



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

ABOUT ReSPA

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an intergovernmental organisation that is supporting the regional cooperation of public administrations in the Western Balkans. ReSPA activities are supported by the European Commission (EC), while operational and administrative costs are funded through the annual contributions of the ReSPA Members.

ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while public servants from Kosovo*¹ participate in ReSPA activities funded by the European Commission.

The purpose of ReSPA is to support the governments in the Western Balkan region in developing better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and prepare them for membership in the European Union. ReSPA serves as an innovative Western Balkans' hub for policy research, knowledge sharing and networking in the field of public administration.

The main direct beneficiaries of ReSPA activities are senior and mid-level public servants working in the ministries and governmental agencies responsible for the Public Administration Reform (PAR) and European Integration, and in other relevant governmental and public institutions in ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. The citizens of the Western Balkan countries, to whom public institutions deliver public services, are indirectly benefiting from ReSPA's activities.

Mission: ReSPA's Mission is to improve regional co-operation, promote shared learning and support the development of public administrations within Western Balkans and through this, support integration into the European Union.

Vision: ReSPA is an inter-governmental innovative regional hub for policy research, knowledge sharing, regional co-operation and networking in the field of public administration.

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



Foreword by the ReSPA Director

I am proud to say that during the past few years ReSPA has reinforced its position in the Western Balkan region as a reliable institution in strengthening capacities of public administrations.

ReSPA's activities contributed to enhancement of regional cooperation in the field of PAR and contributed to the process of European integration of the region.

I would like to thank to the ReSPA Governing Board members for their commitment and for giving ReSPA the necessary stability and leadership to support PAR in the Western Balkans.

The impact of ReSPA activities and policy recommendations on the PAR agenda of the ReSPA Members is important factor of sustainability, as well as an indicator of success of ReSPA operations.

We have provided specific support to each ReSPA Member and peer learning, and we have focused much more on the recommendations from the ReSPA research documents and studies.

Also, we continued our productive cooperation with a number of partners in the region and beyond, in order to ensure synergies of our efforts in providing support to the public administrations in the region.

PAR in the Western Balkans is a very demanding task that requires significant resources and sincere political commitment. I am, therefore, sure that the new ReSPA Strategy for 2019–2024, under the slogan **“Building Together Governance for the Future!”**, will enable us to better integrate and synergise our efforts in order to provide the best possible impact in the implementation of PAR Strategies in the region.

Ratka Sekulović

Director of the Regional School
of Public Administration
31 October 2018

1. Executive Summary

In 2018, the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) successfully completed implementation of activities envisaged by the EC Grant Contract (2016–2018). During the period between the two meetings of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level, from 15 October 2017 to 31 October 2018, ReSPA organised activities in line with its 2016–2018 Programme of Work, and the 2016–2020 Strategic Framework. All the activities have been undertaken within the following three pillars: the European Integration (EUI) Pillar, the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Pillar, and the Governance for Growth (GfG) Pillar.

All types of ReSPA activities were organised according to the integrated approach in order to ensure better contribution towards PAR and EUI efforts in the Western Balkan region, in particular through the in-country support and peer-to-peer mechanism, and through provision of valuable research and policy recommendations. Policy recommendations developed based on the ReSPA research and studies were transformed into policy actions: more than 30% of policy recommendations from ReSPA studies were implemented or are in the process of implementation.

During the past year, ReSPA produced seven comparative regional studies, analyses and guidelines of strategic importance for future PAR-related activities in the Western Balkans. ReSPA organised over 50 events to enhance regional cooperation and to empower synergies with national institutions, regional and international stakeholders, and the European Commission.

Moreover, during 2018, ReSPA coordinated a broad consultation process in preparation of its 2019–2024 Strategy. The new six-year strategic framework will provide for more synergies and coordination of PAR-related activities in the ReSPA Members, and will enable sharper focus on PAR priorities.

The cooperation has been strengthened with the OECD/SIGMA, Centre of Excellence in Finance, German Development Cooperation (GIZ), Regional Cooperation Council, Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Austria, EU Delegations in the ReSPA Members, and many more partners. A number of activities, including research and large events, were organised in cooperation with partner institutions and organisations. In such a way, we are together ensuring better impact on PAR and EUI in the Western Balkans.

ReSPA's main achievements in 2018:

In parallel with preparing the ReSPA Strategy for the period 2019–2024, ReSPA organised over **50 networking and capacity building events** (seminars, workshops, conferences, working visits, training, meetings, mobility schemes, in-country support projects), **involving over 1,000 public servants from the Western Balkans, and more than 200 international and regional experts**, and completed **seven regional comparative research projects** with policy recommendations for Public Administration Reform.

2. Implementation of ReSPA's Programme of Work

ReSPA's main objectives in the reporting period were in line with its 2016–2020 Strategic Framework:

- Improving cooperation in the field of public administration amongst the ReSPA Members;
- Strengthening the administrative capacity in the public administrations of the ReSPA Members as required by the European Integration process;
- Developing human resources in the public administrations of the ReSPA Members in line with the European Principles of Public Administration².

These objectives are being achieved through the three pillars of the ReSPA Programme of Work 2016–2018:

- (1) European Integration Pillar: Increase the capacity of public administration in the ReSPA Members necessary for the successful conducting of the European Integration process;
- (2) Public Administration Reform Pillar: Facilitate and enhance cooperation and exchange of experiences in Public Administration Reform and European Integration activities in the ReSPA Members;
- (3) Governance for Growth Pillar: Ensure effective coordination of the implementation of Dimension N – Effective Public Services of the Governance for Growth Pillar of the South-East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy³.

During the reporting period, ReSPA organised over 50 activities that were interconnected and organised in the way to obtain synergistic effect among the Working Groups established around particular thematic areas.

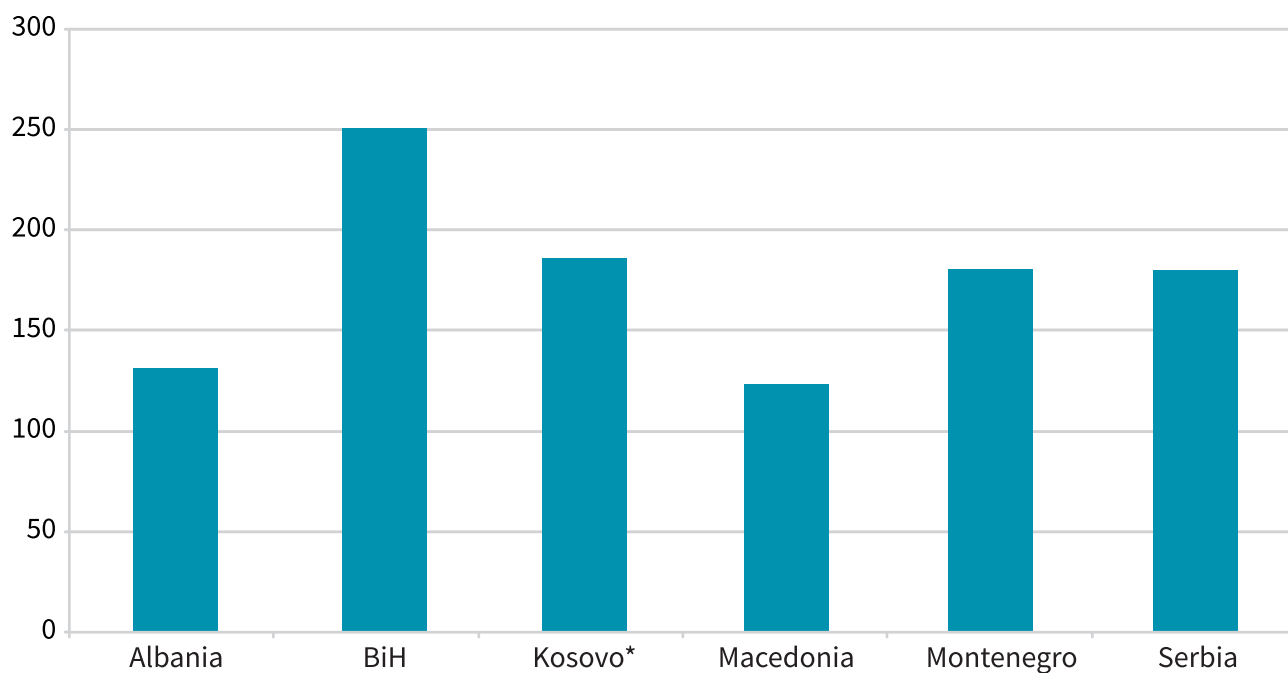
Over 1,000 participants (60% female and 40% male) were involved in ReSPA activities. More than 200 experts (70% from the Western Balkan region and 30% from EU member states) contributed to ReSPA's research and educational activities

- **Comparative Studies / Policy Research 7**
- **Regional Conferences 12**
- **In-country Support Projects 20**
- **Mobility Schemes and Working Visits 6**
- **Meetings of Working Groups 14**
- **Training events 4**
- **Workshops 6**
- **Summer School 1**
- **Meetings of National Coordinators 2**

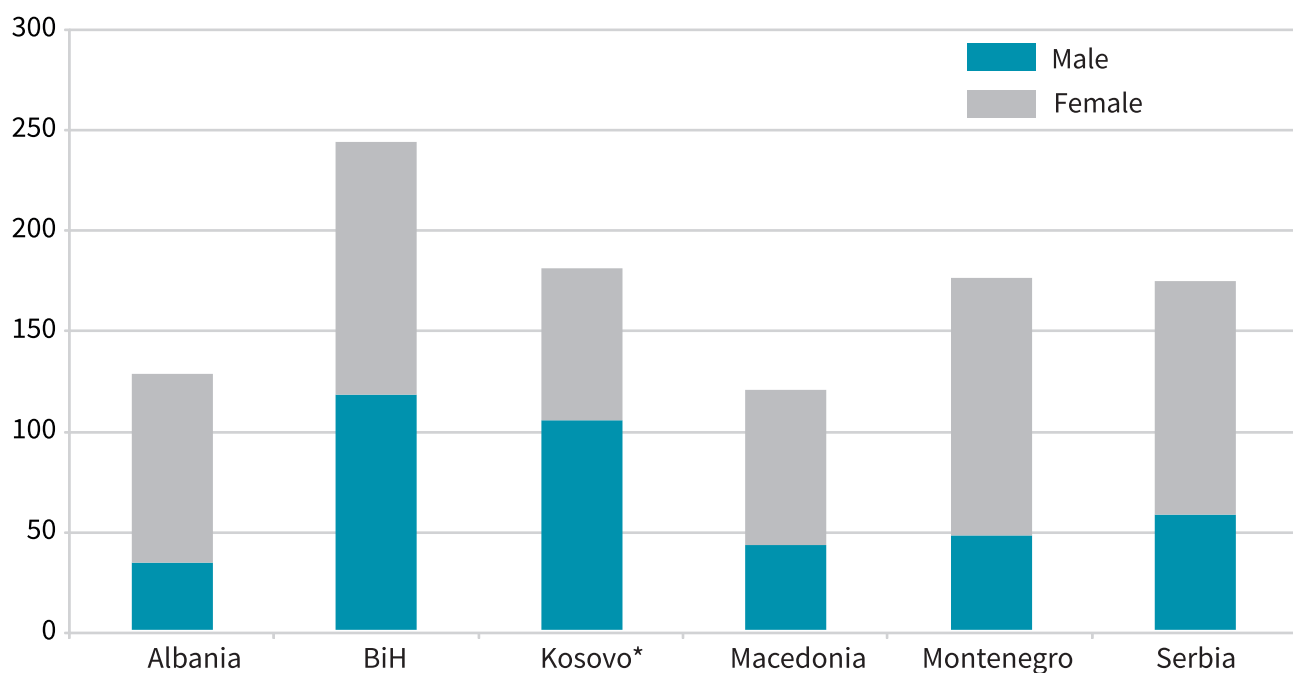
2 For more details about the European Principles of Public Administration, visit the OECD/SIGMA website: <http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/principles-public-administration.htm>

3 For more information about the SEE 2020 Strategy and its implementation see the RCC website: <http://www.rcc.int/pages/62/south-east-europe-2020-strategy>

Graph No. 1:
Participants in ReSPA Activities in 2018



Graphic No 2:
**Participants in ReSPA Activities
in 2018 per Gender**





2.1. Cooperation among ReSPA Members in the area of European Integration

ReSPA's activities contributed to the enhancement of capacities of public administrations in its Members and Kosovo* for continuing the European Integration process.

Within the EUI pillar, special focus was on strengthening capacities for better programming and utilisation of IPA funds, particularly through the EU's Budget Support, and work of national investment committees, as well as on legal alignment with the EU *Acquis* in ReSPA Members. Moreover, ReSPA continued supporting administrative capacities for the EU accession negotiations.

Strategic co-ordination of the EUI activities was enabled through implementation of recommendations provided by the ReSPA Programme Committee on EUI. During the reporting period, two meetings of this Committee were held. The recommendations of the Programme Committee on EUI highlighted relevant and tangible activities to be implemented with the aim of supporting European Integration processes.

3rd Conference on Regional Cooperation among Technical Secretariats of NICs ***31 October 2017, at ReSPA Campus***

Ever since 2015, when ReSPA started promoting and supporting cooperation of National Investment Commissions (NICs) in the Western Balkans,

this initiative has been one of the key ReSPA's instruments for strengthening the capacities for the use of IPA funds, and for obtaining support for infrastructure projects from the Western Balkans Investment Framework.

In this context, the 3rd Conference on Regional Cooperation among Technical Secretariats of NICs resulted in a provision of a platform for the exchange of experiences acquired in the previous period with relation to the functioning of NICs and its technical secretariats, the functioning of sector working groups, and preparation and updating of Single Project Pipelines.

* * *

Training on Legal Alignment for Negotiating Chapters 11 and 12

11–13 April 2018, at ReSPA Campus

With an aim to contribute to stronger administrative capacities for harmonisation of national legislations with the EU *Acquis*, ReSPA organised the training on legal alignment for over 20 civil servants from the Western Balkans' administrations in charge of Negotiating Chapter 11 (Agriculture and Rural Development), and Chapter 12 (Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy). The training enabled extensive elaboration of the main legal concepts and principles covered by the two referred chapters. The training was interactive and based on real or simulated examples of the use of transposition techniques and methods, with references to experiences from the accession negotiations. The training was highly evaluated by the participants.



ReSPA Summer School
July 2018

***ReSPA Summer School on Accession
Negotiations (focused on Chapters 23 and 24)***
2–6 July 2018, at ReSPA Campus

With the intention of improving the knowledge and professional skills of public servants working on the European Integration process, and in order to offer them a new opportunity to network with colleagues from the Western Balkan region, ReSPA organized the Summer School on Accession Negotiations with the EU. As in 2017, special focus was on the Negotiating Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security).

Lecturers and presenters at the Summer School were high level professionals and experts from the EU institutions, and from Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia. More than 30 participants of the Summer School came from all ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. They were senior and mid-level professionals actively taking part in the European Integration process, from the institutions that are coordinating the European Integration process at the central level, ministries in charge of foreign affairs, justice, internal affairs, and public administration.

The objectives of the Summer School were multiple: to help participants deepen their understanding of the issues covered by the Chapters 23 and 24 – background and finer points of the concepts, foreseeable challenges during the Chapters' negotiations and possible ways to overcome them; to inform participants of the

state of affairs in the region in particular thematic areas of the Chapters 23 and 24; to derive common lessons from the various experiences, and to share good practices in terms of existing regional initiatives in the matters related to these Chapters.

Drawing on the first-hand Croatian experience to depict accession negotiations, **Dr Vesna Pusić**, Vice President of the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, and former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, explained to the participants of the Summer School that the institutions of the system, more than anything else, need longevity, tenure and stability. "If you have institutions and states that last less than an average human life, being brought down every few decades, you are facing a serious problem. It is very difficult to create something which these institutions must rely on - and that is trust - that people believe that these institutions will be predictable, that they will make transparent decisions and verdicts based on known and equal rules for all. That is what we need, and what we expect. For all of us in this region, European integration gives us a chance to build the institutions that will last, and that will gradually become transparent and trustworthy; that will hopefully create a culture of self-regulation in our societies, supported by institutions that work and perform the tasks we gave them," Dr Pusić pointed out.



Workshop on Programming and Implementation of IPA II
18-19 October 2018, Brussels, Belgium

4th Conference on EU Budget Support 20–21 September 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

ReSPA and the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) Open Regional Fund's project *Promotion of European Integration through Regional Co-operation* jointly organised this Conference in order to support institutional capacities for implementation of reforms through the use of the EU Budget Support.

The Conference covered three themes important for the successful implementation of reforms: Sector reform contract implementation – sector performance monitoring for reporting on results; Successful strategy development, policy planning, and coordination; and Effective communication for promoting strategic objectives and results.

The Officials of the European Commission (EC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) contributed to the discussion by presenting relevant best practices. Representatives of institutions in ReSPA Members presented their related experiences and engaged in constructive discussions through which the lessons learned were identified and shared. The Budget Support was appraised as a useful aid modality to support reform processes in those ReSPA Members that are implementing sector reform performance contracts. The use of a national system for monitoring and reporting was appraised as important, as well as the development of the institutional capacities for this purpose.

Regional Workshop on Programming and Implementation of IPA II

18–19 October 2018, Brussels, Belgium

In order to support preparedness for implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) by the Western Balkans' administrations, ReSPA and the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) Open Regional Fund's project *Promotion of European Integration through Regional Co-operation* jointly organised, in co-operation with the DG NEAR and OECD/SIGMA, the Regional Workshop on Programming and Implementation of IPA II – Lessons Learned for the Next Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF).

In addition to the representatives of the NIPAC Offices, ministries of finance and other key line ministries of IPA beneficiaries, the Workshop was attended by the representatives of the DG NEAR and the EU Delegations to the Western Balkan countries and Turkey.

During the Workshop, the major challenges and lessons learned in the programming and implementation of IPA II, and findings and recommendations related to the retention policy, as identified by the GIZ commended studies, were presented and discussed. Officials of the DG NEAR presented the development of the next generation of the IPA instrument within the future MFF, and the requirements for communication and visibility within the implementation of the IPA funded projects.

The Workshop was concluded by a practical exercise related to the Toolkit for preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of PAR and sector strategies, developed by the OECD/SIGMA.

ReSPA is committed to continue the support for its Members in the administrative efforts related to the utilization of IPA funds. In this context, particular attention will be paid to strengthened inter-institutional coordination for better delivery of strategic results and the financial sustainability of reform processes.

2.2. ReSPA's Contribution to Public Administration Reforms in the Western Balkans

The Public Administration Reform (PAR), together with the Rule of Law and Economic Governance, remains key priority in the EU Enlargement process. A well-functioning public administration plays a fundamental role in the European integration process by enabling the implementation of crucial reforms and efficient accession dialogue with the European Union. PAR is a cross-cutting issue of fundamental importance for success in political and economic reforms, and is building a basis for implementation of the EU rules and standards. The quality of administration directly impacts the ability of governments to provide public services, to prevent and fight against corruption, and to foster competitiveness and growth.

Strategic priorities of ReSPA in the Western Balkans remain directly related to the progress in the area of PAR. By encouraging regional cooperation in PAR through its activities, ReSPA contributes to the exercise of the European Principles of Public Administration (PPA) in the region. ReSPA's activities within the PAR Pillar are cross-cutting, but are structured according to the chapters of the European Principles of Public Administration: 1) Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform (PAR); 2) Policy Development and Coordination; 3) Public Service and Human Resources Management (HRM); 4) Accountability; 5) Service Delivery; and 6) Public Financial Management (PFM).

Within each chapter of the European PPA, the concrete and specific objectives guided the activities of ReSPA Working Groups. These regional Working Groups are composed of senior and mid-level professionals and public servants representing central level public administration

institutions (ministries, public agencies, governmental offices and other institutions). Each regional Working Group usually has three representatives per ReSPA Member and Kosovo*. Some meetings of Working Groups also included representatives of civil society organisations, think tanks and academic community from the Western Balkan region.

Within the PAR Pillar, ReSPA organised its work through the established regional Working Groups, in the following thematic areas:

- **Administrative Procedures and Administrative Justice (APAJ)**
- **Better Regulation**
- **eGovernment**
- **Ethics and Integrity**
- **Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD)**
- **Public Administration Reform (PAR) Network**
- **Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC)**
- **Public-Private Partnership**
- **Public Procurement**
- **Quality in Public Administration and Services (QPAS)**

2.2.1. Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform

Since 2014, the ReSPA's main coordinating structure for Public Administration Reform (PAR) in the Western Balkans is the PAR Network. Members of this Network are high level officials who are in charge of PAR in the ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. The PAR Network regularly monitors and evaluates the work of all ReSPA Working Groups, and provides strategic directions for future activities.

7th Meeting of the Public Administration Reform Network

29–30 November 2017, Ohrid, Macedonia

The Public Administration Reform (PAR) Network has an important role in coordination of ReSPA working groups and in provision of holistic approach to all ReSPA's activities. The 7th Meeting of the PAR Network was devoted to the Methodological Guide for Costing of Strategies, and the role of Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC) in enhancement of Managerial Accountability. Managerial Accountability and its

practical implementation are important topics because the accountability principles are still not firmly embedded in the administrative culture of public sector management in the Western Balkans, and the countries of the region are facing difficulties in achieving goals in this area.

At the meeting, members of the ReSPA team also presented the Feasibility Study on Establishing Regional Quality Management Centre to the PAR Network members, and to the representatives of the European Commission (DG Budget), SIGMA, Delegation of the EU to Macedonia, and the Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF). ReSPA's Plan of Activities for 2018 was also presented, as well as the process of development of the ReSPA Strategy for 2019–2024. The important segment of the Meeting was devoted to a regular exchange of information on the most relevant activities of ReSPA Working Groups between the two meetings of the PAR Network.

The **Methodological Guide for Costing of Strategies** was developed through broad consultations with various ReSPA Working Groups, as well as with the EC and SIGMA. The draft Guide was presented at the ReSPA Governing Board Meeting at Ministerial level that was held on 6 November 2017 in Tirana, Albania, while an in-depth discussion related to this document was organised at the PAR Network meeting held on 29–30 November 2017 in Ohrid, Macedonia. Although its primary goal is to strengthen financial frameworks for implementation of PAR strategies and related action plans, the Guide is also expected to facilitate the process of costing governments' strategies in general, i.e. in other sectors. In order to enable its wider dissemination, ReSPA translated this Guide to languages of the region. The Guide and its translations are published in hard copies, and electronic versions are available through the ReSPA Website.⁴

Gender Equality and Public Administration Reform

Regional Conference on Measuring Gender Equality in Western Balkans

1 December 2017, at ReSPA Campus

Achieving gender equality in the countries of the Western Balkans being a continuous challenge, issues and policies related to this aspect are inevitably gaining relevance in the pre-accession countries in this region. With an aim to influence

development of gender equality policies in the ReSPA Members, the Conference brought together more than 50 public servants dealing with gender equality issues in relevant governmental institutions of the Western Balkans, experts from the region and the EU, representatives of civil society organisations active in this field, and representatives of relevant international organisations (UNDP, EIGE, OSCE).

This Regional Conference was organised in cooperation with the Department for Gender Equality of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of Serbia, and the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The main themes were gender equality policies in the Western Balkans, and its measurements with a focus on the *Gender Equality Index* and its application in policy making. The EU's *Gender Equality Index* is a composite indicator for measuring the concept of gender equality. Based on the EU policy framework, it also serves to monitor the progress of gender equality across the EU. Measuring progress of gender equality is an integral part of effective policy-making. Thus, the *Gender Equality Index* supports the development and implementation of evidence-based gender equality policies and legislation, and shows different outcomes of those policies for women and for men. It is to be hoped that this mechanism will help to further raise the awareness of public servants in the ReSPA Members of progress and challenges in the implementation of gender equality policies.

Also, the participants of the Conference were acquainted with the main findings of the comparative research on Gender Equality in Public Administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA Secretariat and regional public administrations provided the inputs for this specific research project implemented by the European Commission DG NEAR during 2017.

“What we want to do now is make a step further into building a system which will endorse gender equality as its core cross-cutting principle based on human-rights and anti-discrimination commitments.”

Fiona McCluney, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Montenegro

⁴ <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2018-7>



Regional Conference on Gender Equality
30–31 January 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

Regional Conference on Gender Equality and Public Administration Reform

30–31 January 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

With a goal to promote regional cooperation of public administrations and experts in the field of Gender Equality and PAR, the ReSPA and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia convened a two-day Regional Conference on Gender Equality and PAR in the Western Balkans. The event brought together more than 50 public servants dealing with gender equality and PAR in 30 different governmental institutions, experts on gender equality and PAR from the Western Balkans region, and representatives of non-governmental organisations active in this field from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The main objective of the Conference was to influence the development of gender equality policies, and to link these with PAR efforts in ReSPA Members.

Particular focus of the discussion was on Gender Responsive Budgeting, and the results of the regional research on gender equality in public administration that were presented, with an emphasis on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

The high-level officials from the Republic of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, ambassadors of

the European Union, the OSCE, and Montenegro in the Republic of Serbia, as well as the Head of the UN Women Office in Serbia, addressed the Regional Conference participants, thereby giving strong political support to the issues of the gender equality in the context of PAR.

High-level Policy Dialogue on Public Administration Reform

Ministerial Conference on Good Governance in Western Balkans

12–13 June 2018, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In order to provide opportunities for high-level policy dialogue and exchange of experience in various aspects of PAR, ReSPA organised a two-day regional Ministerial Conference entitled „Good Governance in Western Balkans”, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Conference brought together over 80 participants: ministers in charge of public administration; representatives of ministries of finances; national IPA Coordinators; high level representatives of state administrations dealing with PAR, Public Finance Management and European integration; representatives of the European Commission (DG NEAR and European Union Delegation to BiH); OECD/SIGMA; RCC; RAI; RACVIAC; civil society organisations and other partners.



ReSPA Ministerial Conference on Good Governance
12-13 June 2018, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Good Governance is a requirement of the PAR which, together with the Rule of Law and Economic Governance, remains a strategic priority in the Western Balkans. In this context, the major themes discussed at the Conference were related to the strategic framework for PAR and its financial sustainability, quality of policy planning and coordination, and monitoring and reporting on the implementation of PAR strategies, as well as the adequate EU financial assistance for supporting the reforms.

“In addition to the adequate human resources, it is clear that the reform processes also require great financial resources, and we are aware that no country in the region has unlimited funds available. This is why we need to focus on financial planning and the good management of public finances.”

Mr. Josip Grubeša, Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Chair of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level

“Comparing good and bad experiences must take place at political and technical levels, regularly, and shall be supported by research and training. ReSPA is the place to be for regional cooperation. The EU sets important incentives through support, finance, and access. Exchange means primarily inspiration, not finding one-size-fits-all solutions. Once the Principles of Good Governance are agreed, it is all about implementation.”

**Mr. Rolf Alter, Senior Fellow,
Hertie School of Governance, Berlin**

The primary goal of ReSPA is to support governments in the Western Balkan region to build stronger administrative capacities for development of modern, professional and competent public administration.



Conclusions and recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on Good Governance in Western Balkans:

- Adherence to the concept of Good Governance in preparation and adoption of PAR strategic frameworks in the Western Balkans requires tools and modalities that will enable permanent modernisation of public administration and improvement of public services.
- Sound and effective management of public finances is an important part of PAR processes.
- Recognising the significance of public scrutiny over implementation of strategies, the governments of the Western Balkans are recommended to ensure publication of monitoring reports, and to enable more consistent inclusion of civil society in monitoring and reporting. Practices of inclusion of data provided by civil society in governments' monitoring reports and organisation of public debates on the implementation of PAR and PFM strategies, initiated in some countries, should be promoted across the Western Balkans as a good practice.
- Introduction of the EU Budget Support as a new aid modality was assessed as beneficial for improving policy coordination and strategic planning, as well as implementation of IPA funds.

In-country support projects

In Montenegro, ReSPA supported the activities related to the application of the Action Plan for Implementation of the National 2016–2020 PAR Strategy, by engaging the experts for the following projects:

Drafting Law on State Administration in Montenegro

April–July 2018

The PAR Strategy 2016–2020 of Montenegro recognised the need for the development of the new Law on State Administration. Based on the request from the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro, ReSPA engaged prof. Dr Gregor Virant to support the process of development of this law. The main challenge was to establish a clear and transparent typology of public administration

bodies and to prescribe uniform rules for their establishment and functioning. The engaged expert participated in a broad public consultation process with a number of stakeholders, and in particular with OECD/SIGMA, and prepared the draft Law on State Administration.

Planning for Optimisation of State Administration in Montenegro

April–July 2018

Based on the 2016–2020 PAR Strategy, the Government of Montenegro has launched a process of reorganisation of public administration at the central level. The Ministry of Public Administration and its operational teams, including the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Optimisation, approached ReSPA for additional expert support for this process. ReSPA arranged for two experts to do research and analysis of economic and legal aspects of the optimisation policies in the EU, Western Balkan region and in Montenegro, including the size and cost of public administration. As a result of the analyses and reviews, the experts, in cooperation with the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Optimisation, prepared the optimisation measures for the period 2018–2020 for central and local level of government. This document, entitled “*The Action Plan for Optimisation of the Public Sector in Montenegro for the Period 2018–2020*”, has been adopted by the PAR Council and the Government of Montenegro, and its implementation is on-going.

Outsourcing Services at the Clinical Centre of Montenegro

September–October 2018

The Action Plan for Optimisation of the Public Sector in Montenegro for the Period 2018–2020 envisages activities related to optimisation through outsourcing in the area of public health sector in Montenegro. Therefore, based on the request from Montenegro, ReSPA provided expert support related to the review of the draft Concession Document on Outsourcing Services at the Clinical Centre of Montenegro, which will serve as a guiding document for further outsourcing activities in the public health sector.



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Action Plan for Restructuring of Public Administration in Albania

September–October 2018

The Department of Public Administration (DoPA) of the Albanian Government was supported in piloting the implementation of the Action Plan for Restructuring of Public Administration. The Action Plan was tested in several agencies within health and education sector.

ReSPA engaged one expert to perform the following tasks:

- Assist to the DoPA in undertaking and fulfilling its role and responsibilities that derive from being key part of the structures set up for conducting this restructuring process;
- Assist DoPA in reviewing and drafting the institutional structures of subordinate institutions and agencies in the health system, and piloting the new reorganization model by implementing OECD/SIGMA and UNDP's methodology;
- Support DoPA in carrying out the inventory and assessment phase in the education system, following the example applied on the health system;
- Pursuant to the approved Action Plan, clarify and define the typology, structures and processes on the reorganization of subordinate institutions and agencies in the health and education systems;
- Provide technical know-how and assistance to the DoPA, to develop and increase its capacities in order for DoPA to continue in fulfilling its tasks in the restructuring process.

2.2.2. Policy Development and Coordination

Within the European Principles of Public Administration Chapter on Policy Development and Coordination, ReSPA's efforts were focused on improving cooperation of the Centre of Government (CoG) institutions and Better Regulation efforts, particularly in terms of improving Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and public participation in the legislative and policy processes in the Western Balkans.

Meeting of Centre of Government Institutions' Representatives

5–6 March 2018, at ReSPA Campus

ReSPA, RCC and OECD/SIGMA reinitialised regional cooperation of CoG institutions of the Western Balkans at a regional conference held in June 2017. In line with ReSPA Governing Board's decision to further support this network in favour of enhancing the capacities of public administrations for strategic planning and policy coordination – in particular in light of the European integration process – ReSPA, RCC and OECD/SIGMA organised a follow-up meeting for CoG officials and representatives of institutions in charge of EU integration processes. The objective of the meeting was to highlight similarities and differences in the regional experiences, and to discuss options for better linking of government planning, management of priorities, sectorial policy planning, and the European integration process. As a result, participants identified key enablers, disablers and possible solutions for effectuating connections between planning and monitoring functions of the CoGs, and ensuring comprehensive strategic and budgetary planning. The participants also discussed RCC's and ReSPA's joint Recommendation on Public Participation⁵, as well as results of the SIGMA's monitoring reports concerning policy development and coordination.

Regional Meeting on Better Regulation in the Western Balkans

18–19 April 2018, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), ReSPA organised a two-day meeting of more than 20 senior public servants dealing with the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and other aspects of Better Regulation in governmental institutions of ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. The participants shared information on developments regarding the oversight and implementation of RIA in their jurisdictions. They discussed achievements and challenges in evidence-based policy making and public participation with SIGMA and RCC partners. Special attention was devoted to the Recommendation on Public Participation developed by ReSPA and RCC and endorsed by the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level in November 2017. To support the implementation of this Recommendation, participants in the meeting defined a framework for respective peer-missions and awareness raising events.

5 <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#recommendation-on-public-participation-126>

Regional Comparative Study on Better Regulation in Western Balkans⁶

One of the results of the Meeting of the Working Group on Better Regulation held in Sarajevo was consensus about the necessity to update and upgrade the comparative research on Better Regulation efforts in the Western Balkans that was undertaken with ReSPA's support in late 2016. The update has been prepared by two regional experts who did the original research in 2016, and followed-up developments in the region during 2017 and 2018. The upgrade took into consideration SIGMA Monitoring Reports from 2017, as well as new developments and data up to the end of April 2017. The Study has been published after data-verification by relevant RIA Oversight Units. The researchers used OECD's methodology for measuring RIA, and offered an up-to-date review of Better Regulation efforts in the Western Balkans. Finally, the Study is offering policy recommendations for improving RIA and other Better Regulation tools for each ReSPA Member and Kosovo*.

Regional Conference “Unlocking Benefits of Public Participation in the Western Balkans”, 11 June 2018, Vienna, Austria

Together with partners from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) of Austria, ReSPA organised this regional conference with an aim to raise the awareness about regional standards on public participation in policy-making processes. The purpose of the event was also to highlight the significance of the recently adopted Western Balkans Recommendation on Public Participation in achieving Better Regulation.

The Conference brought together 25 heads of units from ministries of justice, ministries in charge of public administration, ministries and governmental offices in charge of European Integration, as well as representatives of CoG institutions from all Western Balkans' countries. Participants discussed various aspects of public participation, and the spotlight was on communication tools and on planning a targeted approach for an effective public campaign to get citizens and businesses engaged in policy-making processes.

A whole set of multilingual public information and awareness raising materials (the Recommendation leaflet, video and brochure) on citizen participation in policy-making in the Western Balkans, prepared by the RCC together with ReSPA, aimed at animating the public to get engaged in these processes, were presented and distributed at the Conference. These materials are publicly available and free for further sharing and dissemination.⁷

“Public participation in policy-making process is crucial as it has concrete practical consequences not only for the region’s European path, but also for everyday life of ordinary citizens. A great potential for public participation is here, around us, and it needs to be unlocked to show its benefits. It is quite a challenge to motivate citizens to partake in policy-making processes in order to get their concerns and views included. Only in this way we can make all-inclusive policies to make society better for ourselves and for our children. Therefore, we need to be persistent and to keep trying.”

Mr. Gazmend Turdiu, RCC Deputy Secretary General and Member of ReSPA Advisory Board

Mobility Schemes

Working Visit for Delegations from Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Republic of Serbia

30–31 August 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

ReSPA organised a regional exchange of peer experience for the delegations from the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of Macedonia and governmental institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through a working visit to the Public Policy Secretariat (PPS) of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The delegations also visited the Office for Information Technologies and e-Government, and the National Academy of Public Administration of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The visiting delegations consisted of senior public servants from the Macedonian Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA), representatives of the Ministry of Justice and General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Economic Relations and Regional Cooperation of the Republic of Srpska, and

6 <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2018-7>

7 <https://www.rcc.int/events/1178/regional-conference-unlocking-benefits-of-public-participationrn>

the representative of the General Secretariat of the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the key actors, this working visit was an excellent opportunity for the exchange of experiences among peers in the processes related to the simplification and digitalisation of administrative procedures, monitoring of the implementation of government work plans, controlling quality of regulatory impact assessment (RIA), and capacity building of public administration.

Peer-Mission on Public Participation

*16–17 October 2018, Pristina, Kosovo**

ReSPA and RCC jointly organised this Peer-Mission on Public Participation in order to raise the awareness on the Western Balkans' Recommendation on Public Participation and to discuss its implementation in Kosovo*. This regional event brought together over 20 public servants who are in charge of coordinating public consultations in various ministries of Kosovo*, to discuss with peers from Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro ways to improve public participation in policy making and legislative processes.

During the opening session, participants were welcomed by Mr. Mahir Yağcılar, Minister of Public Administration, Mr. Besnik Tahiri, Coordinator for State Reforms in the Office of the Prime Minister, and Ms. Mikaela Gronqvist from the EU Office in Pristina.

The Report was then discussed by the participants of the event, and key challenges for improving public participation were addressed. The discussion was followed by three workshops that were led by an RCC Consultant Mr. Goran Forbici. The workshops covered the following topics: Targeted Approach, Early Involvement of Stakeholders, and Development of Consultation Documents. The event was highly evaluated by participants, hosts and organisers.

In-country support projects

Support for Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in Montenegro

January–October 2018, Podgorica, Montenegro

In close cooperation with the Directorate for Financial System and Improvement of Business Environment of the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro, ReSPA has supported an expert, Dr Branko Radulović, for provision of trainings on Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and use of Standard Cost Model (SCM) for public servants from regulatory bodies in Montenegro. During the trainings, the examples of RIA statements for various draft laws were discussed and improved. The expert also prepared the RIA Quality Checklist to be used for assessing the quality of RIAs, and upgraded version of the Manual for Conducting RIA.

Upgrading the Website of the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia⁸

October 2017–October 2018

At the request of the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia, ReSPA provided an expert to redesign and upgrade the website of this institution. One of the most important segments of this website, that could be used as an inspiration for ReSPA Members and other countries, is the section on simplification of administrative procedures (e-papir). Also, ReSPA supported an expert to develop software solution for management of the public participation process – system for managing and responding to initiatives and recommendations for simplification of administrative procedures that are submitted by citizens and businesses. It is expected that upgraded website and relevant software will improve transparency, visibility and public participation in the policy and legislative process.



At the outset of the event, the Annual Report (2017) on Public Consultations in Kosovo* was presented by Mr. Habit Hajredini, Director of the Office for Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination, in the Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo*.

⁸ <https://rsjp.gov.rs/> and <http://epapir.rsjp.gov.rs/>

2.2.3. Public Service and Human Resource Management

Within the European Principles of Public Administration Chapter on Public Service and Human Resource Management the ReSPA's efforts were focused on Ethics and Integrity in public administration, and on improving Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD) within the public administration in the Western Balkans.

Conference on Contemporary Challenges in Public Service and the Role of Partnership for Reaching Solutions

25–26 October 2018, Skopje, Macedonia

The Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) of Macedonia, the Astana Civil Service Hub (ACSH) based in Kazakhstan, UNDP and ReSPA jointly organised the Conference on Contemporary Challenges in Public Service and the Role of Partnership for Reaching Solutions. The Conference was attended by representatives of the ReSPA Members and Central Asian countries, OECD, UNDP, and ACSH. ReSPA representatives actively participated in several panels as panelists and moderators. The importance of wider framework of international cooperation was strengthened as the best way for ensuring partnering and synergies towards the achievement of sustainable results in the public service improvement and modernisation of the civil service system.

Ethics and Integrity

12th Meeting of the Working group on Ethics and Integrity

30 November – 1 December 2017, Belgrade, Serbia

The 12th Meeting of the ReSPA Working Group on Ethics and Integrity contributed to sharing good practices in domain of detecting conflict of interest and integrity. There were more than 30 participants of the Meeting who are members of the following ReSPA Working Groups: Ethics and Integrity, Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD), Public Procurement, and Administrative Procedures and Administrative Justice (APAJ). Participants were senior officials of central governmental institutions responsible for preventing and combating corruption. The meeting was also attended by a representative of the Transparency International Serbia.

„My expectations from this Meeting were to find out what were legal frameworks on this topic in the Western Balkans, what types of detecting conflict of interest had been established in the countries of our region, and what were the problems in the implementation of this system. The event met my expectations to a great extent, thanks to the organisers and their excellent preparation. The inputs from this event will be very useful for my future work, especially in terms of administrative disputes before my administrative court regarding free access to information and conflict of interest. I will also keep in touch with colleagues from Montenegro and Macedonia”

**Judge Jelena Tišma Jovanović,
Administrative Court of the Republic of Serbia**

The draft **Methodology for Detecting Hidden Conflicts of Interest** was also presented at the Meeting. The methodology gives full picture on what could be done in proactive detecting of the conflict of interest. By using this Methodology, policymakers might see their own legislation in a new light, and consider to which extent additional efforts might be needed for an effective oversight of conflicts of interest. The obtained comments and proposals were used for finalisation of the Methodology. The participants of the Meeting discussed possible usage of the Methodology and its integration in the oversight mechanisms of integrity bodies, as well as in standard procedures for the larger civil service.

The **Methodology for Detecting Hidden Conflicts of Interest**⁹ is published at the ReSPA website in English and in the languages of the region.

The draft manuscript of the Manual on **Integrity Challenges in the Western Balkans** was presented at the Meeting, and was discussed and commented by the participants. This draft Manual was developed by the Institute of Comparative Law (ICL) from Belgrade, Serbia, with the support of the Norwegian Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector (CIDS). The Manual provides an insight into international standards in the area of integrity building, existing national integrity legal frameworks in the Western Balkans, and best international and regional practices that are, or can be used to address key integrity

9 <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2017-7>

challenges. This document thus presents a comprehensive and a flexible tool for both initial and continuous training of civil servants in Western Balkans. It focuses on integrity with regard to the human resources management, free access to information, conflict of interest, internal financial control, administrative proceedings, and public procurement. It also includes the ethical dilemmas of how to act upon unlawful superior's orders.

Training for Trainers on Integrity Challenges

15–24 October 2018, at ReSPA Campus

Based on the Manual on **Integrity Challenges in the Western Balkans**, ReSPA organised three Training of Trainers: Training on Integrity Challenges in Recruitment and Selection for the Civil Service; Training on Integrity Challenges in Public Procurement; and Training on Integrity and Conflict of Interest in the Western Balkans. The three Training sessions brought together 39 participants from all ReSPA Members and Kosovo*.

The Training on Recruitment and Selection for the Civil Service included: presentation of HRM in the civil service and integrity challenges in the Western Balkans, job analysis, conducting the competency-based interviews, assessing the candidate after the interview and use of knowledge obtained at the training in practice.

The Training on Public Procurement (PP) included: presentation of PP and integrity challenges in the Western Balkans, presentation of integrity risks in each PP phase, exercises on pre-bidding, bidding and post-bidding phase, and recommendations for avoiding integrity risks in public procurement.

The Training on Integrity and Conflict of Interest (Col) included: interactive sessions on conflict of interest, implementation of the national frameworks on Col, best practice models on handling Col, and exercises on handling Col in practice.

All training events contained a session on dealing with improper orders from a superior.

In-country support projects

Development of IT Application for Efficient Management of Conflict of Interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina

January–February 2018

ReSPA supported the project submitted by the Commission on Conflict of Interest for engagement of an expert to develop the IT application for the effective management of the conflict of interest.

The application was developed to support timely electronic submission and storage of financial statements that would be listed in the system under the unified number with the option to attach supporting documentation relating to each individual case. In addition, the application created the real preconditions for search / check of information in real time, established open communication channels with other relevant institutions / agencies at all levels of authorities, as well as established “early warning system” (red flag system) to draw attention to timely treatment, if any discrepancies were noticed in the financial statements. The expert also developed manuals for efficient use and maintenance of the system, conducted training for IT staff to maintain the system, and produced security protocols for ensuring adequate protection system in the spirit of the Law on Personal Data Protection and the Law on the Protection of Classified Information. In addition to the above, the system was designed to define user rights which would be reflected in the possibilities: to monitor all activities within the base, to process and treat data, and to conduct analytical processing and reporting. Also, when it comes to the financial reports of the target group, the system ensures the effective data verification and audit.

This project contributed to the improved human and institutional capacity of the Commission on Conflict of Interest and development of professional civil service. Establishment of the above-mentioned system implies the standardization of policies on dealing with the conflict of interest that are already in place in the SEE countries. Through the implementation of the project, the full compliance with the GRECO and EC Report recommendations was ensured.

Analysis of Legal Framework for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest for Civil Servants in the Republic of Serbia

June–December 2017

For the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia, ReSPA provided two experts (one international and one national) who conducted an analysis of the legal framework related to the prevention of corruption and conflict of interest for civil servants in Serbia, and provided recommendations for its improvement and alignment with the EU and international standards.

Human Resources Management and Development

Workshop on Coaching

27–28 February 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

ReSPA organised this workshop as a follow-up of the meeting held in Tirana in May 2017. Members of the Working Group on Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD) gathered to learn about the research initiatives regarding coaching, performance evaluation, civil service reform, public service employees' motivation, and integrity management.

The experience and information shared among participants served as a basis for proposing a set of recommendations for introduction of coaching initiatives in public administrations in the Western Balkans. The outcomes of the workshop were also outlining of the ReSPA comparative study on performance evaluation, and information exchange regarding the update of the *Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans*¹⁰ that ReSPA produced in 2015, and which is published in English and in the languages of the region on ReSPA's website.

Baseline Analysis on Performance Appraisal in Western Balkans

April–November 2018

The Baseline Analysis, that will be completed in November 2018, encompasses: state of the art in the performance appraisal in the Western Balkan countries with a special focus on the improvement of the performance appraisal implementation, the examples of the existing good practice in the EU and worldwide, and also

provides recommendations for improvement of the performance appraisal implementation in the Western Balkans.

Update of the Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures

April–November 2018

In 2015 ReSPA produced the regional Study on *Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans*. This research project was led by Professor Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling from the University of Nottingham, who was also the main author of the Study. The Study identified the obstacles for the successful implementation of the HRMD policies and proposed the recommendations for the improvement of the implementation quality. The Study focuses on the area of recruitment and selection as crucial areas for the analysis of the quality of implementation of HRM policies in the Western Balkans. The Study includes over 60 specific recommendations for the ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. Due to a numerous changes in the region as of 2015, ReSPA, in cooperation with the University of Nottingham, initiated the update of this research and Study. The recent research shows that more than 60% of the recommendations from the previous Study have been adopted by the end of 2018, indicating ReSPA's contribution to the professionalisation of the civil service in the region. The current study, which will be completed soon, also provides new recommendations, both for the regional and country specific level, which will further contribute to professionalisation of the civil service in Western Balkans.

Mobility Schemes

Working Visit to the Department of Public Administration of Albania for the Officials from the Civil Service Agencies from Bosnia and Herzegovina

1–2 February 2018, Tirana, Albania

The visit to the Department of Public Administration (DoPA) facilitated the exchange of knowledge and good practices regarding the Albanian Recruitment Portal System. The participants had informative sessions with lessons learned and practical examples. The Delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) – nine representatives of central level and the level of Federation of BiH and Republic of Srpska – got more specific overview of the e-recruitment process and important steps to be undertaken in digitalisation of the recruitment procedures.

10 <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2015-7>

In order to support simplification and enhancement of good governance in the recruitment process for public service in BiH, the three Civil Service Agencies have planned to reconsider technical software opportunities for the recruitment process in BiH, develop concept for BiH administration, and prepare the basic proposal for implementing IT system in BiH. This new potential on-line electronic application system will seek to simplify the procedures and increase transparency through the use of innovative tools, with the focus on the challenges to transposing the legal procedure into a technical procedure, as well as the challenges on transforming a paper-based process into a web application. This event was also the opportunity for strengthening cooperation among the civil servants from the three Civil Service Agencies of BiH.

Working Visit of Delegation from Macedonia to the Albanian Government

9–11 May 2018, Tirana, Albania

In preparation for the establishment of the Top-Level Management Corps (TMC) in Macedonia, two representatives of the Macedonian Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) gained an overview of the establishment of the Top-Level Management Corps in Albania: legal framework, recruitment process, the role of the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) in the functioning of this body, training provided for the TMC, past and current challenges. It is expected that this experience-exchange with the Albanian Department of Public Administration and ASPA will be useful for establishing the TMC in Macedonia.

In-country support projects

Improvement of the Organisational Culture in the Public Administration in Albania

November 2017 – March 2018

Following the general parliamentary elections of June 2017, the new Albanian government was established and formalized. Thus, the new governmental structure consisting of the Prime Minister's Office and new line ministries (11 new line ministries and 2 state ministers) was put in place with the aim to provide high quality services for citizens and businesses.

Based on the request from DoPA, ReSPA engaged an expert to provide support in maximising the benefits of the 'new organisational model' by

enhancing the organisational culture, whilst developing the senior managers. The key managers in central governmental institutions were evaluated for the positions in the new structures, in accordance to their fields of expertise vis-à-vis the position requirements. Based on the analysis conducted, the expert provided recommendations for the culture change which include: improvement of employees' engagement and productivity; continuous enhancement of senior managerial skills; introduction of the employees' recognition procedures; enhancement of managerial accountability in the recruitment process; and induction and development of procedures.

The expert prepared more than 100 pages of the useful material which should support changing of organisational culture, as well as boosting the efficiency and effectiveness of employees. The material is related to the improvement of performance evaluation, improvement of communication, enhancement of employees' motivation, etc. In addition, the *Implementation Workbook* was prepared as well as the *Implementation Action Plan* for undertaking a successful implementation of the recommendations. It is planned to implement the recommendations until the end of 2019.

"The activities included in this project helped in ensuring the proper implementation of the new structure, as well as in understanding the reorganization and innovations by all the staff. Moreover, through this project we were able to identify the general strengths of the top management level of the public administration, and assess the actual level of involvement and motivation of each employee, while also developing the approach to organizational behaviour in each ministry and Prime Minister's Office. Apart from the benefits we are already seeing, we also foresee to benefit from this project in the long-term in regards of maximizing the success, raising the job satisfaction and personal happiness of all individuals, but especially leaders, contributing to the important work of the administration, and moreover we envisage the achievement of a high performance public administration supported by "continuous improvement culture."

Albana Koçiu, Director of the Department of Public Administration, Government of the Republic of Albania and ReSPA GB member

Development of Video on Functioning of Public Administration in Albania

June–July 2018

ReSPA supported the Department of Public Administration (DoPA) of Albania in its initiative to inform the citizens, in a simple way through the creation of a video, about the public administration. At the same time, the video was used to emphasize the importance of the civil service and to call on the professionals to join the public administration and enter into the recruitment process.

The animated video explains different levels and types of institutions that function under the civil service law, how one can apply and join the administration with a special focus on concrete steps that should be taken in order to be properly prepared for the recruitment procedures. The video is an explanatory one and further builds upon the previously created video tutorials.

In order to ensure reaching out to future potential applicants, a ‘social-medial distribution plan’ was created to use mediums such as Facebook, Twitter and other social media news outlets, to distribute the video. Furthermore, the civil service institutions distributed the video and published it on their respective social media accounts.

Development of the Information Technology Application for e-recruitment in Bosnia and Herzegovina

June–August 2018

As a result of the Working Visit of the Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to DoPA in Albania, a project was developed by the Civil Service Agency of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Agency for Public Administration of the Republic of Srpska for creation of the IT application for e-recruitment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. ReSPA supported the two Agencies in creating this application consisting of the underlined database structure, front-end structure and navigation, public features like user registration and login, vacancies overview and search, user profile management, job submissions, notifications and similar.

The initial IT solution was created with the following features: user management, vacancies management, submission management, system log and similar. The development of the initial IT solution practically resulted with the functional web application accessible on the following web address: <http://erecruitment.core-enigma.com>.

The installation version of the produced initial IT solution, as well as the backup of the underlining databases, were delivered as well. The system documentation was created in the form of the *User Manual* which outlines in details all the implemented features of the initial IT solution. The access rights and security protocols were created, and the specific user rights were implemented.

Skills Development for the Directorate for Agrarian Payments of the Republic of Serbia

March–April 2018

ReSPA supported training in communication skills for the employees of the Directorate for Agrarian Payments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia.

Improvement of Job Descriptions for Public Administration in Kosovo*

August–October 2018

ReSPA supported the project of the Department for Civil Service Administration (DCSA) of Kosovo* for revision of the generic job descriptions, review and update of the list of jobs, as well as training of the DCSA's staff on the changes and their impact on daily HRM business. The aim of the new job classification for civil servants is to ensure equal salaries for the same category of jobs, and remuneration based on experience and on successful performance.

Procedure for Development and Validation of Training Programmes for the Kosovo* Institute of Public Administration

April–September 2018

On the request of the Kosovo* Institute of Public Administration (KIPA), one expert was engaged by ReSPA to finalize the draft of the *Administrative Procedure for Development and Validation of Training Programmes and Materials* in line with the best European practices. The expert recommended recent trends and latest research insights to be enshrined in the training programmes. After the submission of a finalized document, the expert prepared and implemented a training on the new *Administrative Procedure*. The training session was held on 22–24 August 2018 in the KIPA in Pristina, Kosovo*.

Analysis of Training Programmes of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) of the Republic of Serbia

July–October 2018

Based on the request from NAPA, ReSPA supported an expert to provide the analysis and to assess the relevance of the existing training programmes of NAPA for their wider implementation (with recommendations for improvement and/or adaptation). This analysis serves as a basis for decision-making on the future training programmes to be implemented by NAPA. In particular, the assignment included the revision of the existing training programmes of NAPA and analysis of its applicability for the local self-governments and other public administration bodies in Serbia. The analytical document provides the explanation on which training programmes that are already adopted could be implemented at the local level as well as for the other public administration bodies without any changes, then training programmes that are not relevant for them (with explanation of reasons), and finally, explanation on which training programmes could be implemented with modifications and recommendations for the modifications and adaptation of training programmes. An additional issue covered by this document are recommendations for the development of the on-line courses (based on the existing training programmes) using the new NAPA on-line platform.

2.2.4. Accountability

The aim of ReSPA activities related to Administrative Justice in Western Balkans is to contribute towards implementation of Accountability principles, in particular addressing protection of both human rights and the public interests, enabling fair treatment in administrative disputes, and ensuring that public authorities assume liability in cases of wrongdoing.

Regional Conference on the Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights Applicable in Administrative Disputes

17 May 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

The overall aim of this Conference was to contribute to the improvement of judicial control of administration in the Western Balkan region. Hosted by the Union University Faculty of Law in Belgrade, it brought together more than 50 participants: judges of administrative and

supreme courts, representatives of ministries of justice, representatives of judiciary academies and experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The participants were welcomed by the Dean of the Union University Faculty of Law, the Chair of the ReSPA Governing Board at Senior Officials level, the President of the Administrative Court of the Republic of Serbia, and by the representative of the Council of Europe. The representative of the Regional Cooperation Council also attended this Conference.

At this Conference the ReSPA **Study on the Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) Applicable in Administrative Disputes**¹¹ was presented. The authors of the Study, prof. Violeta Beširević, prof. Dragoljub Popović, and prof. Tanasije Marinković exchanged views with participants in a lively discussion which also included the cases related to the protection of property (Article 1 of Protocol no. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights). During the Conference, it became clear that the administrative courts should continue building their capacities regarding the topics covered by the ReSPA Study. The Study is available in printed and on-line format in English and Serbian languages.

2.2.5. Service Delivery

Within the European Principles of Public Administration Chapter on Service Delivery, ReSPA efforts were focused on research on service delivery, on supporting modernisation of general administrative procedures, on transparency in public administration through Open Data and Open Government initiatives, and on contributing to the enhancement of quality in public administration and services in the Western Balkan countries.

ReSPA Panel at the United Nations Public Service Forum

21–23 June 2018, Marrakesh, Morocco

This year's United Nations Public Service Forum provided an opportunity for policy-makers to exchange good practices, experiences and lessons learned through collaboration and networking to improve public service in all areas. The three-day Forum facilitated discussions on two intertwined themes, both being critical for the realisation of Sustainable Development Goals: governance transformation and public administration

¹¹ <https://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2017-7>

innovation. The event was organised by the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

ReSPA contributed to the 2018 UN Public Service Forum with a panel session entitled “Achievements and Challenges in Public Administration Reform in the Western Balkans to fulfil the 2030 Agenda”, in the context of Introduction of the Global Initiative and Regional Perspectives on Public Administration Readiness for the 2030 Agenda. Participants in the panel were distinguished representatives of the Western Balkan administrations, experts and discussants, and a representative of the OECD/SIGMA. It was reiterated that the governments in the Western Balkans have identified concrete possibilities to invest a substantial part of their budgets in digital infrastructure, electronic services, and in programmes for the improvement of public service delivery for citizens and businesses.

Damjan Mančevski, Minister of Information Society and Administration of Macedonia, emphasized that the Western Balkans Digital Summit held in Skopje in April 2018 made a good start in a series of regional events with the purpose of fostering cooperation between leaders and civil servants. “Through involvement and cooperation with private sector, as well as with citizens, local governments will identify success factors for pushing public administration reform forward.”

various governmental institutions, representatives of civil society organisations dealing with issues of accessibility and equality, representatives of business sector, and relevant international organisations. Based on focus group meetings that were held across the region, regional experts have prepared fact-based country profiles and case studies selection. After collection of primary and secondary data (interviews, focus groups, online questionnaire, other data sources) analysis have been made and consultations with partners from OECD/SIGMA and EC DG NEAR were continued during summer 2018, before the process of validation of findings. The Study is currently being finalised and will be disseminated during 2019.



Supporting Modernisation of General Administrative Procedures

Mobility scheme

Working Visit of the Delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia

27–28 March 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

Due to its complex internal structure, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is currently the only Western Balkans’ country that has not yet aligned its legislation in the field of general administrative procedure with the European principles and standards. In line with BiH’s initiatives and efforts at various levels of government, ReSPA organised a working visit for a delegation of nine public servants from various governance levels of BiH to their counterparts in Serbia, with a goal to enable the experience exchange with peers and experts from Serbia regarding modernisation of general administrative procedures. The main purpose of the visit was to learn from Serbian experiences

Regional Comparative Study on Public Service Delivery

January–November 2018

Given the growing importance of the quality of service delivery for the Western Balkans, ReSPA decided to prepare a study on the latest developments and future orientation on Service Delivery in the region’s public sectors. The objective set for this Study is to give an in-depth overview and increase understanding of PAR processes in the Western Balkans, and to offer recommendations for improvement in three thematic areas: implementation of new general administrative procedures; digitalisation and eGovernment; and Quality Management of Service Delivery.

Effectively supported by the ReSPA team, the focus group meetings convened public servants responsible for eGovernment and implementation of new general administrative procedures at central and local level, decision makers from

on drafting and implementation of the new General Administrative Procedure Act (GAPA) of the Republic of Serbia and to eventually replicate some legal solutions in BiH.

As part of the working visit, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia hosted a roundtable discussion for peers and experts. The topics discussed included the process of drafting of the new GAPA in Serbia, Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) on Draft GAPA, new legal institutes in GAPA of Serbia, and harmonisation of legislation with GAPA. On the second day of the visit, the Delegation from BiH visited the Administrative Inspectorate, the Delivery Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia, where hosts shared their experiences in the implementation of the new GAPA of the Republic of Serbia.

In-country support project

Harmonisation with the new Law on General Administrative Procedure in Macedonia

February–May 2018

Based on the request of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of Macedonia, ReSPA supported an expert who prepared a legal analysis of 20 substantive laws with a purpose of checking their compliance with the new Law on General Administrative Procedure (LGAP). The Analysis also contains recommendations for further simplification of administrative procedures.

Supporting Transparency through Open Data and Open Government

ReSPA Panel at the 2018 Open Government Partnership Global Summit

17–19 July 2018, Tbilisi, Georgia

The guiding objective of the 5th Open Government Partnership¹² (OGP) Global Summit was to explore and exchange the ideas on how to make governments more responsive to the citizens, and how to empower people to take more active role in decision making processes. General audience at the OGP Summit was energised with two actual themes: blockchain development and the use of artificial intelligence in different sectors.

The representatives of ReSPA contributed to the OGP's Public Service Delivery subject matter

by setting a **panel session “Regional Dialogue for Open Government Partnership”**. Together with representatives from partner organisations and institutions of the Western Balkans, they highlighted the regional aspects of important global issues relevant to the OGP. Representatives from six regional administrations gave insight into their national challenges and visions.

On the margins of the OGP Global Summit, ReSPA organised the **Meeting of the eGovernment Working Group** where peers exchanged information on the current priorities in the Western Balkans' administrations regarding digitalisation and eGovernment.

Delegates from the ReSPA team used their stay in Tbilisi to make a **Study Visit to the local Public Service Hall**, designed according to the one-stop shop public service delivery model. The purpose of the visit was to acquire information about the efficiency and effectiveness of back and front offices in the public service delivery chain.

ReSPA's Contribution at the INFOFEST 2018

1–3 October 2018, Budva, Montenegro

For the fourth time, the representatives of ReSPA contributed to the INFOFEST with a panel discussion. Keynote speaker at the panel was Mr. Goran Jovetić, the State Secretary at the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro and ReSPA Governing Board member. His speech was followed by the presentation of ReSPA's Comparative Study on Service Delivery in the Western Balkans. Since the Comparative Study on Service Delivery has reiterated the need for interoperability of public services and reuse of common building blocks, the ISA² Programme and European Interoperability Framework (DG DIGIT) were also included in the panel.





Digital Dialogue of the Western Balkans and DG Connect
8 October 2018, Podgorica, Montenegro

The aim was to provide practical information and to offer concrete products for reuse in the Western Balkans in the domain of interoperability of e-services.

The second day of the event provided an intensive programme in the framework of ReSPA's closed session, where the ISA² Programme was presented in more detail along with the USA innovation lab, eParticipation platform in Madrid, blockchain experience from Lithuania, and Smart city grow and smart governance presented by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. The discussion on global trends in public services was also included in the session, as well as change management as a must for any type of digital transformation of public administration.

Digital Dialogue of the Western Balkans and DG Connect

8 October 2018, Podgorica, Montenegro

Director of ReSPA Ms. Ratka Sekulović opened the Dialogue with an elaboration of ReSPA's multiannual focus on open data, eParticipation, digital transformation and eServices. European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Ms. Mariya Gabriel underlined the importance of the Berlin Process Agenda and Digital Agenda as flagship initiatives for the Western Balkans. For the upcoming period, the ministers who participated in the Digital Dialogue gave suggestions in terms of providing support in updating the regional roaming agreement, and in capacity building in the area of cyber security, interoperability, digital innovation and the use of new IT technologies. Raising awareness on the importance of eGovernment and eServices was also stressed.

In-country support projects

Training Management Information System for the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) of the Republic of Serbia

ReSPA has contributed to establishing an interactive online platform of NAPA enabling application of e-services such as online registration of trainees at NAPA courses, automatic distribution of information, information on training programmes, information on trainers and lecturers, as well as a link to NAPA's e-Learning courses. Central registry database was also optimised.

To enhance accessibility, the platform was developed in a user-friendly format, and is available in Serbian language while certain information are available in English as well. With the set platform, the documentation will be machine readable, thus, with an appropriate permission, the customers will be able to improve the documentation or modify it to reflect their specific rules and processes. In addition, NAPA's platform is now designed to facilitate future interoperability with the Human Resource Management and Information System (HRMIS) in Serbia.

e-Signature and e-Services in Albania

ReSPA supported the Albanian National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security (AKCESK), which has approved all the legal framework for the trusted services, including electronic signature used in many electronic government systems (communication Government to Government – G2G, Government to Citizens – G2C and Government to Businesses – G2B).

The implementation of the new legal framework needed to be improved in accordance with the “paperless” initiative promoted by the Prime Minister of Albania.

Enhancement of Quality Management in Public Administration and Services

ReSPA Working Group on Quality in Public Administration and Services (QPAS) has put the topic of quality in public administration on the agenda of governments across Western Balkan countries. During the reporting period, the QPAS Working Group members actively participated in several ReSPA events.

ReSPA at the Danube Governance Forum: Improving Governance Together 4 December 2017, Vienna, Austria

The Danube Governance Forum was organised by the programme Building Administrative Capacities in the Danube Region (BACID), in cooperation with the Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Austria, ReSPA, and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS).

The Forum was focused on improving the capacity of public administrations within the Danube Governance Hub, and on enabling local governments to fulfil EU standards and deliver better services. The objective was to agree on the priorities for improving governance of the countries in the region on their way to the EU, while promoting the cooperation of the public sector – national and local institutions – with civil society, science and the business sector.

The Forum gathered more than 100 participants who represented national public administrations, local governments, civil society, media and science organisations from 16 different countries, as well as from international organisations.

“The main success factor for implementing Quality Management in public administration is senior management commitment. They have to support it on a political level and to understand what Quality Management instruments are. The next steps for implementing Quality Management in the Western Balkans is that they be made through the establishment of the Regional Quality Management Centre, and the role of ReSPA here could be very important.”

Thomas Prorok,
Deputy Managing Director of KDZ, Austria
and Member of ReSPA Advisory Board

The **Feasibility Study on Establishing Regional Quality Management Centre**¹³ was prepared based on the initiative of the ReSPA Working Group on QPAS. This Feasibility Study was presented to the EC DG NEAR on 23 October 2017 in Brussels. It was also presented at the ReSPA Governing Board Meeting at Ministerial level that was held on 6 November 2017 in Tirana, Albania, as well as at the PAR Network Meeting held on 29–30 November in Ohrid, Macedonia. The results of this Feasibility Study, and related discussions, confirmed the need for establishing the Regional Quality Management Centre in ReSPA (ReSPA QMC) as a long-term goal.

In-country support projects

*Quality Management: Common Assessment Framework for Kosovo**

ReSPA supported the engagement of one expert specialised in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to support the administration in Kosovo* in: i) preparation of a CAF training module for trainers; ii) organisation and delivery of a 10-day CAF training of trainers; and iii) drafting a plan on how to apply and strengthen implementation of CAF model in public administration.

Support for Quality Management in Macedonia

In cooperation with the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) in Macedonia, ReSPA supported training on Quality Management and preparation of the National Plan on Quality Management in the Public Sector for 2018–2020 that was included in the PAR Strategy and adopted by the Government of Macedonia in July 2018.

2.2.6. Public Financial Management

ReSPA has invested efforts in development of regional cooperation of key stakeholders in the areas of Public Financial Management (PFM) that are directly connected to PAR. These areas are: Public Procurement, Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC), and Managerial Accountability.

Enhancing the Efficiency of Public Procurement

Public Procurement (PP) constitutes a considerable share of public expenditures. In view of limited fiscal income, the challenge to increase efficiency and effectiveness of PP systems becomes evident. Members of the ReSPA Working Group on Public Procurement identified the problems that

13 <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2018-7>

public procurement is facing in their respective countries: significant number of complaints, slow procurement processes, complex administrative procedures that are not always aligned with the PP rules, etc. They exchange best practices and experiences on development of national public procurement systems, and they learn from one another during ReSPA events and meetings.

Baseline Analysis on Transparency in Public Procurement

ReSPA developed the Baseline Analysis on Transparency in Public Procurement that is focused on the procurement planning processes, for which there are no sufficient regulatory inputs offered by the EU procurement directives. This document is to serve to fill that gap, by referring to the EU *Acquis* requirements and the best practices of the EU Member States, as well as the ReSPA Members.

The document provides a short overview of transparency elements at the different stages of the public procurement system and public procurement processes. Based on the presented elements and inspired by the OECD's Methodology for Assessing Procurement Systems, a **self-assessment questionnaire on the transparency in public procurement** has been developed. In line with good practices and continuous development of the implementing mechanisms, especially IT tools, the questionnaire should be gradually upgraded and updated. The questionnaire is planned to be used by the ReSPA Members as an assessment tool on progress related to the transparency of the national public procurement systems.

In-country support project

Software for Public Procurement in Montenegro

January–February 2018

According to the new legal framework on Public Procurement which was adopted by the Government of Montenegro in June 2017, as well as the corresponding bylaws, the contracting authorities have the legal obligation to keep the records on concluded public contracts on prescribed forms. The development of a new software was quite necessary and urgent due to the obligation of having a unified method of reporting to the Public Procurement Agency by the contracting authorities. This project supported creating of a software solution for reporting on the conducted procedures and contracts on public procurement. The software enables the contracting authorities to keep records of

the concluded public procurement contracts, to send the information electronically to Public Procurement Agency and generate reports in accordance with the new legislation.

Improvement of Public Internal Financial Control

Although Western Balkan countries have strict EU integration requirements for Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC) development, there is not enough experience, knowledge and cooperation among Central Harmonization Units responsible for PIFC. Therefore, ReSPA created the Working Group on PIFC for experience exchange and peer-learning.

Workshop on Collaboration of Internal and External Auditors

9–11 October 2018, Ljubljana, Slovenia

ReSPA supported the members of its PIFC Working Group to take an active part in this Workshop organised by the Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF) in Slovenia. The Workshop on Collaboration of Internal and External Auditors identified possible cooperation in policy and audit areas, defined priorities for cooperation and discussed independence, objectivity and the role of quality assurance in audit work. Particular attention was devoted to the experience exchange on how to increase cooperation between the external auditors working in the State Audit Institutions (SAI) and the public sector internal auditors.

The Participants discussed the role and responsibilities of Internal Auditors and External Auditors in PFM and PAR, and touched upon important tools for integrating, coordinating and aligning all activities to optimise the level of governance, risk and control oversight. Colleagues from Slovenia, Serbia, Hungary and Albania presented the functioning of collaboration of the two forms of audit in their countries.





Regional Conference
16–17 May 2018, at ReSPA Campus

In-country support project

Drafting the new Law on Public Internal Financial Control in Macedonia

February–April 2018, Skopje, Macedonia

In September 2017, the Government of Macedonia adopted the 2018–2021 Public Financial Management Reform Programme and the 2018–2020 Fiscal Strategy. These documents envisaged the need for development of a new Law on Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC). ReSPA engaged three experts who drafted the new Law on PIFC, after a thorough analysis of the provisions of the current Law on PIFC and other regulations in the area of public finances, and based on feedback from a number of meetings with the main stakeholders in Macedonia.

Managerial Accountability

Although Western Balkans' countries continue to improve their public management as a crucial part of preparations for the EU accession, managerial accountability remains challenging. According to 2017 OECD/SIGMA Monitoring Reports, main weaknesses are related to effectiveness of managerial accountability mechanisms.

Regional Conference on Managerial Accountability and Professionalisation of Senior Civil Service for Better Performance and Accountability

16–17 May 2018, at ReSPA Campus

To emphasize the need for further betterment of governance across the Western Balkan administrations, ReSPA and OECD/SIGMA devoted this

joint conference to the exchange of experiences in two key areas of public management – professionalisation of senior civil service and managerial accountability. Representatives of the EC DG BUDGET and OECD/ SIGMA, discussed ways forward with over 50 senior representatives of relevant ministries and governmental offices from the ReSPA Members and Kosovo*.

This Conference was also an opportunity to disseminate the key findings of two OECD/ SIGMA's regional comparative papers on professionalisation of the senior civil service and managerial accountability, that triggered discussions on how to advance these essential aspects in a complementary and aligned manner.

„The European integration process has conditioned Montenegrin administrative planning to conform to the standards, regulations and best practice of the European Union. Thus, the approach to managerial accountability is based on the European model of administration, which contains the recommended principles of the EU such as impartiality, professional integrity, coordination of human resource management, professional leadership, and to some extent legal responsibility.”

Ms. Suzana Pribilović, Minister of Public Administration in the Government of Montenegro and Member of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial Level

2.3. Coordination of ReSPA

Members for implementation of the Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy

During the reporting period, ReSPA has continued to contribute, directly or indirectly, to the process of achieving the SEE 2020 Strategy goals with all its activities – in particular those related to the building-up of cooperation of Centre of Government (CoG) institutions, reinforcing Better Regulation agenda, improving public participation in the legislative and policy processes, and enhancing Service Delivery and Quality Management in public administration.

First Meeting of the ReSPA Coordination Structure for Governance for Growth Pillar of the South-East Europe 2020 Strategy

23 November 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

ReSPA established the Coordination Structure for dealing with the issues of importance regarding Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy, with a focus on Effective Public Services Dimension. In its capacity as a Regional Dimension Coordinator, ReSPA has participated in the development of the SEE 2020 Strategy Programming Document 2017–2019, including its monitoring and reporting aspects.

ReSPA organised the first meeting of its Coordination Structure for Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). This Structure is composed of representatives of the already existing ReSPA Working Groups which activities are directly connected with the SEE 2020 Strategy and its Effective Public Services Dimension (Better Regulation, HRMD and QPAS), and representatives of national statistical offices.

At the meeting, members of the new Coordination Structure learned about the model of Regional Flagship Initiatives, and gained additional information about various aspects of the SEE 2020 Strategy implementation: its governing and coordination structure, Dimensions and Activities within the Governance for Growth Pillar, concrete ways of work on the Strategy through the Employments and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP), as well as with the monitoring mechanisms of the

SEE 2020 Strategy such as the Balkan Barometer and integration of its results into OECD/SIGMA PAR assessments.

At the meeting, representatives of ReSPA presented plans regarding PAR and Governance for Growth, while RCC highlighted the areas of cooperation such as improvement in public participation quality through collaboration with the ReSPA Better Regulation Working Group.



3. Horizontal Activities

3.1. ReSPA Governance and Operations

As an intergovernmental organisation, ReSPA is composed of the governing bodies where its Members are represented, and the Secretariat. The Governing Board of ReSPA (GB) is the decision-making body of the organisation. It operates at two levels: at the Ministerial level and at the Senior Officials' level.

The Governing Board of ReSPA has created subsidiary bodies with specific mandates: the Budget Committee (BC), Programme Committee on European Integration (PC EUI), Appeal Board (ApB), and Advisory Board (AB). In order to manage the achievement of the planned results, ReSPA's

regular annual governance activities include the following: one meeting of the GB at the Ministerial level, four meetings of the GB at the Senior Officials' level, three meetings of the Budget Committee, two meetings of the PC EUI, and two meetings of the Advisory Board.

Meeting of the Governing Board at Ministerial Level

6 November 2017, Tirana, Albania

At the 8th Governing Board Meeting at Ministerial level, the ReSPA Secretariat and experts presented on the Public Participation improvement efforts, the Methodology for Costing of Strategies, examples of good practice in e-recruitment for public service in Albania, and research on quality management in public administration.



ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial Level
6 November 2017, Tirana, Albania

Members of the ReSPA Governing Board endorsed ReSPA's Annual Report for 2017, as well as the Recommendations for Improving Public Participation and encouraged ReSPA to follow up, in cooperation with the RCC, on their implementation by relevant institutions. ReSPA Governing Board also took note of the Highlights of ReSPA activities planned for 2018, and adopted the Annual envelope and ReSPA Budget for the next year.

During the day, on the margins of the ReSPA Governing Board meeting, a number of bilateral ministerial meetings were held, through which regional cooperation is additionally strengthened.

At the 8th ReSPA Governing Board meeting, representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina formally accepted Chairing of ReSPA from Albania in a ceremony of handing over the ReSPA Flag.

Highlighting Albania's chairing of ReSPA in the previous year, **Ms. Senida Mesi, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania**, said that "the presence of ministers from the Western Balkans at the meeting in Tirana shows readiness of each country to further collaborate in order to strengthen capacities for the implementation of Public Administration Reform towards the integration in the European Union."



New Chair of ReSPA, **Mr. Josip Grubeša, Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina** said that for him personally, taking over Chairmanship of ReSPA was a big challenge and responsibility. "The Republic of Albania accomplished significant progress in the Public Administration Reform during their chairmanship. Taking over from Albania will for Bosnia and Herzegovina mean firm determination to follow the example and use the possibilities of cooperation with ReSPA to make improvements in the public sector."

Thematic Meetings at Ministerial Level – High-level Policy Dialogues

- Ministerial Conference on Good Governance in the Western Balkans, 12–13 June 2018, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Conference on Contemporary Challenges in Public Service and the Role of Partnership for Reaching Solutions, 25–26 October 2018, Skopje, Macedonia

In the period between 15 October 2017 and 31 October 2018, the following ReSPA Governing Board meetings at Senior Officials' level were held:

- 33rd GB SL meeting, 5 December 2017, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 34th GB SL meeting, 20 April 2018, at ReSPA
- 35th GB SL meeting, 6 July 2018, at ReSPA
- 36th GB SL meeting, 11–12 October 2018, at ReSPA



"During 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed to ReSPA's governance by chairing its Governing Boards. The most important undertaking during this year was the development of the new ReSPA Strategy 2019–2024. However, this year is also marked by an impressive list of activities that enhanced regional cooperation in the area of PAR. Special attention was paid to in-country support projects, mobility schemes and peer-learning. Also, ReSPA produced valuable research and policy recommendations that will contribute to PAR efforts in the Western Balkan region. Finally, cooperation and partnership with regional and international organisations active in the region was strengthen and developed."

Dr. sc. iur. Selma Džihanović-Gratz
Chair of the ReSPA GB at Senior Officials' Level

Programme Committee on European Integration

The **Programme Committee on European Integration** met on 11 May and on 7 September 2018 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Particular focus of the meetings was on ReSPA's support to its Members in the area of the European integration, and on preparations of the new 2019–2024 ReSPA Strategy.

Advisory Board

During 2018, ReSPA Advisory Board met two times: on 20 April and on 11 October 2018. On both occasions, Advisory Board discussed and provided inputs for the development of the draft ReSPA Strategy 2019–2024.

Members of the ReSPA Advisory Board are:

- Ms. Jana Repansek, Director, Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF)
- Ms. Mirosława Boryczka, OECD/SIGMA, Senior Advisor for Public Financial Management and IPA Regional Liaison
- Mr. Thomas Prorok, Deputy Managing Director, Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ), Austria
- Ms. Jutta Gützkow, Head of Good Governance Division, Council of Europe (CoE)
- Mr. Gazmend Turdiu, Deputy Secretary General and Head of Programme Department, Regional Cooperation Council

Budget Committee

Three meetings of the Budget Committee were held during the reporting period: 19–20 March 2018 in Tirana, Albania; 18–19 June 2018 in Ohrid, Macedonia; and on 27–28 September 2018 in Perast, Montenegro.

Agendas for those meetings entailed ReSPA Financial Reports and Financial Statements for 2017; ReSPA Core Budget implementation reports; Reports on revenues from ReSPA Campus Hotel; Core Budget Amendments for 2017 and 2018; Annual plan of activities regarding donor funds; Report on visits to State Audit Institutions in ReSPA Members; Audit of the ReSPA Annual Report 2017; Proposal for the ReSPA Core Budget Addendum 2018 and payments into the ReSPA Working Capital Fund; Presentation of ReSPA internal regulations and processes; EC grant status reports and overdraft loan; ReSPA Procurement Plan and Report; Reports on national contributions, cash flow forecast, cash management plan and liquidity of ReSPA until the end of the fiscal year.

ReSPA Operations

During the reporting period, ReSPA has operated by a fully staffed Secretariat (15 employees) located at the ReSPA Headquarters in Danilovgrad, Montenegro.

In order to make a proper segregation of duties within the Secretariat, ReSPA has been implementing the new internal control model. The Director established the Task Force to finalise new internal procedures. Full implementation of this process depends on the development of the new software solution which is expected in the period 2019–2020.

Complementary with the above-mentioned process, ReSPA has initiated transition of its internal reporting standards from the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) to the International Public-Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

ReSPA's current Budget consists of two parts:

- Core Budget of EUR 900,000 for 2018, which is used for covering administrative and operational costs; and
- Programme Budget covered by donor funds, i.e. from the current EC Grant in total amount of EUR 3,500,000 for the period March 2016 – December 2018.

During 2018, all ReSPA Members paid their annual contribution in the amount of EUR 150,000 for the Core Budget of ReSPA. However, still delayed accession to ReSPA Agreement by Kosovo* is imposing challenges in ensuring the principle of budget equilibrium.

The Programme Budget is utilised (paid, committed and earmarked funds) 99%, and the final financial report will be prepared after the end of the current EC Grant.

ReSPA Campus Management

During 2018, ReSPA Campus has utilised the surplus funds from the past years of operation to co-finance its expenses along with the funds from the Core Budget. Still, the new operating model has enabled positive end-year result of the Campus operation. In order to propose optimisation and preferably finalise maintenance issues with the Campus before the start of the next EC Grant, ReSPA Secretariat will undertake efforts to consult similar international practices in the EU countries.

ReSPA Secretariat engaged an external company to conduct necessary works at the Campus, i.e. to conduct repair of damages occurred during the winter period. However, due to structural malfunctions caused by the damage, it is likely that more significant funds will be needed for adequate interventions in the future.

Upon request of the EC, ReSPA conducted a market research of available accommodation and catering capacities in the Danilovgrad Municipality, in order to compare and streamline the unit price cost of full board accommodation for ReSPA participants at the Campus. The research is completed and its results will be used in determining relevant budget lines in the draft budget for the new EC Grant.

Internal Capacity Building

Workshop on Structured Democratic Dialogue

6–7 December 2017, Nicosia, Cyprus

The Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA) hosted ReSPA's Workshop on Structured Democratic Dialogue (SDD), where a new strategic perspective of ReSPA has been discussed in a participatory manner. The Workshop conclusions have been considered for the new 2019–2024 ReSPA Strategy framework, in particular because the SDD methodology is very suitable for the process of strategic planning.



The interactive workshop on SDD demonstrated how this methodology can be applied in complex situations involving many stakeholders with diverse perspectives, in order to help better define a problem and choose the best solution while at the same time cultivating participants' commitment to the implementation of decisions.

ReSPA Governing Board members at Senior Officials' level and members of the ReSPA Secretariat took this opportunity to get a grasp of the CAPA's experience and practical implementation of the SDD methodology. This becomes even more important in light of the fact that CAPA is an organisation that has always kept up with the international trends in Public Administration capacity building, in order to adapt its assistance to the customers from the civil service and public-sector organisations.

Implementing the Common Assessment Framework in ReSPA

With a goal to institutionalise Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as a Quality Management Instrument for enhancing daily operations and upgrading ReSPA to a Regional Centre of Excellence for Quality Management, the ReSPA Secretariat held its first CAF training on 24–26 January 2018, supported by the CAF team from the Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Austria. The training entailed introduction to CAF and other quality management instruments, and guidance for the initiation of CAF implementation in ReSPA.

In the second phase of CAF introduction, a two-day self-assessment workshop was organised for the ReSPA Secretariat on 8–9 May 2018, generating many good ideas on the institutional strengths, areas for improvement and actions needed. For that purpose, a team has been designated at ReSPA to lead in the implementation of CAF in internal strategic, operational, logistical and financial matters.

On 24 July 2018, supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by the KDZ and ReSPA, a workshop on ReSPA's CAF Action Plan was held for the ReSPA Secretariat. This was the first activity related to ReSPA envisaged in the framework of the BACID 2¹⁴ project. In the CAF Action Plan, all conclusions drawn from workshops, generated knowledge, skills and lessons learned have been interwoven into measurable steps that should result in an improved performance and maximised capacity of ReSPA to bolster up partner organisations from public sector in their own application of this quality management instrument.

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ReSPA Secretariat's Workshops on Programming

ReSPA Secretariat held two workshops for planning of activities for 2018: on 6–9 February in Budva, Montenegro, and on 21–24 August in Kolašin, Montenegro. This year was marked with over 50 regional events and a number of other activities such as high-level meetings, new strategy development, and completion of several regional comparative studies. ReSPA's current grant from the EC will be finished in December 2018, and therefore the plan of activities coincided with the duration of the grant. Also, the Secretariat made a detailed plan for consultations about the Draft ReSPA Strategy 2019–2024. Finally, during the second workshop, ReSPA staff prepared the first draft of the Programme of Work for the period 2019–2020. This draft document will be further discussed with stakeholders prior to its submission to the ReSPA Governing Board at Senior Officials' level for consideration and approval.

ReSPA National Coordinators

ReSPA organised regular meetings with National Coordinators in order to improve their coordination and reporting role. National Coordinators were regularly informed about ReSPA activities and plans, and they participated in a number of activities. During the reporting period, two regular meetings of National Coordinators were held: on 21–22 December 2017 in ReSPA Campus, and on 24–25 May 2018 in Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the first meeting, the ReSPA Secretariat used the opportunity to present the plans for development of the new 2019–2024 Strategy, and to discuss with National Coordinators initial experiences with the on-line system for registration of participants for ReSPA's activities. During the second meeting, special attention was devoted to the discussion on National Coordinators' experience in collecting reports on the implementation of recommendations defined in ReSPA regional comparative studies. General conclusion was that the engagement of National Coordinators is significantly contributing to a better implementation of overall ReSPA's activities.

Consultations with Stakeholders on Strategy Development

On 12–13 March 2018, for the first time since its inception, ReSPA convened its key stakeholders and representatives from Western Balkans' administrations in one place in Belgrade, Serbia, for the purpose of strategic planning. In order to obtain the inputs for the new 2019–2024 Strategy, the Workshop on Strategy Development gathered around 80 participants from ReSPA Members and Kosovo*: Governing Board members at Senior Officials' level, members of all ReSPA Working groups, and National Coordinators.

The stakeholders contributed to the development of the ReSPA's 2019–2024 Draft Strategy by identifying key issues in their jurisdictions that could be addressed in this document. The Workshop also indicated improvements in coordination among various national institutions, encouraged discussion on the matters recognised as areas for ReSPA's bettering, and possible future interventions at the national and regional level.

The first ReSPA's draft Strategy 2019–2024 was presented and consulted with stakeholders at meetings held from 11–21 September 2018 in all capital cities of the Western Balkan region. Apart from this document, the initial activities which will be part of the draft Programme of Work 2019–2020 were presented as well. The GB Members at Senior Officials' Level and members of different ReSPA Working Groups provided their comments, and overall discussions greatly contributed to the participatory process in the upgrade of the draft Strategy.

About the 2019–2024 ReSPA Strategy

In the previous period, ReSPA has contributed to the regional PAR through various capacity building and networking activities, in-country support mechanisms, peering and production of research papers. For the purpose of sharpening its approach, investigating new developmental opportunities, as well as achieving greater effectiveness, efficiency and visibility, the ReSPA Secretariat proposed to the Governing Board at Senior Officials' level in mid-July 2017 to develop a new 2019–2024 Strategy.

Reasons why new ReSPA strategy is needed:

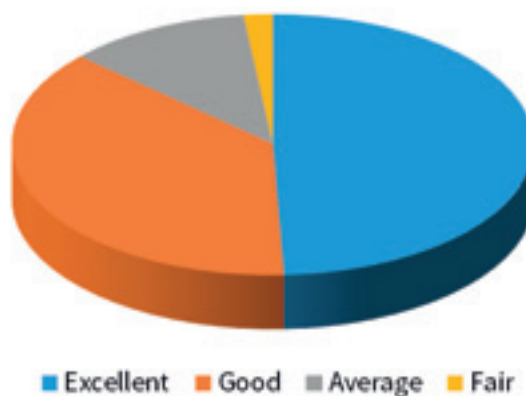
- i) obtaining a strategic document with clear objectives and targets for a longer period of time, better aligned with the European Principles of Public Administration, including monitoring and evaluation methods, plan for diversification of funds and sustainability scheme; ii) ensuring further commitment of the EC and ReSPA Members to the activities within ReSPA's remit; iii) further strengthening of ReSPA's position gained through the implementation of the 2016–2018 EC Grant; iv) Ex-post Evaluation Report and Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Report on ReSPA's previous grants, which confirmed high relevance of ReSPA's activities in the region, but also provided important recommendations for improvement (manifold challenges in fulfilling the requirements of member countries, as their capacities for development and progress significantly vary when it comes to the PAR, progressing in the European integration process, institutional capacities and some other specifics in ReSPA's thematic areas).

One of the main benefits of the strategy development process was active participation of key stakeholders from all ReSPA Members in providing strategic inputs on matters regarding improvements and future interventions. To help in providing a more effective response of public administrations in ReSPA Members to the needs of citizens and businesses, the main goal of ReSPA in the period covered by its new Strategy will be to continue strengthening the regional cooperation in PAR, PFM and European Integration, to continue with capacity building activities for regional public administrations, and to contribute to improving quality management in public administrations.

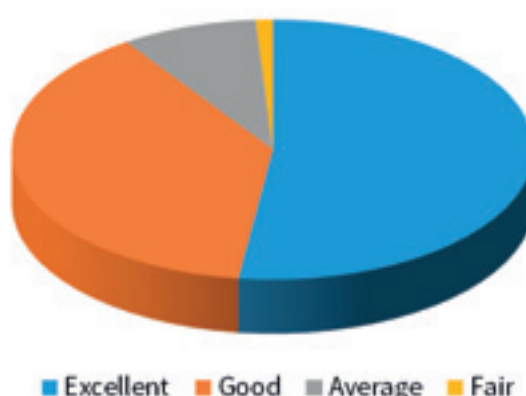
Monitoring and Evaluation

Results of end-of-event evaluations by participants in the period from 15 October 2017 – 31 October 2018:

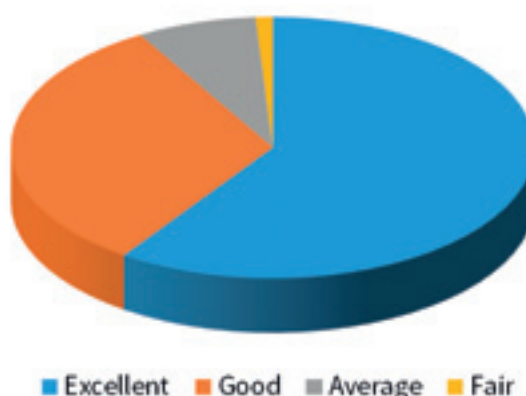
Event methodology



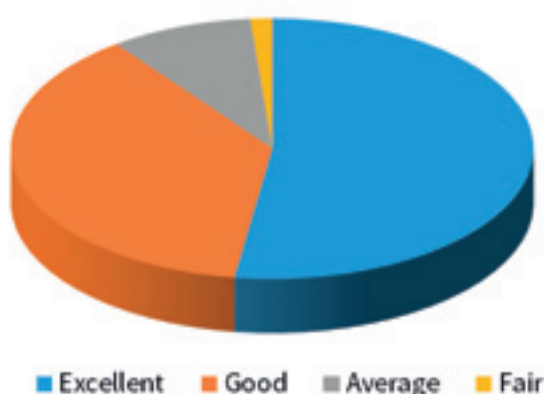
General evaluation of events



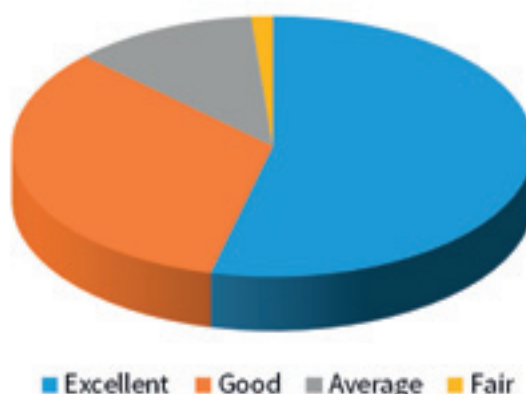
Event organisation



Event content



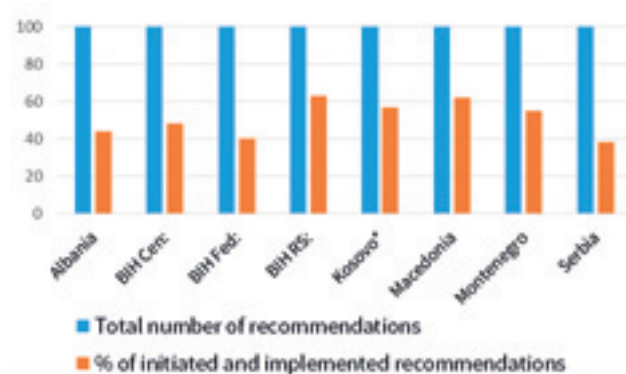
Event relevance



Implementation of Policy Recommendations

The implementation of policy recommendations defined in various ReSPA studies, analytical papers and policy documents are usually supported through in-country support mechanisms.

The following graph shows the level of implementation of total number of policy recommendations.



3.2. Cooperation and Partnerships

ReSPA Beneficiaries – Cooperation with Governmental Institutions in Western Balkans

The following is a non-exhaustive list of governmental institutions in the Western Balkans that benefited from ReSPA activities in 2018, and that ReSPA has established good cooperation with, and will continue to cooperate in the future:

Albania

Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania (ADISA); Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA); Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; Department of Public Administration in the Prime Minister's Office; Ministry of Finance and Economy; Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy; Ministry of Health and Social Protection; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth; Parliament of Albania; Prime Minister's Office; Public Procurement Agency; Statistical Office of Albania (INSTAT).

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

Agency for Prevention of Corruption and Coordination of the Fight against Corruption of BiH; Agency for Information Society of the

Republic of Srpska; Public Administration Reform Coordinator's Office (PARCO) of BiH; Agency for Public Administration of the Republic of Srpska; Civil Service Agency of the Federation of BiH; Civil Service Agency of BiH; Council of Ministers of BiH; Directorate for European Integration BiH; General Secretariat of the Government of the Federation of BiH; Government of the Brcko District; Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH; Gender Centre of the Republic of Srpska; Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Srpska; Ministry of Finance of the Federation of BiH; Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Federation of BiH; Ministry of Economic Relations and Regional Cooperation of the Republic of Srpska; Ministry of Finance and Treasury of BiH; Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH; Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Srpska; Ministry of Justice of BiH; Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Srpska; Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Federation of BiH; Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH; Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Srpska; Ministry of Public Administration and Local-Self Government of the Republic of Srpska; Office for European Integration of the Federation of BiH; Ombudsman Institution for Human Rights of BiH; Procurement Review Body of BiH; Parliament of the Federation of BiH; Supreme Court of the Federation of BiH.

*Kosovo**

Agency of Statistics; Anti-corruption Agency; Kosovo* Institute of Public Administration (KIPA); Ministry of Public Administration; Ministry of European Integration; Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development; Ministry of Economic Development; Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning; Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo*; Prime Minister's Office.

Macedonia

Administrative Court; Food and Veterinary Agency; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning; Secretariat for European Affairs; State Statistical Office; State Commission for Prevention of Corruption.

Montenegro

Administrative Court; Agency for Prevention of Corruption; General Secretariat of the Government; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Finance; Human Resources Management Authority; Ministry of Public Administration; Ministry for Human and Minority Rights; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Parliament of Montenegro; Prime Minister's Office; Public Procurement Administration; Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT).

Republic of Serbia

Administrative Court; Anti-Corruption Agency; Ministry of European Integration; Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; National Academy for Public Administration; Ombudsman Office; Parliament of the Republic of Serbia; Public Policy Secretariat; Public Investment Management Office; State Attorney Office.

Cooperation and Partnerships

BACID Project – Building Administrative Capacities in the Danube Region: in cooperation with the Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Austria, and supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), ReSPA is introducing CAF, and co-organising various events such as the Danube Governance Forum (4 December 2017), and the Regional Conference “Unlocking Benefits of Public Participation in the Western Balkans” (11 June 2018).

Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF) from Slovenia: Directors of ReSPA and CEF signed the Memorandum of Understanding on 11 April 2018 to reinforce partnership and ReSPA's outreach and impact in the field of Public Finance Management. On 3–4 September 2018, ReSPA representatives participated in the CEF Partners' Meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, aimed at identification of complementarities in CEF's activities with the objectives, priorities and activities of their partners in South East Europe.

Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector (CIDS) from Norway: in cooperation with the CIDS and the Institute of Comparative Law from Belgrade, Serbia, ReSPA organised Training for Trainers on Integrity Challenges for which the manual on “Integrity and Good Governance in the Western Balkans” was used.

DISPA – Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration – Network: Director of ReSPA participated in regular DISPA meetings in Tallinn, Estonia, in November 2017, and in Sofia, Bulgaria, in June 2018.

EC PAR Network – Representatives of the ReSPA Secretariat participated in the DG NEAR PAR-PFM-NET and Sector Budget Support Seminar in Brussels, organised by the EC DG NEAR on 25–29 June 2018. Also, ReSPA representatives regularly participate at PAR Special Group meetings in Western Balkans. For these meetings, ReSPA usually prepares brief information on its relevant activities, explains its main results and provides statistics on participants from related countries.

German Development Cooperation (GIZ) Open Regional Fund's project *Promotion of European Integration through Regional Co-operation* and ReSPA jointly organised two regional events: the 4th Regional Conference on EU Budget Support (20–21 September 2018 in Belgrade, Serbia), and the Regional Workshop on Programming and Implementation of IPA II (18–19 October 2018 in Brussels, Belgium).

Korean National Human Resource Development Institute (NHI) – ReSPA hosted a visit of the representatives of the NHI in December 2017, and discussed possibilities for cooperation in the fields of eGovernment, HRMD and innovation.

NISPAcee – the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe: at the 26th NISPAcee Annual Conference organised under the theme “Public Administration for Well-being and Growth” that was held on 24–25



May 2018 in Iasi, Romania, ReSPA representatives held a panel session on supporting PAR in the Western Balkans through regional cooperation.

Open Government Partnership (OGP) – ReSPA contributed to the 2018 OGP Global Summit that was held on 17–19 July, 2018 in Tbilisi, Georgia, with a panel session “Regional Dialogue for Open Government Partnership”.

OECD/SIGMA’s experts are actively involved in various ReSPA activities, and the two organisations jointly promote recommendations from ReSPA studies and SIGMA monitoring reports. In December 2017 in Paris, France, Director of ReSPA participated in SIGMA’s Ministerial Conference “Good Public Governance – Delivering for Citizens and Businesses”. Between January and March 2018, members of the ReSPA team participated in presentations of the SIGMA monitoring reports in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia. Together with the OECD/SIGMA and RCC, ReSPA organised a meeting for CoG institutions’ representatives on 5–6 March 2018. Also, ReSPA held a joint Regional Conference with SIGMA on “Managerial Accountability and Professionalisation of Senior Civil Service for Better Performance and Accountability” on 16–17 May 2018, at ReSPA Campus.

Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) – The leaders of ReSPA and RCC signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 10 November 2017, to formalise continued cooperation related to the goals of the SEE 2020 Strategy. RCC and ReSPA co-organised a number of regional events in 2017 and 2018, contributing to the implementation of the Effective Public Services Dimension of the Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy. Also, ReSPA representatives participated at the Meeting of the SEE 2020 Strategy’s Coordination Board and the RCC Annual meeting.



Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) – At the invitation of SASS, ReSPA representative participated at the conference entitled “Smart City Building in the New Era: Governance, Sustainability and Culture” held on 21–23 May 2018 in Shanghai, China. The SASS delegation visited ReSPA on 27 June 2018. ReSPA Director and Vice President of the SAAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 2 October 2018, to set up a platform for mutual learning through working visits, joint conferences, and the exchange of experiences.



Signing of MoU between ReSPA and SASS
2 October 2018, Budva, Montenegro

United Nations – In April 2018, ReSPA Director took part in the 17th session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration¹⁵ (CEPA) held in New York, USA. Also, at the 2018 United Nations Public Service Forum, ReSPA presented PAR achievements and challenges in the Western Balkans (21–23 June 2018, Marrakesh, Morocco).

WeBER – Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform: ReSPA representatives participated at several meetings and events organised by the WeBER Project, while members of the WeBER network took part in few ReSPA activities.

Western Balkans Digital Summit – ReSPA representative participated at the First Western Balkans Digital Summit held in Skopje, Macedonia on 18–19 April 2018.

World Summit Award (WSA) – ReSPA representatives participated in the WSA event in the capacity of jury members, on 19–22 March 2018 in Vienna, Austria.

15 <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/cepa>

Bilateral Meetings

ReSPA Director and her team had a number of bilateral meetings with high-level representatives of ReSPA Members and of countries of relevance for the Western Balkan region. The main purpose of these meetings was to discuss the new ReSPA's draft 2019–2024 Strategy, joint organisation and participation in major regional and international events, EU financial assistance for supporting PAR, and more. An important discussion framework for those bilateral meetings was further strengthening of partnerships in the context of ReSPA's role in supporting the EU accession efforts of governments in the region, including development of better public administration, public services and overall governance systems. The following is a non-exhaustive list of bilateral meetings held between 15 October 2017 – 31 October 2018:

- Ambassador of Kosovo* to Montenegro H.E. Mr. Skender Durmishi visited ReSPA on 10 November 2017;
- ReSPA Director Ms. Ratka Sekulović had a meeting with Mr. Josip Grubeša, Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Chair of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level on 30 January 2018 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Montenegro H.E. Mr. Serhat Galip welcomed ReSPA Director on 15 February 2018 in Podgorica, Montenegro;
- Mr. Boris Koprivnikar, Minister of Public Administration of the Republic of Slovenia, visited ReSPA on 6 March 2018;
- ReSPA Director visited Ms. Senida Mesi, Deputy Prime Minister of Republic of Albania on 9 March 2018 in Tirana, Albania; Also, Ms. Senida Mesi visited ReSPA on 11 September 2018;

- ReSPA representatives met with Mr. Bujar Osmani, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration of Macedonia on 21 March 2018 in Skopje, Macedonia;
- ReSPA representatives met with Ms. Thea Tsulukiani, Minister of Justice of Georgia, and Ms. Catherine Kardava, Director of the Civil Service Bureau of Georgia on 19 July 2018 in Tbilisi, Georgia;
- ReSPA Director met with Mr. Alikhan Baimenov, Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Astana Civil Service Hub (ACSH) from Kazakhstan on 25 October 2018 in Skopje, Macedonia;



- Mr. Damjan Mančevski, Minister of Information Society and Administration of Macedonia, and Mr. Mahir Yağcılar, Minister of Public Administration of Kosovo* visited ReSPA on 8 October 2018.



3.3. Visibility and Communication

The process of EU accession brings numerous political, socio-economic, environmental, cultural and other challenges and opportunities for the people of the Western Balkans. EU enlargement will have impact on their towns, villages, business opportunities, institutions, and public services. That is why the population in ReSPA Members should be objectively informed and, more important, involved in the debate through interaction – to ensure that they understand the impact, and participate more actively in the accession process.

Civil servants are a crucial and very diversified ReSPA's target group under the constant pressure of changes implied by the European integration. In this process of transformation of public administration, they need to know that they can draw plenty of support from partnership with the ReSPA. It is therefore ReSPA's responsibility to help all the layers of this target group, and of citizenship in broad terms, to apprehend the nature of change which reflects not just in high level technical achievements of European integration processes, but also in appropriate communications endeavours.

ReSPA has been proved as a powerful intergovernmental instrument for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administrations in the Western Balkans. Taking into consideration the complexity of ReSPA's themes and given the importance of PAR for citizens' everyday life, ReSPA employs particular efforts to strengthen strategic communications and advocacy aspects of its operations. The implications should be manifold: winning more credibility for its actions among beneficiaries and partners, and taking advantage of what it is doing in order to better promote and increase the visibility of EU in the region.

ReSPA's Communications Action Plan is currently being aligned with the new requirements for Communication and Visibility in EU-financed External Actions, and with the new 2019–2024 ReSPA Strategy. Its purpose is to (1) increase the public awareness of the importance of the PAR and its long-term effects, and to (2) recognise ReSPA's contributions to the building of strategic foundations and capacities for a developed Western Balkan region.

With the intention to highlight the results of its activities, ReSPA has realised a number of practical communications activities during the reporting period. Those actions were especially related to the complex thematic areas covered by the PAR Network and all ReSPA Working Groups; involvement of ReSPA staff and Governing Board members in communications and advocacy activities with the purpose of promotion of programmatic results and relevant recommendations for PAR enhancement; increasing influence of decision and policy makers and implementers in accepting, promoting, and implementing PAR; boosting the visibility and impact of capital projects and flagship reports, such as regional comparative studies; attracting wider interests and deepening public awareness related to the importance of having and linking strategic projects with regional practical needs, with cross-cutting and value-added effects.

The scope of ReSPA's communications strategy is closely related to reaching out to the following target audiences:

- Direct beneficiaries of ReSPA activities (public institutions in ReSPA Members and Kosovo* whose representatives are either involved in ReSPA activities or are directly supported by ReSPA: senior and mid-level public servants working in ministries and governmental agencies responsible for PAR and European Integration, and in other relevant line ministries);
- High-ranking officials of ReSPA's partner governmental institutions, as key decision makers;
- Organisations that ReSPA collaborates with in assisting the Western Balkan governments to implement and support PAR such as European and global change agents committed to reform for development, international agencies connected with PAR, relevant agencies in EU countries, academic and research institutions in the Western Balkans and the EU;
- Promoters of effective PAR and regional cooperation (business associations, professional organisations, and regional organisations);
- National and international media in the Western Balkans;
- Direct and indirect users of public services in ReSPA Members and Kosovo*.

In order to positively impact the reputation and standing of ReSPA in the region that it covers, as well as among partners, with special emphasis on the European Commission as the main donor, ReSPA uses the most convenient communications and advocacy mechanisms and tools. In the past year, some of these mechanisms and tools have been i) improving ways on how information, statistics and results are organised so that high-quality data support ReSPA's key messages, and that information and communication are organised in an appealing manner; ii) developing stronger relations with partner institutions, particularly with communications and public relations departments in partner institutions; defining a common approach in terms of joint events and preparation of media kits; iii) preparation of a short video clip dedicated to important topics and events, and its distribution through the website and other channels; iv) communicating organisational priorities and achievements to all stakeholders and target audiences, and to other interested parties, through the ReSPA website and social media; v) publishing regular quarterly newsletters to feature success stories about regional cooperation; and vi) promoting ReSPA's specific contributions to the Western Balkans' development towards European Integration (public events, initiatives and activities envisaged in the ReSPA's Plan of Activities, including presentations of comparative studies and a follow-up on their policy recommendations).

3.4. The Way Forward

In mid-2017, governments of all ReSPA Members – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – agreed on the extension of ReSPA's international agreement¹⁶ until 2024. This agreement being the main precondition for ReSPA's sustainability, it is essential that ReSPA Members continue to pay their annual contributions to cover operational costs of the ReSPA Secretariat.

Medium to long-term sustainability of ReSPA depends on its ability to continue providing added value to the public governance and PAR agenda of its Members, and to their EU association and accession policies. This ensures readiness of the European Commission and the Governments of EU Members to continue funding of ReSPA's programmatic activities.

The ReSPA Secretariat has prepared the draft Programme of Work for 2019–2020, based on a new 2019–2024 Strategy. Also, ReSPA Secretariat is preparing the Action Document for the new EC Grant.

ReSPA will show the ability to overcome or mitigate the effects of the risks, and to carry on its continuing readiness to adapt its way of work to the changeable environment and increasingly demanding needs for capacity development of public administration in its Members. ReSPA is currently considering diversification of funding, and may decide to start with partnering efforts in the coming years, in order to provide more funds for activities that cannot fit within the budget approved by the European Commission. In addition, comparative studies have been produced, and recommendations of these studies are valuable information for encouraging further work on diversification of activities and funding.



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¹⁶ Agreement Establishing ReSPA: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#legal-documents-18>

List of Acronyms

ACSH – Astana Civil Service Hub	IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ADA – Austrian Development Agency	IPSAS – International Public-Sector Accounting Standards
APAJ – Administrative Procedures and Administrative Justice	IT – Information Technology
ASPA – Albanian School of Public Administration	KDZ – Centre for Public Administration Research, Vienna, Austria
BACID – Building Administrative Capacities in the Danube Region	KIPA – Kosovo Institute of Public Administration
BC – Budget Committee	MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
CAF – Common Assessment Framework	NALAS – Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe
CAPA – Cyprus Academy of Public Administration	NEAR – Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
CEF – Centre of Excellence in Finance	NIC – National Investment Commissions
CHU – Central Harmonization Unit	NIPAC – National IPA Coordinator
CIDS – Centre for Integrity in Defence Sector, Norway	OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CoE – Council of Europe	OECD/SIGMA – OECD's Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
CoG – Centre of Government	OGP – Open Government Partnership
CSO – Civil Society Organizations	PAR – Public Administration Reform
DG – Directorate General	PARCO – Public Administration Reform Coordinator's Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina
DG BUDGET – Directorate-General for Budget of the European Commission	PC EUI – Programme Committee on European Integration
DG NEAR – Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission	PFM – Public Financial Management
DISPA – Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration	PIFC – Public Internal Financial Control
DoPA – Department of Public Administration, Albania	PP – Public Procurement
EC – European Commission	PPA – Principles of Public Administration (OECD/SIGMA)
ECTHR – European Court of Human Rights	QPAS – Quality of Public Administration and Services
EU – European Union	RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation
EUI – European Integration	RAI – Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative
GAPA – General Administrative Procedure Act	RCC – Regional Cooperation Council
GB – Governing Board	ROM – Results Oriented Monitoring
GB ML – Governing Board at Ministerial Level	SEE – South-East Europe
GB SL – Governing Board at Senior Officials Level	SIGMA – Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
GfG – Governance for Growth	UN – United Nations
GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit / German International Development Agency	UN-CEPA – United Nations' Committee of Experts on Public Administration
HRMD – Human Resources Management and Development	UNDESA – United Nations' Department for Economic and Social Affairs
HRMIS – Human Resources Management Information System	UNDP – United Nations' Development Programme
ICL – Institute of Comparative Law, Belgrade, Serbia	WBIF – Western Balkan Investment Framework
ICT – Information and Communication Technology	WeBER – Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform
INFOFEST – Festival of Information Technology Achievements, Montenegro	

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