

Joint Statement on the Occasion of High-Level Policy Dialogue “Attractive and Skilled Public Service Fit for Future”

WE, the Ministers and High-Level representatives responsible for public administrations in the Western Balkan gathered on the occasion of the High-Level Policy Dialogue “Attractive and Skilled Public Service Fit for Future”, held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 17 November 2023:

ACKNOWLEDGING the central importance of strong and resilient institutions for sustainable and inclusive growth and for delivering growth-enhancing reforms;

EMPHASISING the importance of enhanced institutional and administrative capacities for addressing the complex societal and policy demands in an increasingly challenging poly-crises context;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the embedding of public administration reforms within the “fundamentals first” principle and Fundamentals Cluster at the heart of the EU accession negotiations and ACKNOWLEDGING EU’s strong support to the PAR agenda in the region;

STRESSING good quality, well-functioning and professional public administrations as the basis for a successful, sustainable and resilient region and fundamental for the prospective EU Member States (EU MS);

RECALLING the existence of common values and challenges for public administrations both within the WB region and within the European Union (EU);

ACKNOWLEDGING the Principles of Public Administration as a critical blueprint towards effective governance and public service delivery, essential for fostering transparency, accountability, and equitable development;

COMMENDING the crucial role that the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) has in empowering civil servants by enhancing regional cooperation, networking and transfer of knowledge, directed towards progress in professionalisation and building public trust in the institutions in WB and towards citizen-oriented public administrations;

WELCOMING the annual regional high-level Ministerial dialogue on PAR matters as a unique regional cooperation platform and valuable contribution to advancing the good governance and public administration reform agenda that leverages on the regional approach;

GUIDED by the goal of enhancing the quality and capacity of public administrations that are professional, impartial and accountable and serve the interests of citizens and businesses,

HAVE today agreed on this Joint Statement, by which WE:

- ✦ *COMMIT to investing additional concerted efforts to design policies and to implement actions which will contribute to attracting, motivating, developing and retaining talents to work in the public service in the region – as a career of choice;*
- ✦ *ACKNOWLEDGE that our public sector and policies must be youth-proof and COMMIT to further proactively promote youth participation and co-creation in policymaking and public service delivery;*
- ✦ *UNDERLINE the importance of adequate and holistic policies to attract, motivate and retain employees and teams with the required skills and competencies and to increase the public sector’s attractiveness as an employer of choice. Listening to the public servants’ voices on a variety of workplace issues, including regular staff satisfaction and employee surveys, constitutes an important evidence-based tool to inform decision-making and advance the reforms and HRM practices.*
- ✦ *AGREE to support the development and deployment of intra-regional and EU-wide mobility schemes that will enable a greater knowledge sharing, experiences and practices between peers in WB and with civil servants and practitioners working in public administrations in the EU MS;*
- ✦ *WELCOME the design of regional actions to increase further capacities and share of knowledge and experience in the area of PAR and European integration process;*
- ✦ *ENCOURAGE the opening of key EU PAR-relevant networks, instruments, frameworks and initiatives for participation of the WB public servants as a concrete effort towards the accelerated integration and “phasing-in” approach, which will bring added value to strengthening the capacities of the public sector for implementation of the digital and green transition, Growth Plan for WB and accelerated EU integration;*
- ✦ *ENCOURAGE the consideration of the vital topic of human capital, strong institutions and strengthening the administrative capacities in the public sector in all relevant high-level political fora in the region and between EU-WB;*
- ✦ *ENCOURAGE capacity-building initiatives to the local administrations to empower officials with the necessary skills and knowledge required to efficiently manage community resources, deliver essential services, and respond effectively to the evolving needs and dynamics;*
- ✦ *WELCOME the exchanges and promotion of exemplary practices and approaches used in public administration reform processes in WB, including through flagship initiatives such as the WB Public Administration Award.*
- ✦ *CALL upon ReSPA to continue providing a marked contribution towards empowering public servants by steering regional PAR policy dialogue and peer exchanges; extending capacity building and learning support; deploying mobility schemes among the public administrations; boosting partnerships with regional and EU partners, schools of governments and academies, as well as renowned schools from the EU MS, as well as deployment of targeted technical assistance on key reform priorities.*

ENDORSED in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 17 November 2023.