

## Draft DECLARATION

# On Digital transformation of the WBs Ministries for public administration including coordinated response on emergency situations

Date 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**We, Heads of Governments, Ministers and representatives of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia (hereinafter Western Balkans - WB), as Members of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), and European Commission,**

**INVITED** by the Regional School of Public Administration<sup>1</sup>,

**EXTENDING** this invitation and initiative to representatives of the public administration of **Kosovo**\*<sup>2</sup>

**AGREE TO COOPERATE** in the field of digital transformation of Public Administration in the crisis situation of the Western Balkan region caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that, as our response to the latter mentioned, ReSPA has established COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative Platform in April 2020 as a joint activity with Office of Innovation, California Health and Human Service agency (CHHS). The platform launched discussion on the most prioritised institutional challenges and the modalities aiming to set a sustainable pattern of risk mitigation and resolving existing problems.

**TAKING INTO ACCOUNT** the mandate of ReSPA (areas of intervention and forms of support) it has been decided to scan short, mid and long-term perspectives in the domain of regional (WB) and individually led activities in each of the administrations.

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that one of the most important milestones that framed the discussion of the collaborative platform were inputs received from ReSPA stakeholders (eGovernment and

---

<sup>1</sup> Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) has realized its Ministerial Conference on "Digital transformation: Reinventing public administration for digital age", in Skopje, North Macedonia from 12 to 13 November 2019. The overall objective of the ReSPA Ministerial Conference, inspired by North Macedonia as ReSPA Chair at the ministerial level, was to discuss and identify lessons learned in the domain of Digital transformation of Public administration. Based on presentations and discussions at the conference it has been confirmed that digital transformation became one of the top priorities in all WB administrations. It has been also confirmed to consider the introduction of an umbrella regional initiative in the form of declaration that would be a productive and proactive way to speed up cooperation and transformation of the whole WB region. Montenegro is currently ReSPA Chair at the ministerial level, having public service delivery as an umbrella topic.

<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 (1999) and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Quality Management working group members), alumni of ReSPA Seasonal School on digital transformation 2019, USA experience and ReSPA Regional study on service delivery from 2018 (<https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#quality-in-pa-and-services-7>).

**RECALLING** that, in close communication with DG NEAR, European Commission, already in March 2020 the needs assessment of the Public Administration (PA) institutions for obtaining support for reaching resilience has started.

**ENCOURAGING** a diversity of approaches and perspectives, ReSPA has also taken into account other global stakeholders initiatives (EU Commission - EU Coronavirus global response, RCC, CEFTA, Chamber Investment forum WB, The World Bank Group, The International Monetary Fund, EBRD, USAID, WHO, UN DESA - Economic and Social Development, UNDP, World Trade organization, OECD, SIGMA OECD, OECD OPSI, World Economic Forum, innovation foundations such as NESTA, etc). Details provided in Annex 1 of the Declaration.

**RECOGNIZING** the provisions and principles set out in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the OECD Council Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies, the UNDP Digital Strategy and the World Economic Forum Digital Transformation Initiative which reaffirm that the full potential and benefits of digital transformation processes and digital technologies, in particularly in crisis situations are guaranteed only by the establishment of networks between relevant stakeholders and multi-stakeholder partnerships and by strengthening regulations that ensure fair competition among businesses, by adapting workers' skills to the demands of the new economy, and by ensuring that institutions are accountable and safe (trust and cyber security).

**EMPHASISING** the new European Digital Strategy as a key priority for the European Commission and reiterating our determination to take action as reflected in the EU Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans focusing among all on eHealth, digital skills, capacity building in trust and security, common regional commitments in subject area would generate much quicker achievements.

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the need of an umbrella regional initiative between the economies and regional and international organisations for faster development of digital transformation as essential condition for the progress of societies and economies in the region and also as effective response on current and future crisis situations;

**BEING AWARE THAT** the process of digital transformation of the Public Administration in the situation of pandemic has the following characteristic and consequences:

- The development of standards in crisis management of the PA would make the decision-making process much easier;
- The development of collaborative platforms designed to improve the existing and design of new online public services (as a response to the needs in the circumstances of COVID-19) would increase the needs and satisfaction of clients as well as increase trust in Governments;

- The development of digital single market in the region should enable rationalization, better communication among all stakeholders and removal of administrative barriers (e.g. movement of working force and goods in crisis situations);
- Efficiency of public administration and business environment in the situation of pandemic would be enhanced by bringing together governments, business, dynamic start-ups, civil society, academia and international organizations who are dealing with this matter (finding solutions, offering support, good practice exchange);
- Joint and shared development based on compatible standards should be provided, in particular in Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Broadband, Open and Big data, and many other areas that can improve interoperability and provide sufficient connectivity of services especially in the given circumstances of pandemic;
- Digital Transformation in the situation of pandemic will bring not just opportunities but also risks of using the new technologies in the public and private sector, with issues such as Digital Divide, Social Divide, Connectivity, Privacy etc.;
- The use of open government approaches (accountability, transparency, participation) will ensure that benefits are recognized by the citizens and businesses (new services in the situation of pandemic);
- Agile management and assurance of quality (Quality management in Public Administration and Public Services) in the entire Public Administration including IT sector will bring multiple benefits (financial, human and institutional) as one of the greatest assets in adjusting the Governments to the COVID-19 crisis;
- Transformational leaders (Agile leadership) as prerequisite for sustainable development and resilience of Public Administration;
- Innovation in public service delivery and Innovation incubators as generators of holistic process and product optimization in Public administration and as fast and innovative response in crisis situation;
- Regenerating the wellbeing of the public servants and citizens as the ultimate goal of the PA transformation in the crisis situation and no one left behind (special emphasis on women and vulnerable groups (the minorities, the youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, migrants, etc.)).

\* \* \*

### **The administrations of the Western Balkans region pledge to:**

#### **COOPERATE on four levels:**

- Organizational level: establishment of collaborative online platform for share of know – how and joint initiatives, support to the realization of the Public Administration Awards in the Western Balkans (ReSPA – SIGMA OECD joint activity) as well as support to the implementation of Ministerial declaration committed by the WB in digital transformation of the PA (ReSPA – RCC joint activity);
- Ecosystem: Processes and products established through the optimization in Public administration and public services, (e. g. introduction of Agile management, setting of the multidisciplinary i.e. cross – functional teams), implementation of Quality

management instruments (e.g. CAF) in the IT and other sectors, etc., designing and implementing Crisis management checklist, etc.;

- Data: data quality, identification of data sources and their safe sharing through a common platform, e. g. data lake, open data, data journalism, etc.;
- Infrastructure development: communication tools, cyber security mechanisms, enforcing GDPR, Privacy in line with EU regulations, ensuring sufficient permeability of networks, processing and storing capacities, etc.

**COOPERATE in the following regional projects**, including but not limited to:

- Zero Open data guidelines implementation
- Design and maintenance of COVID-19 collaborative platform;
- Open Government Partnership, strengthening the implementation of the OGP action plans implementation;
- Digital innovation labs for fostering innovation in PA and IT sector as well as business sector (digital start-ups);
- Internet of Things infrastructure and set of rules that enables gathering and safe exchange of the IoT data;
- Unified cyber security frame that enables to build trust and trustworthiness for wide range of digital services and products;
- Increase advanced digital skills including developing common curricula (capacity building) in setting multidisciplinary teams in the IT sector (agile management & quality management) and crisis management (crisis communication, adaptability mechanisms of governments as response to extraordinary situations, reaching resilience and wellbeing in crisis situations);
- Identifying common challenges and needs of the WB in domain of crisis caused by COVID-19 including the aspect of governance of new IT technologies with accompanied risks and common mitigation measures;

**ENSURE joint and coordinated initiatives** in the pandemic and post pandemic situation with the emphasis on digital transformation and crisis management. Furthermore, a faster, more agile approach to governing technologies and the business models will be provided.

## **Annex 1 Initiatives of Global Stakeholders related to response to the crisis caused by Covid-19**

**The European Union** jointly with France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Norway and Saudi Arabia started a global pledging effort – the Coronavirus global response (4 May 2020). President of EC von der Leyen will invite Heads of State and Government, as well as additional partners from across the world to pledge to help reach the target of €7.5 billion in initial funding. The funds will help develop and deploy effective diagnostics, treatments and a vaccine which are universally available and affordable

**Regional Cooperation Council** - Apart from many important activities, it also established online Western Balkans Digital Skills Multi Stakeholder Working Group to address digital skills policy formulation and needs in Western Balkan region.

The **CEFTA Secretariat** regularly compiles and disseminates information about the trade measures imposed as regards the COVID-19 and other relevant information, in order to support the CEFTA region.

**WB CIF** representatives support both the business community and the representatives of the National Governments, line ministries, and relevant institutions, as well as all international business associations and organizations, aiming to help member companies to overcome the challenges and reduce the negative impact of the COVID 19 virus on doing business.

**The World Bank** is providing new financing to economies on a fast-track basis, as well as policy advice and technical assistance.

**The International Monetary Fund** is helping its member states with emergency financing, debt relief, new financing arrangements and capacity development

**The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development** is working urgently across the regions where it invests to provide immediate support to companies that are suffering from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

**USAID** is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic with decisive action at home and abroad. This includes working with frontline workers to slow the spread, care for the affected, and equip local communities with the tools needed to fight back against COVID-19.

**The World Health Organization** (WHO) is working closely with global experts, governments and partners to rapidly expand scientific knowledge on this new virus, to track the spread and virulence of the virus, and to provide advice to countries and individuals on measures to protect health and prevent the spread of this outbreak.

**UN DESA** is focusing helping decision makers to navigate tough choices on how to allocate scarce resources.

**UNDP** is working with its partners to combat the spread of the disease and to support the most affected countries where health systems are weakest and people are at their most vulnerable.

Dedicated page on the **WTO** website related to COVID-19 crisis, providing up-to-the minute trade-related information including relevant notifications by WTO members, the impact the virus has had on exports and imports and how WTO activities have been affected by the pandemic.

**The OECD** is making analysis and providing expertise support in finding the solutions for the COVID-19 global health emergency, and its economic and social ramifications

**SIGMA** (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) is a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union. Its key objective is to strengthen the foundations for improved public governance, and hence support socio-economic development through building the capacities of the public sector, enhancing horizontal governance and improving the design and implementation of public administration reforms, including proper prioritisation, sequencing and budgeting. <http://www.sigmaweb.org/> SIGMA OECD produced Public Administration: Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Mapping the EU member states' public administration responses to the COVID-19 pandemic (for EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries, April 2020

**OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI)** has collected innovative practices of the public administration related to COVID-19 in the hope that teams around the world can learn from each other and take inspiration: <https://oecd-opsi.org/covid-response/>.

**WEF** is conducting and supporting various analysis, debates trying to resolve how emerging technologies are now critical infrastructure and what that means for governance in the situation of pandemic

**Nesta** as innovation foundation as an effort to support governments and businesses globally made a list of resources, from funding and volunteer opportunities to ways of sharing someone's data to help fight the spread of COVID-19

See also “ReSPA Regional Comparative Study on Service Delivery (2018)”, available at <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#quality-in-pa-and-services-7>

See also “COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative Platform”, available at <https://www.respaweb.eu/0/events/210/covid-19-western-balkans-digital-collaborative>

See also “Office of Innovation, California Health and Human Service Agency (CHHS)”, available at <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/innovation/#innovation-office>