

Dear colleagues,

I'm very glad to welcome you in Rome for this Dispa meeting, to welcome you personally, on behalf of the SNA, the Italian National School of Administration, and on behalf of course of the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers.

It is the first time for me to host this meeting here at the Italian National School of Administration and it is exciting to see around this table so many colleagues coming from the 27 EU member countries, from Brussels and from some other invited European countries.

Together we'll continue the ongoing dialogue on the challenges of public administration in Europe and, as a consequence, on the role that our Schools play in helping our institutions and administrations to face their challenges.

I also want to welcome, and thank, all the speakers that accepted to come here to enrich our discussion, bringing their point of view and ideas.

We decided to put at the center of this DISPA meeting a crucial issue: how to build a growth friendly public administration and the role of training to this aim.

I think, dear colleagues, that in this way we are going at the core of the problems that many times we discussed in other meetings. This is an old issue but is always new because the changing context changes the very meaning of what we can call "growth friendly public administration".

For many years we discussed on the challenges that the public administrations had to face in a context characterized by the financial and economic crisis. Fiscal consolidation was the general issue and this meant how to cut the public budget without cutting public services. We used to say "do more with less", or do better with less, and the one between us who loved the less the role of the public sector in the economy and society used to say "do less with less".

Now the fiscal and public financial crisis is not overcome in many European countries and the debate on the path and the role of fiscal consolidation as the main exit road from the economic stagnation or recession is very passionate as you know and many schools of thought are fighting. But the general context, the economic and social context, changed. Now is clear that unemployment, stagnation, deflation, social distress and zero or slow growth is at the center of the European debate.

This does not mean that we are no more discussing about public deficits and debts. Certainly, we are discussing a lot on these problems in Italy, but we are more aware that competitiveness, innovation and dynamism of our economies, and more in general of our societies, are the problems.

Europe is the biggest economic area of the world as a whole but is becoming the world problem for the global growth.

But if this is the context, also the meaning of what we call a growth friendly public administration is changing. It doesn't mean only a less expensive and more efficient public administration in delivery public services (more or better with less) but a public administration aware of its role in creating a better environment for growth, a better environment for businesses, a better environment for an innovative and dynamic economy and society. In other words the goal is to become facilitators and not only a lighter burden.

But this means that public managers and all civil servants should be aware of what this means.

The starting point in my view is understand how the enterprises work or should work in a global market.

Understand how the global markets works, their rhythms, the rhythms of the decision making process both individual and collective.

Understand above all which are the values, individual and social values, that in the history of the last centuries allowed the western countries to become the most dynamic and competitive countries in the world. A dynamism and a competitiveness that we are losing.

This means that public managers should watch more what happens outside public administration and consider the general impact and consequences of their behavior. And create trust, between private and public sector, between private and public managers, create trust within our societies.

The role of training in helping this process is what, I think, we are going to discuss. This is what we are discussing at the national school of administration, and in particular in the training and selection of new public managers. And this is a challenging issues, because is not only a matter of skills.

The real challenge for training is to abandon the heroic imagery of the private manager as a technician, and to focus on a real life, on how they can be good public manager, and public managers as all the managers should be above all creative and imaginative.

And I think that this is a great challenge for public schools such as ours: create a viable theoretical and conceptual framework that actually works in bringing the public administration to play a determinant role for the dynamism of our societies.

But at this point let me enlarge a little bit the view.

When we talk about the future of training, we're also talking about the role of higher education in general can play in making our society more dynamic, in stimulating growth and in guaranteeing employment, above all for our young people.

In other words we're talking about training and education as drivers of technological, economic, social and institutional innovation and our administration schools are part, and we are to feel ourselves part, of this general role.

Many people, in particular business leaders, claim we need to close the education gap; to improve the fit between what young people learn in further education and training, and also in permanent training, and what employers are looking for. And governments often respond to this solely by trying to boost student numbers in the so-called STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). We can add to the STEM subjects the technical skills in business administration. Of course, these are vital skills for many countries, but they are not necessarily all we need when it comes to issues as dynamism and innovation.

And this is because an economy is not an equation. Economic growth is not only a matter of increasing the stock of human or physical capital while exploiting scientific advances (like ICT), and the same we can say for the working of public administration.

Here I'd like to quote something Edmund Phelps, the Nobel prize-winner in economics 2006, wrote recently:

*"Labour markets do not need only more technical expertise; they require an increasing number of soft skills, like the ability to think imaginatively, develop creative solutions to complex challenges, and adapt to changing circumstances and new constraints. That is what the young people need from education.*

*To this aim a necessary first step is to restore the humanities in university curricula. Exposure to literature, philosophy and history will inspire young people to seek a life of richness – one that includes making creative, innovative contributions to society. This is even more important than provide young people with a set of narrow and rapidly obsolete skills; it will shape their perceptions, ambitions and capabilities in new and invigorating ways.*

I think that these remarks are particularly crucial for the training of public managers.

And they are also important because innovation and growth strategies are based on three pillars: 1) the scientific world of education, training and research; 2) the world of business and enterprise and 3) the government, that is to say the public administration in its role as a regulator and service provider.

So we need to ensure that legislators and the public sector create the right conditions to allow these three worlds to interact. And this implies coherent policies and objectives established by different administrations. And this also and above all implies to deal with relationships and trust between the three worlds or pillars.

Let me now renovate my welcome to each of you and thank all of you for your participation.