

in-touch

Newsletter



PAI in Rwanda

By Denise Smart, PAI Relationship Manager

PAI was fortunate to be one of the sponsors of the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association’s Annual Conference which I joined in Kigali, Rwanda, in September. The event this year focussed on “Environmental Justice” and was opened by His Excellency President Kagame, who acknowledged that the theme of the important gathering is a top priority for the Commonwealth. In fact, two years ago, when Rwanda hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the urgent threat of climate change was at the top of the agenda.

As well as the opportunity to hear a range of excellent speakers, the conference gave me a chance to meet old friends and make new connections in the legal and justice sector from many countries. I was able to share the latest information about PAI’s professional development workshops in the sector and in related areas of good governance. As some readers will know, our workshops include expert contributions from practitioners and academics as well as site visits to relevant institutions such as courts and tribunals.



Denise Smart, PAI, at the CMJA conference in Rwanda

The workshops currently available are:

- Justice, Fairness and the Rule of Law
- Judicial Administration
- When Citizens Complain (for Ombudsman and complaint handling offices)
- From Policy to Legislation
- Advanced Legislative Drafting
- Transforming Criminal Justice
- Successful Law Reform

Of course, environmental considerations are becoming increasingly important for governments and citizens in so many countries. This year we have introduced a new workshop on “Environmental, Social and Governance: Three pillars for building strong organisations”. The workshop will help participants to develop policies and strategies that are coherent and targeted to achieving ESG goals. This key issue is also discussed in other workshops such as our programme on Public Financial Management.

A quick tour of our current consultancy projects

By Flavia Cornescu, PAI International Project Manager

Albania



Our project in Albania is an initiative under the EU for Good Governance Programme, designed to enhance Albania’s public sector capabilities and support EU integration processes. It focuses on comprehensive governance reforms across multiple areas, including public administration, financial management, anti-corruption, decentralisation and digital transformation. The project aims to build institutional capacity by supporting policy making, improving financial controls, enhancing public service delivery, promoting civic participation and increasing transparency. Our consultants are working with a wide range of government entities from the Prime Minister’s Office and various Ministries to independent institutions and local government units, with the end goal of creating a more responsive and efficient public sector that better serves citizens and businesses while advancing Albania’s European integration plans.

Barbados



Three of our consultants are currently conducting functional reviews of six Ministries for the Government of Barbados to assess core functions, organisational structures and staffing. The project is part of the Government's Public Sector Modernisation Programme, which is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. The main objective is to determine how well core functions, structures and staffing are strategically aligned with the respective Ministry, assess the overall effectiveness and efficiency of each Ministry in achieving their mandate and make recommendations for greater strategic alignment across Government.

Kosovo



UNOPS (the United Nation Office for Project Services) is supporting reforms in six Western Balkan countries through a multi-year programme focusing on institutional and legislative improvements. Jointly with our consortium partner, Pristina REA, we have recently started work in Kosovo on a project to strengthen civil aviation frameworks. Our Senior Advisor will draft a new civil aviation law, propose recommendations to address institutional shortcomings and align the country's aviation sector with European Union standards. The initiative supports Sustainable Development Goal 11 and aims to enhance Kosovo's preparedness in transport policy, particularly in air transport, by addressing challenges related to international civil aviation organisations and improving the legal and regulatory infrastructure.

Lesotho



Our new project in Lesotho is to develop a Strategic Plan for the Office of the Prime Minister and conduct a Functional Review of the OPM to assist it in providing the strategic leadership to co-ordinate Government activities and programmes, including the National Strategic Development Plan. The review of the OPM aims to ensure that its organisational structure, functions and human resources are aligned to enable it to contribute fully to Lesotho's development aspirations.

Our consultants' tasks are to conduct a thorough analysis of the current organisational structure, functions and staff roles and responsibilities within the OPM's mandate, identify gaps, redundancies and misalignment in the organisational structure, departments and workforce capabilities and develop an implementation road map for the review's proposed recommendations, including timelines, responsible parties and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In addition, we will design an analysis framework and work plan to guide development of the strategic plan for 2025 to 2028, conduct an environmental scan of the OPM and facilitate drafting of the strategic plan. We are looking forward to working again with the Government of Lesotho and with the United Nations Development Programme, which is funding the assignment.

Montenegro



Also for UNOPS, we are working in Montenegro on three different initiatives, implemented in consortium with our partner, the Centre for European Policy (CEP) from Serbia. In the agriculture sector, the programme looks at revising plant protection product legislation, with our Senior Advisor working to align national regulations with EU standards in food safety, plant health and pesticide use, supporting Sustainable Development Goal 15 - Life on Land. The transport sector initiative aims to align national legislation for railway interoperability and safety, with a new law, supporting Sustainable Development Goal 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities. Additionally, for the Environment and Climate Change initiative, Montenegro is implementing a Comprehensive National Strategy covering over 200 legal acts, developing a Noise Protection Action Plan and building institutional capacity in environmental management. These coordinated efforts demonstrate Montenegro's comprehensive approach to EU accession, progressively integrating regulatory frameworks across the agriculture, transport and environmental sectors to meet European standards and support sustainable development.

Republic of Ireland



Jointly with KPMG Ireland we have been implementing a project, financed by the European Commission, to assist the Irish national authorities in improving their capacity to design, develop and implement reforms. Our support includes an in-depth analysis of the Irish Civil and Public Service's structures and design following the Covid-19 crisis and the emerging impact of Brexit and setting up a reformed organisational design and structure for the Irish Civil and Public Service. The review covers six government organisations for "deep dive" examination and has three overarching themes – staff management and support, evidence-informed policy and decision-making and service delivery. The support is expected to contribute to a long-term programme of change of the organisational structures and design of the Irish Civil and Public Service.

Governing the UK gets Trumplified

By Jill Rutter, Senior Research Fellow at UK in a Changing Europe and the Institute for Government



Within a week two defining events have set the framework within which UK Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, will govern for the next four years.

On 30 October, Rachel Reeves, the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer (Minister of Finance), made her big "choices" for the budget, including a choice that she had no option but to go back on election promises in order to fund a large injection of money into public services; a choice that she needed to change the fiscal rules to allow a hike in public investment; and a choice that she would make the cost of employing (especially low paid) people much higher while also closing loopholes the asset rich use to reduce tax.

On 5 November the US electorate made their "big choice" – to consign the Democrats to the heap of ejected incumbents and turn again to Donald Trump with his promises of a new "Golden Age", of rising living standards, deporting illegal migrants and ending wars.

The problem for the UK's Labour government is that a Trump presidency could make their domestic task more difficult. First, although Reeves did make more money available from 2025 for defence, it was only enough to keep spending stable at 2.3 per cent of GDP. The government has yet to set out a pathway to reach 2.5 per cent. But if Donald Trump demands that Europeans pay more into NATO, reduces US support for Ukraine or increases the risk Russia poses to NATO's eastern flank (or all three), the government may need to move well beyond that 2.5 per cent figure. More for defence means less for repairing public services.

Second, it can wreck the assumptions on which Reeves' numbers were based. Trump's tariff threats may be aimed at China and – to a lesser extent – the EU, but the UK being outside any major trade bloc risks being collateral damage. Estimates by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research suggest that this could halve already anaemic UK growth forecasts. But Reeves needs the UK economy to surprise on the upside. Anything that reduces growth (or indeed boosts inflation or leaves interest rates higher for longer, both potential consequences of Trump fiscal policy) would mean more tax rises or spending cuts.

A Trump presidency could help catalyse closer UK-EU relations and in particular for cooperation on security. Whether that is happening should be clearer by the first UK-EU summit this Spring. But it is also possible that managing a more fraught transatlantic relationship takes up the available bandwidth that could otherwise be devoted to resetting UK-EU dealings or indeed that the US might pursue an active "divide and rule" strategy between the UK and the EU which could face Labour with a choice it does not want to make.

Civil servants will have to work with Ministers to help them deliver on their promises against this potentially turbulent backdrop. The new government has signalled a reset in relations between Ministers and civil servants from the start – to listen to their advice and collaborate. The momentum that generated was soon dissipated by dysfunction at the centre and the wait for the budget. We are now seeing a series of appointments to rebuild the political support around the Prime Minister.

Next to fill is the vacuum at the top of the civil service. Simon Case finally agreed to step down as Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service and the advertisement for his replacement sets out a requirement for candidates to have a good grasp of geopolitics: they will need that, combined with an ability to galvanise public sector reform at a time of fiscal restraint, and judgment to avoid the blind spots that marred the government's early days. All this while providing inspiring leadership to half a million civil servants whose efforts will be critical to the government's success. The challenges laid bare in that defining week make getting that appointment right even more critical.

PAI's range of professional development workshops for public service leaders are designed to support public servants through changes such as these. They include programmes on policy and strategy, managing change, leadership and more. You can find information about the workshops on PAI's website at www.public-admin.co.uk.

Brushing up your communication skills: new workshops for 2025

By Claire Cameron, PAI Director

We're very pleased to let you know that we have developed two new workshops for 2025 on communications and media relations for public sector leaders and communications professionals.

The first, "**Communications for Public Leaders: Storytelling, social media and successful media interviews**", is due to run from 9 to 13 June in London and will raise your awareness of how to handle public communication and apply strategic communication techniques. Whether we like it or not, effective communication with key audiences, using a variety of tools, is one of the key tests for leaders. We judge our leaders on their ability to articulate their mission, educate and inspire, and build a rapport with audiences.

This intensive skills-based workshop is designed to give leaders in the public realm the key insights and skills they need to prosper in the modern media age. We will use immersive learning techniques to give you practical tools and skills to use at work. The workshop is a hands-on, lively, stimulating and tailored experience, with case studies, visits, role-plays and professional feedback and guidance. You will end the week with renewed confidence, solid determination and new abilities to succeed.



The second, "**Government, Media and Your Audiences: Strategies and tactics for success**" is scheduled to run from 6 to 10 October. As we all know, governments' reputations are shaped by how people perceive them through a variety of media. Direct experience is part of the story, but so is a blend of imagery, storytelling, media handling, spokespeople, speeches, events and social media presence. The fate of Ministers and administrations can rise and fall based on fast-moving events and public opinion. A sound reputation can take months and years to accrue, but only minutes to throw away.

A rapidly changing media landscape offers new ways to reach audiences, shape narratives, communicate with stakeholders and build reputations. It can also be a place of misinformation, misunderstandings and fake news. One lesson every government learns quickly is that it cannot be left to chance. If you're not telling your story, someone else will.

This workshop will show you how to build reputation, how to deploy a variety of techniques and methodologies, how to prepare effective strategies, how to predict and prepare for crises, and how to deal with bad faith actors. We will investigate the basics of effective communication and build during the week to a greater understanding of different media platforms. We will benchmark your activities against others', including the UK Government, and hear from industry experts and practitioners. We will also meet senior journalists and broadcasters and hear perspectives from across the spectrum of media relations.

Do come and join us for one or, if you are keen, both of these exciting workshops!