

Public Administration as a green leader

CDDG - Webinar 9th World Forum for Democracy - Public Administration as a green leader/Webinaire 9e Forum Mondial de la démocratie - L'administration publique en tant que leader vert

The meeting started with posing a remarkably relevant and up-to-date question – Can democracy save the environment? And if yes, then who should take the lead?

It is commonly known that all people want to have a nice and meaningful life, nonetheless, we should remember that our actions influence the climate. It is our generation's role to stop climate changes and save the planet.

During the meeting, it was emphasised that big corporations think in a shorter term, while bureaucracy (public sector), thinks in a longer term, and this situation needs to be changed.

Four experts representing different fields were invited and took part in the event.

The speaker asked participants to imagine that saving a planet was a video game, to be more precise, an online game – “save the planet”, in which one can choose his/her role in saving the planet. Participants and experts shared their points of view on the idea of responsibility for climate changes and any possible solutions that may allow overcoming this significant issue.

First of all, national governments should adopt different strategies when it comes to changing expenditures and policy regarding being eco-friendly (green subjects). It can and should be done by introducing specific laws and regulations in the area of public administration.

Moreover, local authorities (e.g. mayor), can inspire and introduce some changes in public administration and enhance its more efficient everyday life – how people work, how processes are organised. It is also important to work together with other local governments in order to build a closely connected web of cooperation and sharing experience or good practices.

One of the experts indicated that local governments should enhance the influence of local communities on the issue of green subjects. Local authorities must work together with national government and also a private sector. They should promote changing the way of thinking of big companies and regular people. Only this cooperation can be considered to be effective and meaningful.

As pointed out by one of the participants, the prime minister should encourage the whole government and the public sector to transform into more eco-friendly society. The public administration is a complex body, the prime minister and the government should initiate the line of changes – especially in federal countries.

The experts discussed the issue of green public procurement – how to fulfil certain criteria and what obligations are necessary. They mentioned that that public documents circulation should be more flexible are depend on green matters. Certain laws and regulations ought to introduced to promote green public procurement and EU supports this issue. Nevertheless, the questions arises, how far should a government go in order to settle particular procedures and laws.

The question on how citizens might influence public authorities to think about environmentally friendly issues has been also discussed. The elections can be considered as a strategic element of control – what was done between one election and the next one (approximately 4 years). What is more, it has been noted that citizens are members of a private sector and they should push authorities to act more actively and demand immediate actions. Undoubtedly, they should set the agenda. Citizens should force the authorities to form as it was called “good laws”, and to establish the way the laws are implemented. It is necessary to raise awareness, promote the subject, not introduce additional fines and punishments.

In conclusion, Public administrations are critical in promoting green subjects and implementing them into everyday life. They can influence both communities and private sector. It is also worth mentioning that private sector and big companies not only may destroy the environment, they can also bring some innovative and beneficial subjects into everyday life. Thus, they should be invited to discussion and active actions. The work of changing the mind and rising the awareness should be done by the way of

widely spread collaboration. Management level of both public and private service is of paramount importance in that terms. They can introduce new processes, convince people about the relevance of green subjects, and set the example for others to follow. It has been also mentioned that green products are often considered too costly and thus, they tend to be excluded from public procurement. Consequently, it may be stated that some necessary actions need to be taken in order to change this situation as soon as possible.

The meeting ended with a significant sentence that should serve as a reminder: "Every day we are borrowing resources from our children. Authorities should remember about future generations, not focus only on a present day."