

Forum on “ Strategies for Public Administration “

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Operation of national authorities in a supranational environment



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet with you, here, today.

I'll present to you, a view of the operation of national authorities in a very challenging, constantly and swiftly changing, supranational environment.

Let me start with the big picture.



“Τα πάντα ρει μηδέποτε κατ'αυτὸν μένειν”
Hράκλειτος, Greek philosopher, 535 - 475 BCE

In plain English, the above quote translates to “everything flows, nothing stays the same.”

That was the Greek philosopher Heraclitus's way, of determining the existence of life.

Movement, he noted, determines our existence and change is, its fundamental expression.

As our society grows, its rapidly accelerating transformation, impacts the pace of change itself – the tempo of movement increases, and the field of its applicability is widened.

As a physicist would say: “the larger the mass, the stronger its force”.

Nowadays, we live in a constant renewal – as individuals and as societies.

After centuries of hard work to consolidate sovereignty, we witness that some nation states have started sharing – actually they have forfeited their absolute rights in favour of collaborating with others. In so doing, their boundaries have shifted.



When sovereign equality among nation states was established, as a foundational principal in the charter of the United Nations, it was considered by many, to be one of the greatest triumphs of the international system, even though it impinged on sovereign nations', independent decision-making and governance.



They formed new Institutions of Global Governance and voluntarily conceded part of their unconditional right on how to govern their people.

Additionally, the States abided in Multilateral Treaties and Conventions.



The States further expanding their interaction, formed intergovernmental entities and forums, OECD, G7, G8, G20, the Arctic Council, well known here in Sweden,

Non-governmental organizations (NGO's), functioning with independent funding outside the nation states' reach, also assumed an important role by monitoring practices and exercising independent evaluations of nation states' practices and behaviour.

Together with think tanks, which can influence national and international policies, the groups and the actions mentioned above, create new norms to be considered in international law. This, in turn,

further reduces the absolute sovereign rights of independent nation states.

These groups – and the individuals who drive them – are the core and the body of our contemporary societies and can impact the abilities of nation states' decision-making. International capital markets, International debt markets, bond and credit corporations further impact on a states policy drafting.

Today, no nation is totally self-governed without external influences, no matter how powerful it is.

And that is a good thing! Because crises are not local anymore, they are viewed and confronted at a multilateral level – collectively. It is up to national authorities to ensure that the right path of collaboration is followed to prevent us from wandering into an unwanted direction.



In 1951, European nation states took their first step to accelerate the bonding processes between them. Since then, the European Union grew into a supranational entity, now comprised of 28 states with a constitution, a parliament, a council, a EU Commission, a common currency and a European External Service.

The European model, of collective governance is unique and highly sophisticated. It is based on principles of consensus, openness and transparency. It doesn't grow by incorporating states that don't want, or are not ready, to form part of the Union.

EU legislative action has also been implemented in national legislations, establishing a framework for action in the fields of social and economic policy.

By doing so, they have helped to transform, what have often been dated and inward-thinking national structures, into open societies characterized by the free movement of people, goods, services, information and ideas. This is what the supranational design offers us and couldn't be achieved by the actions of a single national state.

This reality, of course, is not viewed by everyone the same way. Some are pro- European while others are reluctant.

Recently, a very well known and high ranking Swedish politician told me that a member of his constituency, an old lady, approached him and told him that no matter how much she appreciated him, she would not be convinced that Sweden is gaining from being a member of the EU. She said, that she would 'not be fooled' about it, because Sweden enjoys a much higher standard of living than other European countries.

Sometimes, an individual – be it because of character or because of age, is reluctant to embrace change.

Nevertheless we must do our best to demonstrate that, thanks to the free movement of people, goods, services, information and ideas, Sweden's good standards of living are and continue to be safeguarded.

It's imperative, however, to appreciate that our world has changed and, in this new world, the only way to ensure a prosperous way of life is to adjust to a new multicultural, open, and outward-thinking society.



While the values and the objectives of the Union remain invariable, the narrative is constantly adjusting and depends on our continuous and proactive participation.

National authorities have an important role to play there. The way in which the EU develops depends on us, the people inhabiting each of its member states.

An active public discourse, within each member state, is very important, for the constant adaptation of a common narrative.



The European Council and the Ministerial Councils, the highest representation of a national authority, decide by consensus on the policies to be followed at a supranational level, thereby serving their citizens and ensuring that a systematic approach is taken, to safeguarding, collectively-espoused, regulations and practices.

One of the goals is to bring all European national laws in line to each other and properly apply the European aquis.

Errors and mishaps occur, sometimes, in the supranational planning. During the recent years of debt crisis in member-states of the Eurozone, new mechanisms have been created to amend faulty architecture and face issues that were created by the unification of the EU currency market.

These mechanisms were put in place to relieve the pressure exerted on individual member-states and the common currency during debt crises.

Different models, have been put in motion, to deal with private debt and bad banks, and conclusions have been drawn.

That's how we are able to reach the best working model to tackle our problems and create prevention mechanisms.

The idea that nations should independently deal with their economic crises belongs to the past.

Nowadays, no nation is an island. We're all interconnected, in complex systems of socio-political and economic exchange.

Our interests are interwoven and we depend on one another. This means that there is a high rate of volatility and spill over, which is out of an individual nation's absolute control.

It is for these reasons that we must approach moments of crises together – on a supranational level – because we are stronger together than we are alone.

Our environment is changing and we need to adapt to it. It is, in fact, imperative that we do, because the cost of not acting is momentous, for not only individual member states, but also for the EU as a whole.

It is vital to always question the effectiveness of our system.

If we are convinced that our practices are the best, to the point where we are unwilling to spot weaknesses or admit that improvements can be made, then we are more reluctant to evolve.



According to several studies and relevant research, more than 800 billion euro can be saved per year by adopting about 24 propositions. Let me refer to some of them:

- The Digital Single Market. Due to the acceleration of the flow of information and the consolidation of a very fragmented market, we can and should embrace a digital single market. E-commerce is fast growing within national boundaries yet it moves at a snail pace, at the supranational level.

To prevent this from happening, several obstacles must be resolved such as the internationalization of VAT payments, e-payments, e-privacy, dispute resolution and consumer protection.

With such structural changes a higher productivity and effectiveness can take place.

- The delivering and completing of the existing Single Market for consumers and citizens. In the last three decades over 3,500 individual single market measures have been implemented.

However, relevant research shows, that further measures are needed to improve the ease of cross border flow of goods and services, along with a European level consumer protection and market surveillance.

- The Banking Union to avert a new Financial crisis. The recent debt crisis produced a huge loss of GDP.

In Greece, the economic crises was due to public debt, but in other countries, it was the momentous losses from private/banking debt, that passed the ticket, on to the tax payer.

The only way to prevent such a crisis from happening again is to further increase the integrated governance of the Union,

with proper intervention rules, to deal decisively with failing banks, with minimal intervention from taxpayers.

- The completing of Financial Markets, along with the Banking Union, intends to eliminate the revealed weaknesses in the regulatory coordination in the EU.

Big transnational financing institutions often operate outside and across a nation's regulatory system.

This requires us to create a stable system where phrases like "too big to fail" disappear from our vocabulary.

- The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). With Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, as the top European negotiator, the TTIP is already being actively discussed and debated throughout the EU.

This partnership is expected to impact the relationship between private actors and the state.

This would impact individuals' national rights in order to harmonize, standardize and regulate trade and investments between the EU and the USA.

The gains from such partnership are expected to rise to 60 billion euro annually. The TTIP is a trade-off between national sovereignty and private business interests.

- The Combat of Violence against Women runs high in the agenda of the EU.

The calculated annual cost (of public services, lost economic productivity, and pain and suffering of the victims) is rising to 226 billion euros for the EU member states.

Incorporating gender-based violence into the crime list, promoting legal action for the prevention of violence, and collecting and analysing further data of gender -based violence

at a EU level, is expected to reduce, the today's existing gender violence.



As I stated earlier, people are always interacting. Services, goods, and ideas are exchanged globally and barriers in communications have long been forgotten.

Today, the young "smart phone and tablet generations" take for granted that there is instant, global, and free communication.

Their connection to information and people, transcends boundaries and an endless array of data is available at their fingertips. The world, in its entirety, is stretched out before them.

- It is common today for young people, to begin their studies in one country, to continue in another, and to work in another.

They might open an internet-based business and become a successful international company with one employee or a handful of geographically dispersed staff.

- Companies are integrating resources from several countries, putting together new products and services, and producing growth in both their national and supranational communities.

- In research, in medicine, in sports, in art, goods and services, people are more mobile and open to exchanging goods, information, and ideas than ever before.

National authorities must rise to meet the unprecedented change we are experiencing, in both speed and scale.

These changes occur in two horizontal planes.

1. At supranational level. As nation-states unite, supranational institutions rise to ensure that:

- Strategic and executive planning are in place, and implemented properly.

For a better outcome, national bodies should operate in a proactive way, influencing and shaping their actions by, actively and collectively, participating in beneficial initiatives and policies. That's essential because:

- More than 60% of local council agendas are affected by the EU
- 40% of EU funds are invested in local government
- The supranational institutions must also ensure that the interactions between EU member-states and EU institutions runs smoothly across the member-states.

2. At a national level, it is essential to recognize that citizens and their enterprises create new realities and these demand new services.

Our national authorities must therefore support – through constant analysis, reevaluation and adaptation – the needs of individuals, in their social and economic enterprises. It is only in this way, that our societies can grow and our citizens can prosper.

Where national states fail to fully implement the new norms, or to meet the needs of their society, the price to pay is significant.

In Greece, during the years prior to the public debt crisis, the State, in order to meet the demands of a rapidly developing economy, instead of modernising and consolidating its operation, multiplied its structure.

As a result, the state lost ground on effective strategy-drawing and operational control.

We all know, the consequences. The operational costs, created huge deficits that amounted to Greece's public debt.

It took years of sacrificial efforts and huge reforms to eliminate the deficits and produce a primary surplus, a second year in a row, and right now achieving the best developing rate in EU.

The challenges and the concerns each nation faces, of course, vary among the member states. The way the states understand and anticipate the people's needs, is of utmost importance in earning the confidence of the citizens and pave the way to growth.

For example, as you know, in Sweden, the exemplary consensus-building in the very early stages of a dispute, paves the way for the efficient implementation of a settled strategy in a timely and well-tuned manner.

It demonstrates the trust that the citizens feel for the State and gives a tactical advantage to the society.

On another note, the level of gender equality provided by Sweden, proactively promotes and enhances justice for its citizens, in this way encouraging social cohesion and growth.

In this ever-changing world, we should continue moving forward, using the strong points that are shaping our lives, transforming our actions, and demanding an even more proactive and participating role in the EU.

What National Authorities need. is to further promote inclusiveness, expand our mutual understanding, embrace innovation, pay attention to peoples' needs, be compassionate, and take bold and well-informed actions to ensure that we keep adapting to our changing environments.



Make no mistake, if a country's National Authority ignores the signs or just hesitate, another country's National Authority will fill the gap, by taking initiatives in the consensus process, or, will attract the best resources, human and material, to its platform.

In other words if you don't do it someone else will do it for you.

Thank you for your attention.