

Dear Mayor,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

A warm welcome also on behalf of the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA). It is wonderful to have you all here in the beautiful historic town hall of the City of Maastricht.

Many thanks to you, Mr Mayor, for receiving us here in this hall that shows the historic dimension of this city. And it is very interesting to note that awareness of the long history of this part of the world is not in contradiction to innovation and openness to Europe and the world.

For EIPA Maastricht is a special place. It is Headquarters of EIPA since 1981. By the way EIPA celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. There are also the so called antennas of EIPA in Barcelona and in Luxembourg. But the basis of EIPA has always been the City of Maastricht.

As you know already, EIPA was established in order to help public administrations with their questions related to European Integration. During the 30 years of EIPA's existence the questions have of course changed a lot and EIPA's programme has changed over the years accordingly. But it is still the place where the civil servants find high quality answers to their questions.

The location close to Belgium, Germany and France as well as the international university and the European institutes, in combination with the beautiful old streets and facades – this is attractive for the many guests that come to follow EIPA's seminars. By the way, last year we had more than 15.000 participants in the wide range of seminars that we offer to civil servants of the EU MS and to the EU institutions.

Many of our participants like to walk through the city, they visit the many shops or simply enjoy the multitude of restaurants and pubs.

In any case Maastricht has become a meeting place for representatives of public administration in Europe. Just like today!!

The European Public Sector Award is a good reason to come to Maastricht. Dear EPSA participants, all of you have participated in the EPSA process. You found the idea of a European Public Sector Award may be a bit challenging, maybe you consulted with your colleagues about it. Possibly you found it a bit hard to present your story in English language. Maybe you called the EPSA Hotline to find out more information. In any case, you followed our invitation to describe your practice, your project, your innovative solution. You have registered in our website and you got in touch with the EPSA team.

Your application was very successful!! All of you are already winners of the European Public Sector Award!!

You are here, ready to share your experience and ready to hear about the stories of the other participants. Thanks to people like you also public administration is a place where innovation takes place. Innovation needs thinking, inspiration, a good team, trial and error, frustration tolerance and also a good deal of persistence.

You seem to have all these characteristics. Our evaluation process gave us evidence that your projects are of top quality. And it was very difficult to decide about the individual projects. Our evaluation process was a very refined one and every project was checked at least by three independent evaluators. In case of doubt every case was intensively discussed during the evaluators' meeting.

Sometimes it was very difficult to take a decision. But in the end we selected 58 applicants that are representing the top group of the all together 274 applications. Out of this 58 we have in a second step selected the 15 nominees for the EPSA award.

As I said earlier: all of you are already winners in this award. Because you participated and because you have succeeded in the evaluation to get a high recognition.

Now, Mayor Hoes and I would like to hand over to you a certificate that documents your success and that you can also use at home as evidence of the success of your application.

Before starting the ceremony in which we will hand over the certificates, please allow me to thank Mayor Hoes for at least two things:

- * for the warm welcome here in the Town Hall of Maastricht,
- * and for his kind and reliable support for the idea of EPSA.

Dear Mayor Hoes, many thanks for all your support that we enjoyed so far. Many thanks also to your staff for their advice and good ideas throughout the preparation process. We appreciate this cooperation with you and your team very much.

But now, let us start the ceremony....