

# EGPA 2023 CONFERENCE

Zagreb, Croatia 5-8 September

Steering the European Union through poly-crises storms:  
The role of Public Administration

## CALL FOR PAPERS

PSG XIII : Public Policy

## EGPA Permanent Study Group XIII on Public Policy

The EGPA Permanent Study Group on Public Policy provides a platform for the study of public policy in the context of public administration. Its main purpose is to develop and strengthen the ties between the fields of public administration/public management and political science/public policy by bringing scholars from these fields together. At the intersection between public policy and public administration stands the bureaucrat who is the transmission belt between government and the governed, i.e. between the policy and its target population.

After a successful launch in 2010 (Toulouse) and a continued range of workshops held in the successive years, the Study Group will have its thirteenth meeting at the 2023 EGPA conference in Zagreb. The topic of this year's call for papers is policy implementation as a setting for innovation, creativity and problem-solving.

### **Focus: *Implementation as Policy Innovation: Creativity, Discretion, and Problem-solving***

This year's workshop of the Permanent Study Group XIII on Public Policy focuses on the positive, creative, and innovative sides of discretion in policy implementation—at the street level and beyond. Policy implementation research is overwhelmingly concerned with questions of compliance, performance, and divergence. In line with a top-down perspective on bureaucracies, there is a tendency to view deviations from formal rules and defined goals during implementation as problematic (e.g. Gajduschek, 2003). However, in reality, the individual or collective use of discretion in policy implementation is not only inevitable, it is also often beneficial. It allows policy implementers to cope with difficult circumstances, flexibly solve problems, help clients, and be innovative and creative.

In both public administration practice and literature, discretion is increasingly seen as a necessary and valuable phenomenon when used in professional and ethical ways (Bartels 2013; Thomann et al. 2018; Zacka 2017). This is evidenced by more horizontal implementation policies, valuing interpersonal notions as trust, collaboration and professional judgement, embracing discretion as a tool to pursue positive outcomes. Within the literature on street-level implementation and frontline work, there is increasing attention to why and how rules are bent for the greater good. Gofen (2014) shows that divergence can be other-serving, and Tummers et al. (2015) depict how frontline workers may cope by moving toward clients. There is a growing literature on how street-level bureaucrats act as policy entrepreneurs (Lavee and Cohen 2019). Other research in that regard focuses on how creative solutions at the frontline are collectively made (Visser and Kruyen 2021), and how social deliberation in uncertain decision-making contexts could contribute to increasing consistency and minimising personal biases (Møller 2021; Raaphorst and Loyens 2020) and broadening frontline workers action repertoires in dealing with complex cases (Rutz et al. 2017). In addition, more and more research underlines the importance of leadership in giving direction to frontline use of discretion within horizontal and collaborative implementation contexts (Bernards 2021; Keulemans and Groeneveld 2020). For member state implementation, Zhelyazkova and Thomann (2021) for example show how member states as problem-solvers “customize” rules when implementing them, with positive effects on practical compliance. Sager et al. (2019) show how subnational units complement federal policy during implementation.

The workshop invites contributions along these lines that help us understand how and why we see positive and creative uses of discretion in policy implementation, what purposes they serve, and what effects they have on policy outcomes, impacts, legitimacy, acceptance, and so on.

Against this background, the workshop of the Permanent Study Group XIII on Public Policy to be held at the EGPA 2023 conference seeks papers that explore the origins and use of innovation through discretionary power in creative ways during the implementation of public policies and solving problems at the street level. PSGXIII is committed to theoretical and methodological pluralism and welcomes contributions from different conceptual frameworks, various analytic approaches, and diverse research designs that explore the current developments in policy implementation around the globe. The workshop invites both experienced and junior researchers to propose theory-based papers to understand the patterns and determinants of creative discretion in policy implementation.

## References

- Bartels, K. P. (2013). Public encounters: The history and future of face-to-face contact between public professionals and citizens. *Public Administration* 91(2): 469-483.
- Bernards, B. (2021). Do visionary and servant leaders reduce cognitive uncertainty of professionals? A study of team-based settings in public organizations. *Public Management Review*, 1-23.
- Gajduschek, G. (2003). Bureaucracy: Is it efficient? Is it not? Is that the question? Uncertainty reduction: An ignored element of bureaucratic rationality. *Administration & Society* 34(6): 700-723.
- Gofen, A. (2014). Mind the gap: Dimensions and influence of street-level divergence. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 24(2): 473-493.
- Keulemans, S., & Groeneveld, S. (2020). Supervisory leadership at the frontlines: Street-level discretion, supervisor influence, and street-level bureaucrats' attitude towards clients. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 30(2): 307-323.
- Lavee, E., & Cohen, N. (2019). How street-level bureaucrats become policy entrepreneurs: the case of urban renewal. *Governance* 32(3): 475-492.
- Møller, A. M. (2021). Deliberation and deliberative organizational routines in frontline decision-making. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 31(3): 471-488.
- Raaphorst, N., & Loyens, K. (2020). From poker games to kitchen tables: How social dynamics affect frontline decision making. *Administration & Society* 52(1): 31-56.
- Rutz, S., Mathew, D., Robben, P., & de Bont, A. (2017). Enhancing responsiveness and consistency: Comparing the collective use of discretion and discretionary room at inspectorates in England and the Netherlands. *Regulation & Governance* 11(1): 81-94.
- Sager, F., Rüefli, C. Thomann, E. (2019). Fixing Federal Faults. Complementary Member State Policies in Swiss Health Care Policy. *International Review of Public Policy* 1(2): 147-172.
- Thomann, E., van Engen, N., & Tummers, L. (2018). The necessity of discretion: A behavioral evaluation of bottom-up implementation theory. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28(4),583-601.

Tummers, L. L., Bekkers, V., Vink, E., & Musheno, M. (2015). Coping during public service delivery: A conceptualization and systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25(4): 1099-1126.

Visser, E. L., & Kruyen, P. M. (2021). Discretion of the future: conceptualizing everyday acts of collective creativity at the street-level. *Public Administration Review* 81(4): 676-690.

Zacka, B. (2017). *When the state meets the street: Public service and moral agency*. Harvard University Press.

Zhelyazkova, A., & Thomann, E. (2022). 'I did it my way': customisation and practical compliance with EU policies. *Journal of European Public Policy* 29(3): 427-447.

## Joint session and Best Paper Award

One workshop session will be organized jointly with the EGPA Permanent Study Group XXI on Policy Design and Evaluation and the *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*. An award will be handed out for the best comparative paper.

## Procedure

We kindly invite researchers interested in the workshop theme to submit a short abstract (max. one page) outlining:

- the title of the paper
- the research question, argument and contents of the paper
- the research methods and empirical material used
- name, affiliation, and contact information of the author(s)

## Practicalities

### Important dates:

- ✓ Deadline for submission of abstracts/Panel Proposals: May 17, 2023
- ✓ Deadline for notification to the authors: May 31, 2023
- ✓ Deadline for online submission of full papers: August 17, 2023
- ✓ EGPA PhD Symposium 5-6 September 2023
- ✓ EGPA 2023 Conference: 6-8 September 2023

EGPA 2023 Conference Website: <https://www.egpa-conference2023.org/>

EGPA 2023 Conference Management System:

<https://www.conftool.org/egpa-conference2023>

For any questions regarding EGPA 2023, please contact us at: [f.maron@iias-iisa.org](mailto:f.maron@iias-iisa.org)

## Co-chairs of Permanent Study Group XIII

Prof Dr Eva Thomann  
Department of Politics and Public Administration  
University of Konstanz, Germany  
E-Mail: [eva.thomann@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:eva.thomann@uni-konstanz.de)

Prof Dr Anat Gofen  
Federman School of Public Policy and Governance, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israël  
E-Mail: [anatgofen@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:anatgofen@mail.huji.ac.il)

Prof Dr Fritz Sager  
University of Bern, KPM Center for Public Management, Switzerland  
E-Mail: [fritz.sager@kpm.unibe.ch](mailto:fritz.sager@kpm.unibe.ch)

Dr Nadine Raaphorst  
Institute of Public Administration, Leiden University, The Netherlands  
E-Mail: [n.j.raaphorst@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:n.j.raaphorst@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)

Dr Anka Kekez  
Faculty of Political Science  
University of Zagreb, Croatia  
E-Mail: [akekez@fpzg.hr](mailto:akekez@fpzg.hr)