality of Copenhagen, with the

<sup>59</sup> [https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/green-public-procurement/gpp-criteria-and-requirements\\_en](https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/green-public-procurement/gpp-criteria-and-requirements_en)

<sup>59</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/gov/public-procurement/Going\\_Green\\_Best\\_Practices\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Procurement.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/gov/public-procurement/Going_Green_Best_Practices_for_Sustainable_Procurement.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> [https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/44278090-3fae-4515-bcc2-44fd57c1d0d1/library/f69e60f9-9dc6-4345-aa18-b9a4b6dfdbf0?p=1&n=10&sort=name\\_ASC](https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/44278090-3fae-4515-bcc2-44fd57c1d0d1/library/f69e60f9-9dc6-4345-aa18-b9a4b6dfdbf0?p=1&n=10&sort=name_ASC)

		aim of sharing knowledge and encourage and inspire each other.
Increase environmental taxation	Raising taxes is unpopular	Feed the new revenues back into greening projects
Shift tax base: labour to environment	Labour tax is relatively low	Show win-win for social/employment and the environment
Green digitalisation action plan	Not everyone wants to acknowledge the environmental burden of digitalisation	A positive response is to adopt a relevant action plan, as <b>Germany</b> has done at federal level.
Measuring progress on greening at regional/local level	National data make no sense at regional/local level.	Regions and cities can support each other with developing localised data and can be supported by programmes such as the JRC in Sevilla.

### 3.2 Guidance on governance for green public administration

132. Governance is how public administrations organise and combine their tools, instruments (including finance) and mechanisms to attain the policy objectives set at the political level. There is one particular SDG target 17.14 that combines many governance challenges. This target on 'policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) has eight dimensions<sup>61</sup> or principles<sup>62</sup> which will be used as a basis for this section.

#### Political Commitment, Leadership and Strategy

133. Governments often show their political commitment to greening by adopting environmental and/or sustainable development strategies. Under a national strategy, sectoral strategies are often developed per ministry (or by a cluster of ministries on a broader theme). A relatively rare but important example is the publication by the Ministry of Finance of **Finland**, of a Strategy on Climate and Nature<sup>63</sup> in 2022 which had been prepared through a stakeholder's consultation. The strategy clarifies the Ministry of Finance's approach to and role in the preparation of climate and nature policies and the related influencing activities. The Ministry makes use of its cross-sectoral approach, intersectoral knowledge and expertise in public administration when assessing the economic and administrative effects of measures.

134. In the section on vision and strategy for GPA, three different approaches to strategy were mentioned. One reason to consider strategy also as a process is to quickly adapt to new

<sup>61</sup> The PCSD dimensions according to the UN (UNEP) are: 1. Institutionalized political commitment; 2. Long-term considerations; 3. Interministerial and cross-sectoral coordination; 4. Participatory processes; 5. Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, assessment of policy effects and linkages; 6. Consultation and coordination across government levels; 7. Monitoring and reporting for policy coherence; 8. Financial resources and tools.

<sup>62</sup> The OECD has a similar approach, with eight principles adopted by its member states: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/oecd-recommendation-on-policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development.htm>. The OECD had published a guidance with good practice examples (OECD 2021)

<sup>63</sup> [https://vm.fi/-/ilmasto-ja-luontostrategia?languageId=en\\_US](https://vm.fi/-/ilmasto-ja-luontostrategia?languageId=en_US)



circumstances. Making policy and governance flexible is useful when technical and other standards evolve quickly during and after a green emergency, but it can also be challenging to the industry and the users. This is about the trade-off between continuity and flexibility, and an example of why trade-offs should not be seen as outcomes of a negotiation (with a negative connotation), but as a dynamic, pro-active process to find acceptable solutions when two requirements contradict or undermine each other.

135. Another way to express political commitment to green PA is to support initiatives that may already have been taken 'bottom-up' in the administration. Without such commitment, innovative projects may face difficulties.

136. Parliamentary elections can make or break change processes within administrations. Not only because part of the civil service may be replaced, but also because new political leadership may want different policy objectives and may have a different preference with regard to governance instruments, mechanisms and tools.

137. It is therefore relevant to discuss whether and how the GPA process can be made relatively resilient to changes in the political configurations of a government. It can be done by offering positive visions and narratives that accommodate diverse political views while still going steadily into the right direction. This is more challenging under more complex multi-level systems with several layers of elections happening at different times.

138. One way of making public administration able to provide policy and governance responses under different political configurations is to ensure that different political groups can be served. This requires the willingness, skills and mindsets to consider possible responses from different policy and governance styles. The three most-used typical governance styles are hierarchy, network and market-style governance, and their combination is called meta-governance<sup>64</sup>. These styles offer different responses based on their own typical set of values. For example, social-democrats may lean more towards legislative solutions; conservatives and the greens might lean more on the different types of societal partnerships, while liberals may favour market-type instruments such as financial incentives.

139. The GPA process may be more robust if the administration understands that the same problem may have different solutions, and that being ready to select the most feasible responses from the whole governance toolbox can help ensuring continuation of GPA in times of political change and/or instability.

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<sup>64</sup> Meuleman 2008, 2018; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011

## Long-term Vision

140. Sustainable development aims at “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>65</sup> This means that having a long-term vision is essential for the environmental sustainability. With this in mind, several countries have started to invest in foresight. Tools such as horizon scanning and scenarios on possible futures can raise the awareness about the long-term dimension of policymaking for the environment and the people. One way to do this is to ensure that a ‘green’ scenario is always included in the options. Most countries, however, have not yet set up foresight capacity at a strategic position, such as in the PM office.

141. Another typical challenge for long-term thinking is the election cycle, which is in practice often shorter than four years. This comes with the risk that existing long-term strategies are replaced by new approaches of the incoming government.

142. A partial remedy is to set up mechanisms to ensure attention for the long term beyond electoral cycles. Examples include a Commissioner for Future Generations, and/or an all-party Parliamentary Commission on sustainable development.

## Policy Integration: mainstreaming environmental concerns

143. Economic, environmental and social policies can face trade-offs, but they can also have synergies. An example of a trade-off is when a comprehensive regional approach to mobility is difficult because of the economic requirement to procure urban and suburban transport options to different companies who compete rather than cooperate with each other. An example of the synergy is the **German** *Deutschland-Ticket* and the **Austrian** *Klima-Ticket* for public transport. This option addresses at the same time environmental, mobility, and social issues (affordability for low incomes).

144. Trade-offs cannot be prevented but need to be tackled, and they should be made transparent. International spill-over effects such as the environmental footprint of the European countries in other parts of the world need to be made clear before the trade-offs behind them can be dealt with.

145. Examples of tools that can help solving such problems are a cost-benefit analysis of policy impacts across all sectors; the identification of measures to mitigate negative effects and to optimise the positive ones; and the specific consideration of international spillovers, such as cross-border and international impacts.

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<sup>65</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>

## Legal frameworks for climate action and environmental protection

146. Many countries have translated international agreements like the Paris Agreement into national legislation. **Denmark** has a Climate Act since 2020, which stimulates the public administration to consider the achievement of the climate goals.

147. The quality of legislation is important. Climate litigation is used by a variety of actors to either accelerate or slow down the implementation of ambitious climate policies.<sup>66</sup> This in turn means that governments and decision makers should consider the litigation risks when developing climate laws and aim for consensus building and stakeholder involvement, legal clarity and certainty, as well as policy cohesion.

148. In addition to legal frameworks, some countries have set up a dedicated organisational structure to support climate actions or changed the remit of the ministries. The **United Kingdom** created the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero. Finland renamed the environment ministry into the Ministry for the Environment and Climate. **Estonia** renamed it into the Climate Ministry. In some countries this is combined with energy policies (the **Netherlands** has a climate and energy departments in its Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate).

149. Although a name change of a ministry is not a guarantee for a more focused 'green' performance of the government, the symbolic value can be important. Some countries have, for example renamed their agriculture ministries into Agriculture and Food quality, showing that the whole food system is dealt with.

150. The Right to a healthy environment is anchored in the Constitution of the **Czech Republic** since 1993 and mentioned in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The convention later states that the right is to be claimed solely within the limit of relevant transposition law. The act contained in the Convention is not enforceable per se. Lawmakers can set the law defining the subject.

151. The Fundamental Law (Constitution) of **Hungary** recognizes sustainability (thus, indirectly, climate safety) to be of paramount value. No law shall conflict with the Fundamental Law, including its sustainability-related norms. The first part of the Fundamental Law, the National Creed, lays down the commitment to nurturing and protecting our heritage, including all man-made and natural assets of the Carpathian Basin. The Fundamental Law emphasises that "we bear responsibility for our descendants and therefore we shall protect the living conditions of future generations by making prudent use of our material, intellectual and natural resources."

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<sup>66</sup><https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Climate-change-law-in-Europe-what-do-new-EU-climate-laws-mean-for-the-courts.pdf>

## Permitting procedures and one-stop-shops

152. An Act of the **Flemish** Parliament on the environmental permit and its implementing executive orders were intended to modernize the outdated and fragmented environmental regulation and to integrate it into a single regulation, including that of the environmental permit. The environmental permit replaced both the previous operating permit and the discharge permit, the permit to protect groundwater against pollution, the permit for the disposal of waste, and the permit for the extraction of ground water. The environmental permit act is a framework act, which lays down a number of general principles.

153. Every classified establishment or activity that is operated in **Flanders** must have an environmental permit or a notification deed. These establishments and activities are divided into 3 classes. The environmental permit for class 1 establishments or activities is provided by the Executive Board of the province. Appeal is possible to the Flemish Minister for the Environment. The Minister's decision can be challenged before the Council of State, or its illegality can be invoked in a court of law. The Board of Mayor and Alderpersons of local governments makes the decision for environmental permits for class 2 establishments or activities. Class 3 projects are reported to the Board of Mayor and Alderpersons.

## Inter-ministerial Coordination

154. Inter-ministerial coordination is about addressing the divergences between sectoral policies within one level of government; it is also called a whole-of-government<sup>67</sup> approach.

155. The silo mentality that hampers constructive collaboration between different ministries (at all levels of administration) was mentioned by many countries in their replies to the survey for this Report. As **Slovenia** argued, the silo working mode among the actors in public administration prevents creating more coherent actions.

156. From the viewpoint of the environment, this has been a challenge since the beginning of the first environmental policies and law decades ago. It is as much an issue of coordination mechanisms and addressing trade-offs, as it is a mindset challenge. Governments are divided into ministries and agencies who tend to work in silos. That is not per se a bad thing. Silos give structure, bring clarity about responsibilities, and offer a 'home' for officers working in one policy area. Therefore, the challenge is not how to break down the silos, but how to bridge them and make them work together.<sup>68</sup>

157. In **Denmark**, a Green Committee secures coordination between different ministries on policies regarding the green transition. In **Germany**, a committee at the level of state secretaries coordinates sustainability policies of all ministries.

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<sup>67</sup> The term "whole-of-government" is often used to mean national government coordination only, while 'government' could imply also subnational government. Therefore, we use the term 'inter-ministerial' in this section.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, the concept of "[Teaching Silos to Dance](#)".

## Subnational Engagement for GPA

158. In a multi-level governance system, how can effective relations between different levels of government support green and fair transitions?

159. In most countries, the relations between national and subnational authorities are characterised by financial and legal conditions, and it is often the Ministry of Internal Affairs coordinating these, with a strong role of the Ministry of Finance. Other ministries such as those dealing with climate and environment, energy, transport or agriculture, tend to have only a limited role in multi-level governance.

160. To make green public administration a success, the national and subnational levels should be aware that they need each other. National government needs subnational (local, regional, provincial) government to implement national policies and targets. It also needs subnational governments to 'absorb' funding from EU, World Bank or other international organisations. Subnational governments need national authorities to understand their needs in terms of finance and legislative space to adapt implementation to their circumstances. This could include room for experimentation.

161. In **Greece**, the local authorities work closely with the competent Ministry of the Interior to take measures and actions that should implement requirements for sustainable, green development at the local level. An example is the collaboration on green public procurement. The "National Action Plan (NAP) for Green Public Procurement" sets quantitative targets for contracting authorities and entities to carry out green public procurement in defined categories of goods, services and public works. These targets are set for central government authorities, and for regions and municipalities. Another example is the Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministers for Finance, Environment and Energy, the Interior and the State on "Measures to improve energy efficiency and save energy in buildings and installations owned or used by public sector bodies". It determines that public bodies must take all necessary steps to limit energy consumption in buildings and installations in their area of responsibility.

162. Federal countries are a special case. For example, in **Belgium**, powers with regard to the environment are nearly all devolved to the regions. The powers of the federal government relate only to product standards, protection against ionising radiation, the import, export and transit of alien plant and animal species and the protection of the marine environment. All the other powers with regard to the environment are regional powers.

163. Although there is a strong interdependency between levels of government as regards GPA, many countries lack an institutional mechanism for collaboration with subnational governments on the basis of problems with a common interest across the levels. Establishing multi-level working groups or policymaking teams for rather urgent issues, where collaboration should be in 'real time', seems logical, but countries have often relied only on legal and financial structures to steer multi-level governance.

164. In **Ukraine**, top-down and bottom-up mechanisms of multi-level governance exist in combination. Local features are taken into account while regional development strategies are being designed, and regional authorities take part while the state strategy for regional development is being designed. Territorial communities design their own development strategies, which have to take into account priorities of the state and regional strategies whilst taking into account local features. As of July 2023, 89% of territorial communities have had their own development strategies approved by local councils or are in the process of development. All Ukrainian associations of local self-government bodies take part in the design process for the State Strategy for Regional Development.

165. Environmental disasters can sometimes expose dysfunctional multi-level governance. The dramatic floods of July 2021 killed more than 220 people in Europe, leaving a trail of destruction particularly in **Germany** and **Belgium**. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate registered 49 deaths, while North Rhine-Westphalia said 135 were killed, and the total cost of the damage in Germany is estimated to be more than €30bn.<sup>69</sup> Immediately after the flood disaster, multi-level cooperation and communication was intensified, as some flaws in this respect seemed to have contributed to the severity of the impacts. The federal government passed a "Reconstruction Aid Act 2021" which provides among others the legal basis for the introduction of warning notifications on mobile phones using cell broadcast, which did not yet exist.<sup>70</sup>

166. While in some countries, a disaster is needed to take concrete actions to improve the effectiveness of multilevel governance, in other countries an elaborate system of steering and working groups with mixed participation of several levels of government already exists. In the **Netherlands**, this is part of the national administrative culture of collaboration towards consensus, which has a long history<sup>71</sup>. This culture is understood to have derived from the need to jointly protect the polders which are mostly below the sea level.

167. Improving multi-level governance does not have to be very complex, and environmental issues can be a good topic to start with. A national government could invite associations of local and regional authorities to form a working group on environmental issues, and its representatives could take part in the inter-ministerial policy teams. If such a system is not yet established, starting a pilot on a topic linked to greening of public administration could be worthwhile.

168. The Region of Flanders, **Belgium**, has launched in 2021 the Flemish Energy and Climate Pact, which focuses on four areas (greening, participatory energy, sustainable mobility, and rainwater) The initiative currently involves 293 municipalities. The aim of the Climate Pact is to include all actors in the process towards climate neutrality. To ensure a good cooperation,

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<sup>69</sup> The Guardian of 13 July 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/floods-then-and-now-photographs-germany-ahr-valley-flooding-disaster-july-2021>

<sup>70</sup> [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2022/abschlussbericht-hochwasserkatastrophe.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=1](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2022/abschlussbericht-hochwasserkatastrophe.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1)

<sup>71</sup> Kickert 2003

the Agency of Home Affairs of the Government of Flanders (the coordinator of the Pact), works very closely with the association of Flemish cities and municipalities.

## Stakeholder Engagement

169. Stakeholder engagement does not imply that all stakeholders and citizens should always be invited to participate in all policymaking and implementation work of governments. The challenge is to establish an effective mechanism to select, in an early stage of policymaking, the most relevant stakeholders from business and civil society, and then decide and communicate what kind of role they should play. It is undisputed that the green transition cannot become successful without societal stakeholders. Participation is necessary to collect knowledge that is essential to make policies that can work in practice and is important for ensuring broad support. Some issues are complex and require collaborative problem-solving rather than just participation. A collaborative approach to policy making may be particularly useful if the stakeholders have a crucial role also in the implementation phase. Public organisations may need to develop their capacities for collaboration. For example in **Finland**, training on collaborative public management was organised for officials from the local to the national level.

170. Stakeholder engagement related to greening public administration can have many forms. Formal and structured engagement often takes place through advisory councils and committees with academic experts, business representatives and civil society organisation in compositions that depend usually on the tradition of a country.

171. The most significant body at the government level responsible for coordination and monitoring of green transition in the **Czech Republic** is the multi-stakeholder Government Council for Sustainable Development, chaired by the Prime Minister. It is an advisory body to the Government responsible for inter-sectoral coordination of the sustainable development policy among central administrative authorities. The Council consists of the representatives of all ministries, both chambers of the Parliament, municipalities, NGOs, trade unions, academia, industry, agriculture and research. Other relevant stakeholders are represented in its nine thematic Committees and working groups. The National Council for Sustainable Development of the **Republic of Moldova** also brings together representatives of government, civil society and the private sector.

172. **Denmark** has an independent advisory expert Council on Climate Change which gives a professional assessment of whether the initiatives of the Danish government are sufficient to reduce emissions with the agreed pace.

173. Other examples of advisory councils can be found, for example, in a 2019 study for the European Parliament.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup><https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/160360/DEVE%20study%20on%20EU%20SDG%20implementation%20formatted.pdf>

174. The intensity of participation can range from low (being informed) to high (co-production and co-decision), with several intermediate steps. It is important to communicate transparently about what type of participation is chosen in a concrete case, and what are the reasons for this. In addition, different engagement types may require specific mindsets and skills of the administration and of stakeholders.<sup>73</sup>

175. In the Belgian region of **Flanders**, a municipal environmental council with the most interested public bodies, institutions and private law organisations is mandatory if the municipality draws up an environmental policy plan, which is not mandatory in itself. The Environment Council issues an opinion on the draft environmental policy plan. If the Board of Mayor and Aldermen deviates from the advice, it will have to justify this in an accompanying note to this plan. In practice, the municipal environmental council is composed of representatives of the various nature and environmental associations in the broadest sense of the word, representatives of the various educational networks, socio-cultural organisations, professional associations, a representative of the Youth and Senior Councils and interested citizens. One of the main tools to keep track of the achieved objectives is the "[Local Climate Pact Portal](#)". This portal allows all signatories to follow up on the actions taken by their peers, and the advances they make.

176. The Government of **Flanders** also invites citizens and organisations to a climate dialogue every two years. The aim is to co-design the climate objectives and the specific actions with representation from all sectors of society.

177. **Denmark** has instituted various forums to ensure citizen participation on the Danish climate policies. There is a Citizens' Parliament where citizens are formally involved, the Climate Partnerships and the Green Business Forum where the business sector is formally involved.

178. In **Poland**, public participation is ensured at various stages of the planning processes that determine the purpose and directions of land development within local government units, which was guaranteed by the 2003 Act on spatial planning and development.

179. Deliberative democracy initiatives, such as the citizens' assemblies and panels are increasingly used to support environmental and sustainability policy development. In the development of the "German Resource Efficiency Programme", **Germany** had organised broad participation by stakeholders, associations and a public dialogue with a total of 229 randomly selected citizens.

180. Finally, there has been a growing understanding that young generations should be more involved in the strategic planning, because of its impact their future. In several countries,

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<sup>73</sup> See Council of Europe Guidelines - [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd) and Toolkit on Civil Participation in the Decision-Making - <https://rm.coe.int/civil-participation-in-decision-making-toolkit-/168075c1a5>



various kinds of youth council have been established. In **Iceland**, the Youth Council for the SDGs consists of twelve representatives from across the country, aged 13-18 years. The Youth Council meets six times a year, including one meeting with the government. The role of the Council is to learn about and discuss the SDGs, as well as to prepare and share interactive content on the goals and sustainable development on social media.<sup>74</sup>

## Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

181. As with every serious strategy or plan, GPA initiatives should be monitored, progress or lagging needs should be reported, and results should be evaluated. An example of periodical reporting is the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on the UN SDGs. These VNRs are presented during the UN's annual sessions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Countries have begun using the preparation of such reviews as a way to engage many internal and external actors, and designing participation mechanisms that last longer than the preparation of the Review report.

182. Regional and local authorities are also involved in the process, because for them the preparation of Voluntary Regional or Local Reviews is a good way to be accountable, transparent, and inclusive. In 2021 the UN website showcased more than 60 examples of VLRs.

183. The **Irish** Environmental Protection Agency has a full open data policy: all data is in principle publicly available, some of it even in real-time, unless there are strong reasons to not publish it. This makes stakeholders and citizens better informed and enables them to better contribute to and engage in environmental and climate action.

184. The Association of the Local Government of **Denmark** has set up a Municipal Climate Barometer. The first Barometer was published in 2022 and the data is continuously updated.

## Impact Assessment

185. The impacts of new policies, legislation, plans, programmes and projects should be assessed as early as possible in the process. The UNECE member States and the EU countries have committed to apply **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** for plans and programmes and **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** for projects, including cross-border ones.<sup>75</sup> They are obliged to inform neighbouring countries in the early phase of decision making and consult them about potential impacts on the environment.

186. The EIA and SEA procedures have been effective in preventing environmentally harmful decisions. However, national governments have often tried to 'simplify' the rules by for

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.heimsmarkmidin.is/forsida/en/youth-council/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://unece.org/environmental-policy-1/environmental-assessment> ; [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/environmental-assessments\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/environmental-assessments_en)

example, allowing a great number of exceptions and increasing the threshold below which no EIA of SEA needs to be done.

187. Another challenge is that EIA and SEA are not applicable to new policies and legislation. Although there is some room for interpretation (the UNECE Espoo Convention on transboundary SEA seems to also cover policies), the environmental and climate impacts on policy and law initiatives should be covered by the broader **Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)**. RIA is a way to make policy and law preparation evidence-informed, and to make the choice options and their impacts transparent. RIA originates from the Better Regulation movement. It started mainly as an economic assessment mechanism, using cost-benefit analysis as the main method, but inside the European Commission, RIA reports<sup>76</sup> must always look at environmental, social and economic impacts. Since 2021, the European Commission has fully integrated the SDGs into its IA. An online toolbox and guidance about how to 'green' impact assessment procedures is available for all public administrations.<sup>77</sup>

188. In many EU member States, including **Hungary** and **Slovenia**, legislative projects have to undergo a regulatory impact assessment that also looks at the impact on climate and environment. This is not always easy, as the obligation of submitting material for evaluation to the Regulatory Impact Assessment Committee was seen as critique rather than a tool to maximize efficiency of new legislation projects, as was pointed out by the **Czech Republic**.

189. A series of online **peer learning** workshops with up to 22 EU countries, OECD and the European Commission, have stimulated countries such as the **Czech Republic, Cyprus, Finland, the Netherlands** and **Romania** to integrate sustainability (including the environmental dimension) better in their RIA procedures.<sup>78</sup>

190. In the **Czech Republic**, RIA assesses the impact of new legislation on specific social groups, gender equality, environment, long term perspective, generation gap, policy coherency, policy receivers' perspective, assessment of negative side impact and impact on cross-border cooperation. There is an independent RIA Committee as watchdog, advisory body of the Legislative Council of the Government. It is one of eight members of RegWatchEurope.<sup>79</sup>

191. **Italy** made progress on the tracking and reporting of the environmental impacts of its national budget (green budgeting). Since 2000, the country has developed reporting on planned expenditure on the environmental protection and resource management. The reporting also incorporated 12 indicators on fair and sustainable wellbeing in accordance with the SDGs and targets of Agenda 2030.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The European Commission calls RIA IA: Impact Assessment.

<sup>77</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en)

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.ps4sd.eu/projects/project-peer-to-peer-for-sustainability-in-impact-assessment/>

<sup>79</sup> RegWatchEurope is a network of independent European advisory bodies that play a significant role in scrutiny of the impacts of new legislation. Official website: <https://www.regwatcheurope.eu/>

<sup>80</sup> [Communication on the Environmental Implementation Review 2022](#), European Commission.

192. The macroeconomic impact of climate change on public finance is difficult to assess. A study in **Finland** showed that the kind of economic effect the public finances will experience will depend on an active and successful policy promoting the green transition.<sup>81</sup> Based on analysis at the municipal level, the Finnish study also suggests that there is a significant risk of general unpreparedness and lack of knowledge. Many municipalities lack a large-scale understanding and overall picture of the economic effects of climate change.

193. **Denmark** has a Green Fund that enables the government to provide funding for unforeseen costs associated with transition initiatives. In **Switzerland**, a practical sustainability assessment guide provides useful instructions for evaluating the Confederation's projects (laws, programs, strategies, designs, and other projects) from a sustainable development perspective. It includes an Excel tool, which facilitates relevance analysis and summary evaluations.

### Summary of guidance on Governance for GPA:

Governance Options	Challenges/Obstacles	Responses / Examples
Ensure that governance frameworks of new policies include all three governance styles	Mindset of a Ministry may be dominated by one style, e.g., Ministry of Justice (hierarchy), Ministry of Social Affairs (network), Ministry of Economy (market). The civil servants may have one style preference.	Organise meta-governance training: learn to apply the three styles and to combine them and switch between them if a situation demands this. Such training has been provided to civil servants in <b>Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Romania</b> , but not yet on a large scale. <sup>82</sup>
Set up a Foresight Unit in the Centre of Government	A central Foresight Unit may have little power, so it needs to find ways to become influential	The <b>United Kingdom</b> has a dedicated foresight support unit linked to the Prime Minister's Office
Appoint Commissioner/Guardian for the Future		"Guardian for future generations" is set up by the Article 8 of the Sustainability Act in <b>Malta</b>
Connect long-mid-and short-term planning	Disconnection between strategies and action plans	Rolling Action Plans (1-year concrete, 3–5-year flexible plans) to ensure at least short/mid-term linkages were adopted in Cyprus

<sup>81</sup> [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164786/VNTEAS\\_2023\\_17.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164786/VNTEAS_2023_17.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>82</sup> See for example the [short introduction](#) at the conference in 2019 of the ESDN network of SDG coordinators in Europe.

Legal frameworks for climate action	National climate action is insufficient	Align with other countries (Paris Agreement, EU Fit 4 55 Package)
	If not long-term oriented (e.g., only until 2030), this conflicts with the principle of intergenerational equity.	The 2019 climate law of <b>Germany</b> had to be adjusted to take this into account. Intergenerational equity should be integrated from the beginning of policymaking.
Quality of legislation	Climate litigation can accelerate or slow down the implementation of ambitious climate policies	Important to consider the litigation risks when developing climate laws and aim for consensus building and stakeholder involvement, legal clarity, and certainty, as well as policy cohesion
Organisational measures for climate action	A name change of a ministry can be merely symbolic, although that has also its value.	Set up a Department for Energy Security & Net Zero ( <b>United Kingdom</b> ); make climate explicit in the remit (Ministry of Climate and Environment in <b>Estonia</b> and <b>Finland</b> ), sometimes combined with energy ( <b>Netherlands</b> ).
Support subnational climate action	Ineffective multi-level governance	Set up a mechanism for national & subnational cooperation and give cities rooms for experiments and pilots. The Local Energy and Climate Pact of the Belgian region of <b>Flanders</b> is an example of an all-inclusive approach with 300 municipalities and stakeholder dialogues.
	Local authorities may not have the expertise to develop a local climate strategy.	Supporting municipal climate strategies ( <b>Hungary</b> guidance). The Towards Carbon Neutral Municipalities (Hinku) network in <b>Finland</b> shows the power of networks.
	If there is no national support, uncertainty at local level whether local green deals are allowed can demotivate	Stimulate setting up local green deals between administrations, business and civil society ( <b>ICLEI</b> guidance).
Coordinate greening across all ministries/ departments	Silo-thinking makes policies less effective and can result in policies that undermine each other	Most countries have some kind of high-level coordination mechanism for green and sustainable transitions, but this requires also focal points or 'hubs' ( <b>Romania</b> ) in each ministry with a sufficient mandate and means.

Set up a working group or a mechanism for structured meetings between national and subnational levels, based on common greening problems.	The mindset is mostly hierarchical: top-down thinking prevents real dialogue and collaboration	Set up a multilevel mechanism first as a pilot with evaluation.  Organise training in Mutual Gains Approach (MGA)
Set up a stakeholder engagement mechanism with working groups advising on challenges	The “usual suspects” will want to be on board, which may lead to less innovative thinking.	Select stakeholders (per issue) based on needs, not on availability
Consider (and test) different stakeholder engagement formats	Stakeholders may be used to lobby/advocate but not have the skills/mindset for co-production/responsibility	Organise joint mutual gains processes with training integrated ( <b>Netherlands</b> )
Set up (rules for) a municipal environmental council	Setting up municipal environmental councils with right to advise may need national or regional legislation.	In <b>Flanders</b> , a stakeholder-based municipal environmental council is mandatory if a local environmental plan is prepared
Set up a youth council for regular engagement with representatives of the young generation	How can a youth council be representative?	Existing examples show that setting up a representative youth representation can be done. <b>Iceland</b> has a Youth Council for the SDGs
Reporting progress on GPA	It may not be popular to add a new reporting process to the existing ones	One idea could be to make a reporting on GPA part of a national, regional or local Voluntary Review on sustainable development.
Open data policy	“Full Open Data policy means less power/influence”	In reality, making almost all data public helps citizens and stakeholders to contribute better to environmental protection, as demonstrated by the <a href="#">Irish EPA</a> .
Fully integrate environmental concerns in the Regulatory Impact Assessments	What methodologies and other approaches are needed?	Learn from exchanges between other countries, see the report & annex of the project <a href="#">Mainstreaming SDGs in RIA</a> . Use existing guidance, for example from <a href="#">UNECE</a>

### 3.3 Guidance on capacity building, communication and leading by example.

#### Greening the public-sector workforce: mindsets, culture, and skills

194. Integrating environment and climate in the whole of public administration needs leadership, strategies, and policy decisions that are informed by the complexity of the sustainability challenges countries are facing. This requires a mindset that is open to complexity, to internal (bridging the silos) and external (engagement with societal stakeholders) collaboration. It is important to understand how the existing mindsets may undermine green public administration.

195. Every mindset is an expression of values and traditions. It is related to national, organisational and personal cultures. Culture is extremely important, as it is what makes people believe what is important to do (and what not). As the famous management consultant Peter Drucker has said: “culture eats strategy for breakfast”: all strategies, policies, and governance frameworks will fail without an administrative culture that encourages civil servants to implement it.

196. Therefore, the public-sector workforce should be just as important for GPA as having the right policies and governance. People are the main assets of public administration.

197. However, cultures are not easy to change. As a rule of thumb, building change upon an existing culture often works better than trying to completely change the culture. This applies also to governance styles. Most administrations are, at the core, characterised by belief in hierarchical governance principles such as coercion, legitimacy, legal solutions, and detailed organisational structures. In some countries, this is mixed with a culture of consensus-making in which participation and collaboration is normal. In others, market mechanisms belong to the culture: using financial incentives, competition, and focus on efficiency. The trick is not to find the best style but to mix them while preventing them from undermining each other.

198. In its Second voluntary national review of the 2030 agenda, the **Czech Republic** states that despite the fact that the country has a solid legal base for sustainability, some of the SDGs are fulfilled only formally: *“The most difficult part of the transition is a change of mind set of individuals and implementation of approach to everyday life (whole of society approach)”*.

199. Many countries have therefore set up competence centres, trainings or help desks to support green public administration. In order to achieve the Federal Government's decision to make the federal administration climate-neutral by 2030, the Federal Government of **Germany** is offering support through the Competence Centre for Sustainable Procurement. This Competence Centre also facilitates the implementation of sustainability and resource efficiency requirements for public authorities in the context of procurement processes.

200. **Romania** has developed a Competence Centre for sustainable development and has already trained 150 civil servants from ministries to become certified sustainable development experts.

201. **Denmark** and the **Netherlands** have a cross-border cooperation on greening of public administration.<sup>83</sup> The goal is to share good practice and foster a network between civil servants working with GPA.

202. It is important to persuade all stakeholders to change their long-lasting habits in favour of environmental and climate policies, and to persuade them that even small steps and changes that may seem not important can be crucial for GPA. This applies to external stakeholders as well as to civil servants in public administrations. The Ministry of Environment of the **Slovak Republic** has developed a manual for public administration bodies ("Public administration as a leader") about how public administration bodies can save at least 15% of their energy use by implementing very small changes.<sup>84</sup>

203. The European Commission offers **peer learning support** for the EU neighbouring countries and the EU member states through the TAIEX instrument.<sup>85</sup> For specific support on environmental implementation, the TAIEX-EIR instrument is available.<sup>86</sup>

204. The OECD has several guidance reports with good practice examples, such as a report on using the principles of policy coherence for sustainable development,<sup>87</sup> and an online platform with various tools.<sup>88</sup>

205. Council of Europe, through its Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, offers a number of relevant training and capacity-building tools. A training course on participatory leadership was developed by the UNDP for Cyprus.<sup>89</sup>

## Communication approaches

206. As green public administration per definition implies intensification of relations and collaboration with other actors (internally with other departments, and externally with the stakeholders from private sector and civil society), communication should be part of policy design and implementation from the very beginning.

207. It is important to realise that there are different approaches to communication, linked to different governance styles and cultures, and for different purposes. The first approach is

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<sup>83</sup> Funded under the TSI Flagship PACE: Public Administration Cooperation Exchange.

<sup>84</sup> [https://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/brozura\\_riesenia\\_v11.pdf](https://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/brozura_riesenia_v11.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/taieux\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/taieux_en)

<sup>86</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/environmental-implementation-review/peer-2-peer\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/environmental-implementation-review/peer-2-peer_en)

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/pcsd-guidance-note-publication.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/governance/pcsd/toolkit/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/cy/FT-TRAINING-MANUAL-WEB.pdf>

the traditional one-way communication: providing information. This can be done through, for example, newsletters, a website, social media messages, reports and brochures. In the past, it used to be the primary approach for government communication, and it still plays an important role, although less dominant.

208. The second approach is a two-way communication in the form of a dialogue. The Mayor of the village of Trojanovice in the **Czech Republic** has started a podcast called „Mayor,” where he invites experts to share their knowledge and experience on emerging topics like energy communities, how to build a city for different generations, challenges of digitalisation or how to cope with developers. He also is the centre of the project “Cérka”<sup>90</sup> which should become a “living lab” of modern technologies and approaches to inspire other cities and villages. The project is to be financed by the municipality, regional authority, the Plan for Regionally Fair Transformation and the private funding. It is developed in close cooperation with central authorities, universities and private sector.

209. The third communication type is again one-way, although not aimed at just informing people but to influence their behaviour, using marketing techniques, for example in the form of an awareness raising campaign. To address the lack of political will to implement GPA and resistance to change, **Greece** has launched awareness-raising campaigns to educate the public and decision-makers about the importance of environmental issues and the benefits of sustainable policies.

210. The **Netherlands** Academy for Government Communication organised in the 2000s a series of trainings for national and subnational civil servants (policymakers as well as communication experts) on these three types of communication.<sup>91</sup>

211. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated online communication. In **Iceland**, as in many other countries, local administrations have committed to continuing the online communication. Local government meetings are often held online, enabling more flexibility and sustainability, in this sparsely populated country.

212. Several municipalities collaborated in an experiment to generate **Finland's** “most effective and fun local climate and environmental communication” in a positive and solution-oriented manner.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Cérka is translated as young woman in local dialect.

<sup>91</sup> Guido Rijnja and Louis Meuleman 2004

<sup>92</sup> <https://kestavakaupunki.fi/en/-/scarce-resources-produce-best-environmental-communication-in-finland->



## Environmental management of the administration

213. **Eco-Management and Audit Schemes** (EMAS) are meant to evaluate, report, and improve the environmental performance of administrations. The EU supports this with relevant tools and guidance.<sup>93</sup>

214. In **Saarland**, environmental management audits are carried out by independent bodies. Findings are usually environmentally relevant and lead to remedial measures or new programmes or goals, which can also affect Saarland's environmental and climate policy. Through an environmental handbook within the framework of EMAS, the Ministry for the Environment, Climate, Mobility, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (MUKMAV) also has, for example, a strict requirement for the procurement of official vehicles (with regard to CO<sub>2</sub>) and the priority procurement of consumables from recycled material, beyond the requirements of the Procurement Directive. Within the framework of EMAS, the MUKMAV maintains a legal directory listing all standards that affect environmental aspects in administrative operations, which can be made available on request.

### Summary of guidance on capacity-building:

Governance Options	Challenges/Obstacles	Response / Examples
Invest in a more pro-green attitude	Culture is difficult to change	Organise pilots, voluntary actions, and positive messages (not "combatting climate change" but "making cities a better place")
Set up a GPA training platform with training modules	Ministry for PA cannot implement it.	Start a joint pilot project with several ministries.
	No time and funding allocated for training.	Much can be adapted based on existing platforms and courses, for example, developed by the Council of Europe, the EC, or the UNDP.
Accelerate capacity-building with peer learning between countries	Unclear where to start	Information on the EU tools (also for the EU neighbouring countries) is available <sup>94</sup> .
Ensure that policymakers and communication experts fully understand	Voluntary training may not reach the people who need it most	Organise trainings for policymakers and for communication experts; consider making the training mandatory. A half-day training might give a sufficient boost.

<sup>93</sup> [https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/eco-management-and-audit-scheme-emas\\_en](https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/eco-management-and-audit-scheme-emas_en)

<sup>94</sup> [PEER 2 PEER \(europa.eu\)](#)

the different types of communication		
Set up a competition between departments on performance of their environmental management system	In some countries, competitions/awards are culturally more popular than in others	Adapt to national/administrative culture: consider whether a more formal incentive would be better, e.g., a certificate of excellent performance added to the HR files.

## 4. Conclusions and key findings

215. This report is taking forward the aspirations expressed in the Reykjavik declaration of May 2023 and at the Green Public Administration Conference of April 2023, with practical guidance. It is meant to share good practice and inspire practitioners to make their work and organisations contribute substantially to green public administration – and with that to contribute to the green transitions in Europe and around the world.

216. “Going green” is not only a matter of policy, governance, or management. It is a paradigm shift. Climate and environmental considerations thus need to be integral parts of decision-making processes and integrated into all policy sectors.

217. The concept of Green Public Administration needs to be deeply embedded in the principles of Good Democratic Governance, in the protection of Human Rights and the Rule of Law, in the democratic participation, in the functioning of local and multi-level governance, and in the concepts of economic, social, and environmental well-being.

218. Multi-level governance is essential in implementing a green public administration approach, ensuring coordination, cooperation, and efficient distribution of tasks between all levels of government.

219. Going green is possible while pursuing inclusive growth. Public administration is called upon to shape conditions for development of sustainable technology and innovation with a view to ensure inclusive growth and to leave no one behind.

220. There is a need for standards and guidance to support those implementing green policies and governance.

221. It is important to further develop and share good practices. The situation in member States varies, so does the impact of climate change and environmental pollution and the capacity to deal with it. There is value in regular exchanges of practice from all levels of government. Peer learning between countries (and at all levels) is in the end more cost-effective than hiring consultants to execute complex projects and should be financially supported.

222. Providing leadership for GPA requires capacity building to be able to routinise and standardise green policies across all sectors; it requires risk taking and managing expectations. Green policies need to transcend the short- and medium-term policies that periodic elections usually imply. Public affairs managers and civil servants need to invest in communicating the changes needed in long-lasting habits and modus operandi of people, economic actors and the public sector itself. Overcoming working in silos would create more coherent actions and bringing on board all stakeholders could help foster trust in public action.

223. While the transition to a more sustainable economy is a task for the whole society, the public sector is ideally placed to play a key role. Public administration can lead the way to promote and enforce the reduction of carbon emissions, protection of the environment, and better management of natural resources. Decisive action on the part of the public administration in turn will encourage individuals, organisations, and businesses to play their part.

224. GPA is likely to improve the environment, the economy, and social well-being of the people, provided that these three dimensions are well-balanced. If implemented correctly, this approach can significantly improve the quality of life for people now and for future generations and communities.

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