



2019 Award for Good Administration- Introduction

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Good morning, everyone and you are most welcome to this ceremony the aim of which is to acknowledge and to applaud the work of each and every one of you and of your colleagues in the institutions, agencies and bodies that you represent. I am immensely grateful to all of you and to your teams for taking part and I appreciate the effort you have made to do so and to be with us here today.

Our very first awards event was held two years ago and I remember it as an event of great warmth and great excitement, not just for the winners but for everyone in the room who gained an insight into some of the amazing and innovative work that was happening in an EU administration that is spread all across the Union.

We were prompted to initiate these awards for a number of reasons. The first was the insight I had been given through my own work of the richness and variety of projects and other work that the administration is involved in. It was, in a sense, my way of saying that despite the fact that while of course, my office necessarily deals with things when they go wrong, I am also very aware of how frequently things go right and the public benefits that occur when they do.

I was also prompted by the negative and frequently unfair depiction of the EU administration either by people, rightly or wrongly, critical of the EU or simply by people unaware of much of the work that is done that is of benefit to so many people.

This is an attempt to help to showcase the range and the value of what you do and to counteract the caricature.

The third reason was quite simply the aim of my Office to promote good administration by sharing best practice and I hope that many of you will be inspired by the work of your colleagues that you see here today.

These few weeks, as every single person in this room knows, are important weeks for the future of the Union. Decisions are being made about important posts, not just Commission President, Council president, EP President and other top roles, but also leaders at other levels within the administration, committee chairs and a raft of other quietly influential positions. The politics are naturally complicated and few people can yet predict how the cards are going to fall.

But watching and waiting as these events unfold are the people that we serve, the citizens of the EU. And they want from the EU institutions what they want from their own member state



administrations - responsiveness to their needs, accountability for their decisions, and an approach to public service that puts the individual at the front and centre of what they do and not viewed as an administrative burden to be tolerated.

The EU is necessarily governed by rules which must be obeyed if we have to have administrative coherence. But, from my experience, the administrators that really do live up to their public service obligations are those that factor in the actual public experience of an administrative act or decision and try to accommodate that, yes within the rules, but always with a view to seeking the fairest outcome.

Administrators sometimes hesitate to use discretion, are more comfortable operating within black and white parameters. But the real world is messier than that and not everyone's problem fits neatly into a black and white protocol. If you think about what causes your own stress when dealing with a utility company or a bank, or a public authority, very often it's not the concrete problem that you have but rather the failure to be really heard, to be treated as a human being by another human being who really wants to assist.

The projects presented here today reflect that awareness of what it is to be a true and authentic public service. They have examined a problem to be solved, and identified a way of solving it, and very often using innovative even unorthodox methods. They have looked firstly at what will work and then used the institutional tools and procedures to craft the solution. Many have not taken anything for granted, have been prepared to look at new ways of doing things and demonstrated awareness of changing environments in all areas of EU life.

Once again I am grateful to all of you for taking the time and the trouble to present your entries to this initiative, I am of course particularly grateful to the three people who volunteered their time and their expertise to evaluate every project and to share their reflections with me as I began the difficult job of shortlisting entries and eventually choosing the winners of each category and the overall winners.

They are Peter Tyndall, President of the International Ombudsman Institute, Christopher Docksey, the honorary director general of the EDPS and Joana Mendes, Professor of Comparative Administrative Law at the University of Luxembourg. Professor Mendes cannot be here with us today but I thank her for her work.

So thank you for your attendance this morning, and I now invite Chris and Peter to give some brief reflections on today's awards.