

**Written statement by the International Institute of Administrative
Sciences on ‘Training and awareness-raising for the Sustainable
Development Goals’,**

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I. Introduction

On 27 September 2015, the Heads of States and Governments of the United Nations member states have adopted the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, consisting of 17 goals further refined into 169 targets to be realized by 2030 (General Assembly 2015). Achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs), as they came to be known, within this ambitious outcome-oriented framework for all member countries will be particularly demanding: it requires political leadership, significant investments, and the involvement of civil society at all levels. Mainstream public administration (PA) theories and practice offer an overarching understanding of the institutional, structural and contextual challenges at stake. But it still falls short on questions on what capabilities, knowledge, and attitudes are expected from civil servants to successfully engage in the attainment of SDGs?

Institutes of Public Administration (IPAs) have central roles in this domain. IPAs are public institutions entrusted with some jurisdiction related to the training of civil servants at the national level. They perform a key role in equipping civil servants with the needed mindset to contribute more effectively to the attainment of the SDGs. Amid the 2030 Agenda, we believe that understanding the challenges facing IPAs in integrating the SDGs into their programs and rethinking the jurisdiction of PA profession urges examination. Such insights will allow the critical assessment of existing opportunities and opening the door for a pragmatic approach to awareness-raising for the realization of global ownership of the 2030 agenda.

II. Remaining challenges of IPAs in the 2030 Agenda

At the global level, the role of IPAs in the 2030 Agenda is gaining momentum, as the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) noted in its 17th meeting¹: *“Civil servants should not be left behind (...) since they are the core of governments’ actions on the Goals”*. Yet we see two main challenges to fully tapping their potential. First is the institutional saturation; on every goal and target exists a myriad of multi-level governance arrangements², resulting in complex relations of labour division, incentive structures and interdependence between the public sector, the industry, NGOs, university faculties, and professional associations. This kind of complexity is often biased towards ‘inertia and conservatism’ and it is influenced by different conditions in PA systems, efficiency in management, and asymmetric institutional and political arrangements³. Supporting IPAs to transform ‘institutional saturation’ becomes a necessary way forward. Two distinctive streams sustain this claim:

- IPAs provide critical reference points to governments for taming the institutional complexity, whereby institutions encourage effective relationships and policy convergence in matters of integration of SDGs into public administration curricula.
- IPAs can foster coherence in the ways that governments steer the implementation of the SDGs, which includes structuring cooperation among layers, managing and adapting policies and institutions, and shaping global debate and learning. As Louis Meuleman (CEPA member) outlined in the 17th CEPA meeting, it is important to *“changing mindsets and teaching silos to dance, instead of breaking them down”*.

The second challenge concerns the unclear devices to incorporate national priority-settings over SDGs into IPAs’ learning and training programs. In general, it seems that overall models of training and development are quite diverse and frequently disconnected from State administrations. Roughly stated, they range from general competency frameworks with central training institutions in the front to decentralized training policies with a large role for the private market⁴. Such disconnections can result in programs operating independently of national steering, contradicting the global realization of SDGs.

¹ Risse, N. (2018, April 26). CEPA 17 Experts Call for Investing in Public Servants to Deliver on SDGs. IISD-SDG Knowledge Hub. Retrieved from <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/cepa-17-experts-call-for-investing-in-public-servants-to-deliver-on-sdgs/>

² Littoz-Monnet, A. (2010). *Dynamic Multi-Level Governance – Bringing the Study of Multi-level Interactions into the Theorizing of European Integration*, European Integration online Papers (EIoP), 14(1).

³ Verhoest, K., Bouckaert, G. & Peters, B.G. (2007), “Janus-faced reorganization: Specialization and coordination in four OECD countries in the period 1980–2005”, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 73(3), 325–48.

⁴ OECD (2017). *National schools of Government. Building civil service capacity*. OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris.

There is still much action and development needed for the integration of the SDGs in Public Administration Curricula. As an international organization promoting the production and diffusion of relevant knowledge in public administration, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) recommends that IPAs regain coherence with governmental actions. We discern two models of training conducive to the global ownership of the 2030 agenda and that moves IPAs in the right direction: cooperation between institutions across the government, and between public institutions and non-governmental stakeholders.

III. Jurisdiction of public administration profession in the 2030 Agenda

According to Bouckaert et al.⁵, the PA profession can claim more or less extensive jurisdiction over the SDGs⁶. In its narrow version, the jurisdictional claim covers positive tasks of governments: The monopoly of Government legitimate violence; the basic rights of citizens, participation in decision-making and access to justice; good governance principles, and specific PA tools.

In its intermediate version, the claim also encompasses the following functions which are generally performed by governments, in a wider division of labor with society, which together contributes to SDGs: the provision of developmental goods and public services; mobilization of policies, and the lobbying in global governance circles. Eventually, a more diffuse claim relates to the mainstreaming of SDGs and public governance. Mainstreaming concept refers to the “systematic incorporation of (...) issues throughout all governmental institutions and policies”⁷ and includes most ‘cross-cutting policy challenges’ including the SDGs⁸. This claim can manifest itself in two ways: 1) the PA-mainstreaming of SDGs, whereby institutions with established jurisdictions over SDGs (agronomists, economists, engineers,...) incorporate PA insights with a positive impact on ‘their’ SDG, and 2) the SDG-mainstreaming of PA, whereby the field promotes the overall SDG philosophy of leaving no one behind and incorporates the specific policy objectives of neighboring specialized fields into its own body of abstract knowledge. The first mainstreaming variant corresponds to a jurisdictional expansion of PA, the second to a jurisdictional shrinking.

A profession, according to Abbott (1988) is a social group, embodying some abstract knowledge, applied to problems in organizational settings, in a controlled way. One essential means of control is education. Education itself flows from research validated by the social group through the conferences and publication series it controls. As a learned society in PA, IIAS is involved in social

⁵ Bouckaert, G., Loretan, R., Troupin, S. (2016). Written Statement by the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, submitted to the 15th session of CEPA, Retrieved from <https://lirias.kuleuven.be/retrieve/389289>

⁶ Abbott, A. (1988). *The systems of Professions, an essay on the division of expert labor*, University Chicago Press, USA.

⁷ Pollack, M., Hafner-Burton, E. (2000, pp. 434). Mainstream gender in the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 7(3), pp. 432-456.

⁸ Scholten, P. & Van Breugel, I. (2018). Introduction: Conceptualizing Mainstreaming in Integration Governance. In: Scholten P., Van Breugel I. (eds) *Mainstreaming Integration Governance*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

control mechanisms of the public administration profession. Its members produce abstract knowledge through research groups; its International Review of Administrative Sciences and publications series validate research before incorporation into teaching programs; its events socialize newcomers and maintain group identity; and its accreditation agencies ensure compliance of education programs with normative professional standards. Through its policies, it can make own some claims, and observe their relative realizations. It made some forays into SDG-related jurisdictions in the recent years, and generated some lessons along the way:

- The SDG-mainstreaming of public administration is most appealing in developing countries under Western sphere of influence, most adequately covered by the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), a sub-entity of IIAS;
- The public administration-mainstreaming of SDGs is most appealing in developmental countries operating outside of the realm of the Washington-consensus, and best served by IIAS itself; and,
- The mainstreaming argument, in whatever version, has difficulties to take root in saturated Western markets partially covered by the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA), the European regional entity of IIAS. where public administration developments remain focused on the jurisdictional core.

IV. Role of the IIAS in the awareness-raising for the SDGs

IIAS has enjoyed a General consultative status vis-à-vis the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 1947⁹. On this occasion, we reaffirm our determination to represent the public administration community of academics and practitioners in global policy debates. Furthermore, as a global non-governmental organization specialized in public administration and global governance, IIAS is determined to sustain the positive effect of global ownership of SDGs by:

- continuing to provide researchers and scholars a platform for PA paradigms and approaches discussion, reinforcing evidence-based research agendas and disseminating comparative case-studies.
- working with its member states and national sections to identify, evaluate and valorise the good practices emerging in different regions of the world to realize the SDGs;
- keeping SDGs on the agenda of its annual Congresses; offering an independent platform to researchers, international organizations and member countries to identify the governance arrangements which are functional for the SDGs agenda.

⁹ Fabio Rugge, Michael Duggett (2005), *"IIAS/IISA Administration & Service 1930-2005 ..."*, IOS Press, Amsterdam, Berlin, Oxford, Tokyo, Washington DC. pp.7-8.

- supporting the professionalization of schools and institutes of administration through accreditation and advice services based on the UNDESA-IASIA Standards of Excellence in Public Administration and Training, and building capacities for sustainable governance; and,
- connecting with other global organizations to join forces for the 2030 agenda.