

Terms of Reference Request for Services

Senior specialist in Digital Transformation

1. Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organisation for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, while Kosovo^{*1} is a beneficiary. ReSPA's purpose is to help governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses and prepare for membership in the European Union.

ReSPA establishes close cooperation with Ministers, senior public servants and heads of units in Member countries. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, specifically Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional actors such as OECD/SIGMA and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as well as agencies and civil society organisations. Since its inception, ReSPA, as an international organisation and a key regional endeavour in Public Administration Reform, has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through on-demand support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research materials.

The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funds for the support of the ReSPA activities (research, training and networking programmes) in line with the EU accession process. Currently, ReSPA is implementing its fifth EC Grant Contract "Support to the Regional School of Public Administration for implementing PAR Agenda and facilitating EU accession process in the WBs" which is active as of 1 January 2023.

ReSPA works primarily through regional networks which operate at three levels: Ministerial, Senior Officials, and networks/working groups of experts and senior practitioners. There is one network – Programme Committee composed of the senior civil servants representing the ministries responsible for the Public Administration, ministries of Finance, and institutions in charge of the European Integration process coordination of the ReSPA Members and four regional thematic groups: (1) Policy planning, better regulation and coordination of Centre of Government, (2) European integration and accession negotiations; (3) Human Resources Management and Professional Development; (4) Service Delivery (digitalisation and quality management).

2. Description of the Assignment

One of the programme thematic areas for ReSPA work in the period 2023-2025 is Service Delivery which includes the programme section related to the **Digitalisation of public services**.

¹ * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

Understanding similar ambitions and topics of interest in Western Balkan public administrations to accelerate the process of digitalisation, as well as different levels of progress achieved, ReSPA's programme will in the period 2023-2025 focus on two key areas:

- a) enhancing the level of digitised services and “digital awareness” (that affects usability, data security and resilience of IT infrastructure for safe use of e-services, accessibility, inclusiveness, comfortability and proficiency for technology usage), data management and interoperability, use of emerging technologies;
- b) the benefits of data-driven administration, open data, and governmental data for a knowledge-based economy.

Programme activities will be defined to achieve two mutually reinforcing objectives:

- Raising the level of capacities for the digitalisation of public services - by the building of strategic institutional digital capacities and by enhancing the level of existing practices
- Boosting the innovative and future-looking approach in developing digital services - by facilitating acquiring the knowledge that will create future-oriented public services and innovative service delivery channels.

Regional thematic sub-group on Digital Transformation established in ReSPA will foster regional networking and cooperation and will participate directly in (re)defining the most relevant topics for programme activities such as Seasonal Schools, regional workshops and thematic conferences. The group will together with ReSPA assess the relevance of topics under key areas and based on such appraisal provide specific input for programme activities with topics to be addressed, taking into account the interlinkages with other strategic areas such as HRMPD – e-recruitment or Policy planning - using digital technologies for policymakers and others.

The possibility of establishing the *Network of Digital Leaders* will be explored with the aim of establishing a regional structure to raise awareness of giving digitalisation an even stronger priority than it has been until now. This, in turn, would require keeping a close eye on the progress in digitalisation at the national level and benchmarking with other countries in and outside the region.

ReSPA will ensure that the civil servants from WB economies, including the members of the Digital Transformation sub-group, as well as the institutions and inter-institutional groups, get the most relevant knowledge that would enable personal growth in digital knowledge and technical skills as well as the growth of institutional capacities to enhance the integration of modern digital methods in their institutions and PAs.

The continuation of the proven models for capacity building of civil servants and for enhancing the practices such as Seasonal Schools, regional peer meetings and follow-up with the Community of winners from the PA Award will be accompanied by **new models of work**. New models refer to: *Upgraded e GOV Pilot initiatives* (for testing the innovative processes of designing the services) *GovTech model²* (for training or/and working together of public officials and private sector technicians on specific topics such as public procurement of sensitive IT equipment, or design thinking methodology and citizen engagement for GovTech solutions development etc), *partnering with CSOs* (addressing the issue of accessibility for vulnerable groups and for addressing the issues of OGP activities) *Open Data challenges* (for addressing cross border exchange of open data).

² GovTech refers to the process where the public sector engages with start-ups and SMEs to procure innovative technology solutions for the provision of tech-based products and services.

Regarding the annual programming in this area, ReSPA will examine the Action Plans of the PAR Strategies from ReSPA Members in order to stay in accordance with major PAR actions. Thematic cross-border initiatives will be explored and supported in different areas of work

The thematic blocks related to the digitalisation of public services will refer to increased quality, usability, safe use of data and IC systems, improved accessibility, data management and interoperability.

ReSPA will develop programmatic activities that aim at increasing the quality of e-services provision that affect usability, **safe use of data and IC systems**, and accessibility while introducing innovative approaches and fully **user-centric service (re)design** supported by the principle of living situations for all e-services. Specific activities will focus on the promotion of using digitised services, systematic monitoring of safe e-services delivery performance or user satisfaction. Regarding accessibility, ReSPA will support the discussion on comparable international standards and best practices in addressing the question of accessibility. Peer exchange between good practices with quality and innovative solutions tackling the above-mentioned issues will be encouraged and supported.

Regarding **interoperability**, the importance of creating and maintaining the ability to share data and operations across the levels of government will be promoted. ReSPA will support the capacity development actions in regard to interoperability through tailored training of civil servants and thus will contribute to building the quantum of knowledge on interoperability in the region. ReSPA will support the “use cases” approach in enhancing data management and “data labs” for testing “once only” new services. The recognised good practices that entail the once-only principle in the provision of public services will be shared and promoted.

ReSPA will continue to provide insights into the most contemporary policies and practices of using **emerging technologies** (AI and blockchain) in the EU and in WB. The challenges of ensuring public confidence in artificial intelligence will be addressed jointly in the HRMPD thematic and service delivery areas.

The thematic blocks related to the benefits of data-driven administrations will refer to: the importance of using data and open data for a knowledge-based economy and the Open Government Partnership initiative.

ReSPA will work on enhancing **regional cooperation in the field of data opening** focusing on common issues while providing support for ensuring commitment from the policy level. Cross-border potentials and the possible impact of exchanging open data between national open data providers will be especially addressed through Open data challenges. They will be used to draw attention to the potential of cross-border open data exchange, the impact of open data visualisations etc. The landscaping of open data maturity will be further supported while monitoring and measuring the progress made in WB countries regarding data openness will also be addressed.

As regards the **Open Government Partnership initiative** ReSPA continuously cover the topics of public access to government data, the opening of governmental data, the openness of state administration, digitalisation as the factor for enhancing openness, CSOs and data openness and this will be the themes of work in 2023-2025.

By means of these Terms of Reference (ToR), ReSPA is seeking one Specialist, an expert in Digital Transformation, who would support ReSPA in boosting specific programme components within the programme section related to the Digitalisation of public services envisaged for 2023.

3. Tasks and responsibilities

The expert will be a part of the team of specialists engaged in different thematic areas in ReSPA. The expert shall work closely with the Programme Manager in charge of Service Delivery and will provide support throughout 2023 in revising the concepts/methodology of the *e-Gov pilot* and developing the concept and following up on programme activities pertaining to GovTech. The expert might assist, if requested, in conducting specific snapshots in the areas of digitalisation that have not been captured in the Regional Study on Digitalisation (2022) (such as personal data protection, accessibility etc.) and to prepare points of discussion and attend the meetings, panels etc. where the specific expertise is required for streamlining the technical discussion into the conclusions of the meeting relevant for ReSPA scope of the work in digitalisation area. For each specific task within the assignment, the expert will provide information on the good regional and EU practices, existing networks, work of other international organisations or CSOs in the region that might be of relevance to the envisaged programme activity.

The expert will be engaged **for up to 10 days** and will perform the following tasks in relation to the Digitalisation programme section:

- As requested, conduct regional snapshots on the selected topic. (2 days),
- Provide support in the upgrading of the new models of programme activities, specifically E Gov pilots and GovTech initiative (5 days),
- Prepare technical part and attend the panels, discussions and other events that require specific expertise (2 days),
- Occasionally meet other specialists online and boost the synergy among ReSPA thematic areas - Policy coordination, EU integration, Human Resources Management and Service Delivery(1 day)

3. Necessary Qualifications, Experience and Skills

Educational background:

Qualifications and skills:

- At least Master's degree in Public Policy and Management, Public Administration, Computer Sciences or other related fields;

General professional experience:

- More than 15 years of professional experience in the field of public administration;

Specific professional experience:

- Specific experience in work related to digitalisation and using data for a knowledge-based economy.
- Prior experience in conducting analysis, and needs assessment.
- Previous experience and work in the Western Balkans will be considered an advantage.

Skills:

- High presentation and moderation skills;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English;
- Ability to write clear and coherent guidance documents;

- Ability to work with people of different nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds.

4. Timing and Location

The assignment foresees work from home and participation in one meeting. The work will be performed from **May 2023 – March 2024**.

The expert will provide assistance related to the support to the digitalisation section of the 2023 programme pertaining to the revision of E GOV pilots and development of the concepts of GovTech in the period **May-June 2023**. Expert is expected to participate in up to two regional meetings/events **from June till the end of the assignment** (Digital Transformation sub-group meeting or/and Seasonal School on Digital Transformation or/and Data protection event or/end OGP WB Regional workshop).

ReSPA reserves the right to change the timing and location of the activity and will timely inform the expert. It also reserves the right to modify the tasks in agreement with the expert.

5. Remunerations

The assignment foresees up to **10 (ten) expert days** in the amount of up to 5.000 EUR. The final outputs will be subject to approval from ReSPA before the payment is executed.

The daily fee shall be determined in line with the ReSPA expert selection procedure. The payment will be made in two instalments, the first following the submission of the report for implementation of the 5 days of the assignment and the second one following the submission of the report on the implementation of the remaining 5 days. Both reports are subject to the approval of the relevant ReSPA PM.

Note: No other costs will be covered apart from the expert cost per day. The expert cost per day comprises of expert's fee per day and (if needed) a lump sum for covering related costs, including travel, accommodation, local transport, meals and other incidentals.

6. Reporting and Final Documentation

The Expert will be requested to deliver the following documents in English language before the payment is conducted:

Outputs

- Snapshots, analytical papers with comments, conclusions from the meetings, inputs for the panel discussions

Documents required for payment

- Invoice (original and signed);
- Timesheet (original and signed);
- Final report in English on the performed tasks.