



# ReSPA

Regional School  
of Public Administration

Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)

## **STRATEGY 2019–2024**

*Building Together Governance for the Future*





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## List of abbreviations

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AB	Advisory Board of ReSPA
ApB	Appeal Board of ReSPA
BS	Budget Support
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CEF	Centre of Excellence in Finance
CoE	Council of Europe
CoG	Centre of Government
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DISPA	Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration
EI	European integration
EIPC	European Integration Programme Committee
EU	European Union
EUPAN	European Public Administration Network
EC	European Commission
EMPA	Executive Master in Public Administration
FIA	Fiscal impact assessment
GB	Governing Board of ReSPA
HR	Human Resources
HRMD	Human Resources Management and Development
ICEGOV	International Conference of Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KDZ	Centre for Public Administration Research (Zentrum für Verwaltungsforschung)
MA	Managerial Accountability
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NIC	National Investment Committee
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
OECD/SIGMA	SIGMA programme within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPG	Open Government Partnership
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PA	Public Administration
PAP	European Principles of Public Administration
PFM	Public Finance Management
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration
ReSPA Agreement	Agreement Establishing the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) of 21 November 2008
RIA	Regulatory impact assessment
SCS	Senior Civil Service
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
WB	Western Balkans

## Introduction

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Public administration reform is paramount to strengthening governance at all levels. This includes improving the quality and accountability of administration, increasing professionalism, depoliticisation and transparency, also in recruitment and dismissals, more transparent management of public finances, and better services for citizens. The Western Balkans has shown some progress in these areas, although problems persist. Comprehensive public administration and public financial management reform strategies have been adopted in all the Western Balkan countries except for Bosnia and Herzegovina: Albania adopted its Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015–2020<sup>1</sup>, Kosovo\*<sup>2</sup> adopted in 2015 the Strategy on the Modernisation of Public Administration 2015–2020<sup>3</sup>, Macedonia adopted in early 2018 the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2017–2022,<sup>4</sup> Serbia adopted the Action Plan for Implementation of Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018–2020<sup>5</sup> and Montenegro adopted in 2016 the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2016–2026. All these strategies are generally in compliance with the EU principles addressing the six core areas of PAR.

This said, within these strategic frameworks, the quality of policy planning and links to sector planning still need to be substantially improved. Often policies are prepared without a systematic impact assessment and consultations and urgent legislative procedures are extensively used. Modern civil service legislation is in place; however professionalisation of the civil service is still lacking, while political appointment continues, especially in senior positions. Most Western Balkan countries have increased their efforts to improve service delivery with a focus on e-government services, but initiatives often lack strategic steering and coordination. While laws on general administrative procedures are in place, a substantial amount of sector legislation still needs to be amended to reduce special administrative procedures to a minimum. Addressing reforms in good governance thus remains a pressing issue for the Western Balkan countries. This is a key benchmark for the European integration of these countries, as confirmed through the most recent EU Western Balkans Strategy of 2018.<sup>7</sup>

ReSPA, as an international inter-governmental organisation and a key regional endeavour in PAR, has contributed through various capacity-building and networking activities, in-country support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research material towards the following three main objectives closely related to public administration reform:

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted with the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 319, dated 15/04/2015. See: <http://dap.gov.al/publikime/dokumenta-strategjik/64-strategjia-ndersektorale-e-reformes-ne-administraten-publike-2015-2020>.

<sup>2</sup> This designation is used without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Advisory Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://map.rks-gov.net/institucion/Plan-and-Strategies/Strategjia-e-RAP.aspx?lang=en-US>.

<sup>4</sup> See: [http://www.mio.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl\\_files/documents/strategies/PAR\\_Strategy\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.mio.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/PAR_Strategy_ENG.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> New Action Plan, PAR Strategy ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 9/14, 42/14 – corrections and No. 54/18), the AP PAR for the period 2015–2017 ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 31/15) and Reports on implementation are published at the website of the MPALG, at the following link in Serbian: <http://www.mduls.gov.rs/reforma-javne-uprave-sprovodjenje-strategije.php> and in English: <http://www.mduls.gov.rs/english/reforma-javne-uprave.php>.

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.mju.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rld=268697&rType=2>

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions 2018, Communication on EU Enlargement Policy Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 COM(2018) 450, p.1. See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417\\_strategy\\_paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417_strategy_paper_en.pdf).

- Increasing the capacity of public administration in ReSPA members required for successful implementation of the European Integration;
- Facilitating and enhancing cooperation and the exchange of experience in the Public Administration Reform and European Integration activities in the ReSPA members;
- Ensuring effective coordination of the implementation of the Governance for Growth pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy.

In order to continue to further support Western Balkan countries in a more focused and strategic way, and to investigate new developmental opportunities for the institution as such, the ReSPA Secretariat proposed the development of a six-year Strategy for 2019–2024 at the Governing Board Senior Level meeting held in July 2017.

This proposal is justified by:

- The need to have a comprehensive strategic document for a longer period with clear objectives and targets better aligned with the Principles of Public Administration. The new ReSPA strategy will also address some of ReSPA's main challenges, such as the development of a monitoring and evaluation plan, the diversification of funds and the sustainability of ReSPA.
- The commitment of ReSPA members and the European Commission (EC) and to provide further support to ReSPA (extension of Agreement on establishing ReSPA until 2024, as well as the new EC grant worth more than €4 million for the period 2019–2022).
- ReSPA's stronger position, confirmed through the implementation of the EC Grant 2016–2018, providing an added value on the PAR Agenda in the region (confirmed in a number of successfully delivered capacity-building and networking activities including tangible results within the in-country support; a number of valuable studies, baseline analyses and methodologies prepared with important recommendations at the regional and country levels and the satisfactory fulfilment of their implementation among the ReSPA members so far).
- The high relevance of ReSPA's activities in the region confirmed by the ex-post evaluation and ROM report on the previous ReSPA grants, which also provided important recommendations for improvement. ReSPA has now a very good opportunity to take a **leading role in public administration reform and EU integration in the region.**

In line with the principle of inclusive policy making, this Strategy has been drafted following a participatory approach. The first round of consultations with key stakeholders took place in March 2018 during a workshop organised in Belgrade. The following documents were prepared and delivered to the ReSPA members and Kosovo\* by the ReSPA team:

- A Comprehensive Country Overview, consisting of the problems and recommendations identified in the SIGMA Monitoring reports published in 2017 that cover a two-year period (*first half of 2015 to first half of 2017*);
- Recommendations from ReSPA studies, baseline analyses and other research documents (developed in the period 2015–2018);
- Priorities identified in the National PAR strategies and Action Plans; and

- Operational conclusions from the PAR SG meetings.

Based the workshop inputs, the ReSPA Secretariat prepared the draft Strategy with a set of relevant indicators that were further discussed with the EC, the Governing Board at the Senior Official Level (GBSL), the Governing Board at the Ministerial Level (GB ML), the Advisory Board of ReSPA (AB) and the Delegations of the EU (DEUs).<sup>8</sup>

The draft Strategy, with the main focus on priorities and indicators, was discussed and confirmed at six workshops organised in September 2018 in all ReSPA members and Kosovo\*.

The final draft was submitted to the GB SL and AB in October 2018. The ReSPA Strategy 2019–2024 was finally endorsed by GB ML at the ministerial meeting held in Brussels in November 2018.

The 2019–2024 Strategy will be focused on the improvement of the ReSPA members' performance in key horizontal governance and public administration reform fields identified in the respective national PAR strategies of the ReSPA members, national PAR Action Plans, mainly through in-country support.

The main stakeholders will continue to be the ministries responsible for public administration within the Western Balkan governments, as well as the centre-of-government institutions<sup>9</sup>. The ultimate beneficiaries are the citizens of the Western Balkan countries, to whom public institutions deliver public services.

The 2019–2024 Strategy defines the strategic goal and specific objectives that are to be achieved within the intervention areas as explained below. The Strategy will be complemented by biannual programmes of work which will precisely define activities for the implementation of the Strategy.

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<sup>8</sup> Meeting in Brussels on 28 June 2018.

<sup>9</sup> The CoG is defined through the key functions typically carried out by the Government Office/General Secretariat of the Government, the Ministry of Finance, the body responsible for legal conformity and the institutions responsible for coordination of the European integration process, when fulfilling the policy-planning, co-ordination and development functions. Cf. SIGMA (2014), [\*The Principles of Public Administration\*](#), OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 21.



## 1. About ReSPA

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The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is a unique endeavour, a joint initiative of the Western Balkan countries<sup>10</sup> and the European Commission. The ReSPA initiative was initially formulated following the June 2003 Thessaloniki Agenda. From November 2006, ReSPA operated through a virtual network of the national schools and authorities of public administration of the ReSPA partners. The ReSPA Agreement was concluded on 21 November 2008 and became effective in 2010. It was formally launched as an inter-governmental organisation in September 2010 and became fully self-managed from 1 October 2011.

ReSPA has been entrusted with the mission of boosting regional cooperation in the field of public administration in the Western Balkans. As such, ReSPA has been established to support the creation of accountable, effective and professional public administration systems for the Western Balkans which would provide better services to citizens and businesses.

The ReSPA Agreement sets out the organisational objectives as follows:

- Improve cooperation in the field of public administration amongst the members of ReSPA;
- Strengthen exchange with the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area;
- Strengthen administrative capacity in the public administrations of the members of ReSPA as required by the European integration process;
- Develop human resources in the public administrations of the members of ReSPA in line with the principles of the European Administrative Space.

For the first four years after its establishment, ReSPA operated as a regional training provider and an in-service training centre for public servants from the Western Balkans. ReSPA made the strategic shift from being primarily a training institution to an institution focused on capacity development and networking. Thus, it has become a regional hub which supports its members, individually and collectively, to develop their public administrations' capacity and foster experience exchange and regional cooperation. This is also confirmed in the 'Changing with the Region' 2017–2020 Strategy of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), which considers ReSPA a responsible regional structure in reaching the Pillar 5 – Governance for Growth targets aimed at increasing government effectiveness through improvements and upgrades in public administration professionalisation, e-governance, the quality of public services policy and regulatory capacities, and evidence-based policies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Croatia withdrew from the ReSPA membership as of 1 January 2015. Since the establishment of ReSPA, Kosovo\* benefits from all ReSPA's activities on an equal footing with ReSPA members, although not contributing to the functioning of the organisation. Kosovo\*'s application to accede to ReSPA was accepted in 2013 but its institutions have not yet completed the accession procedure.

<sup>11</sup> The South-East European (SEE) 2020 Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective Strategy, adopted in November 2013 in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as direct participants. p. 58. See: <https://www.rcc.int/pages/86/south-east-europe-2020-strategy>.

## 1.1. ReSPA's governing structures

As an international organisation, ReSPA is composed of the governing bodies represented by its members and the Secretariat. The Governing Board of ReSPA (GB) is the decision-making body of the organisation. It is composed of representatives from the ministries or the equivalent authorities of each ReSPA member responsible for public administration, human resources development or European integration. It operates at two levels: the ministerial level and the senior official level. The European Commission is represented at the GB sessions on an *ex-officio* basis without the right to vote. Thus, the decision-making process is under the full control of the Western Balkan governments.

The GB is mainly responsible for setting up the strategic directions for the development and running of ReSPA, including its activities, biannual or multi-annual Programmes of Work and ReSPA regulations and other decisions. The GB is also supposed to review and decide on the regular reports submitted by the Secretariat on the implementation of ReSPA's activities. The GB is chaired for a one-year term by ReSPA members.

The GB has created subsidiary bodies with specific mandates: Budget Committee (BC), European Integration Programme Committee (EIPC), Appeal Board (ApB) and Advisory Board (AB).

The EIPC is currently composed of the representatives of the EI process's coordinating institutions of the ReSPA members. Its main responsibility is providing recommendations to the GB and guidance to the Secretariat to ensure that all ReSPA activities contribute to responses to challenges and tasks arriving from the EI process.

The BC is composed of representatives of the ministries of finance or the finance departments within the ministries in charge of the public administration. Its main responsibility is to advise the GB on financial and budgetary matters and to provide recommendations for the adoption of the budget and other decisions which have a financial impact. The BC also performs some auditing duties.

The AB is composed of representatives of ReSPA's partner organisations and institutions – OECD/SIGMA, the Council of Europe (CoE), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Austrian Centre for Research into Public Policy (KDZ) and the Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF). Its main role is: to provide advice and support in defining ReSPA's strategic vision and to provide inputs for the development of ReSPA's strategic documents; to assist in identifying programme activities and priorities that may be carried out through ReSPA; to provide guidance in issues of institutional importance for the organisation and for the improvement of its management and governance; to provide advice for business development of the organisation; to facilitate ReSPA's networking with relevant stakeholders and to foster better understanding and coordination of individual donor activities of relevance for ReSPA.

The Appeal Board is composed of independent experts, appointed by the GB for a five-year term, with the mandate to adjudicate any appeal to decisions related to staff matters taken pursuant to ReSPA's Staff Regulations. It also conducts independent reviews of recruitment procedures for ReSPA employees.

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 official level, three meetings of the BC, two meetings of the EIPC, and two meetings of the AB. The ApB meets as needed for dealing with matters within its responsibility.

## 1.2. The ReSPA Secretariat

The ReSPA Secretariat is the executive body of the organisation and has 15 employees from the Western Balkan region. It is headed by the Director of ReSPA and its seat is in Danilovgrad, Montenegro. The Secretariat is responsible for the execution of strategic and programme documents, regulations and other decisions enacted by the GB.

Administrative coordination with the ReSPA members is supported by the National Coordinators appointed by the GB members. They are contracted by the ReSPA Secretariat and their tasks include contacts with stakeholders at national level, support for the selection of participants, communication and inputs for monitoring.

## 1.3. ReSPA's mandate

In accordance with its mandate defined by the Agreement Establishing the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA Agreement), ReSPA will keep pursuing its vision and mission.

The **vision**: ReSPA is an inter-governmental innovative regional hub for policy research, knowledge sharing, regional cooperation and networking in the field of public administration.

ReSPA's **mission** is to improve regional cooperation, promote shared learning and support the development of public administrations within the Western Balkans and, through this, support integration into the EU.

ReSPA's **motto** is: Building Together – Governance for the Future.

ReSPA is accomplishing its vision and mission in accordance with the following key principles:

- Supporting the development and improvement of effective public services in ReSPA's members;
- Supporting innovative and comparative research that would guide policy recommendations and would allow public-sector decision makers to measure their performance within the region and beyond, and to recognise their potential for improvement;
- Fostering the exchange of experience, learning and sharing of good practices in the region and with the European Union;
- Building closer ties with the European Union and its programmes for the region and ReSPA members;

- Building cooperation and collaboration with other actors in the region to ensure that efforts towards public administration reform and European integration are effective and yield positive results;
- Operating by using different models of cooperation with its members (observers and beneficiaries) as defined by the ReSPA Agreement;
- Promoting the principles of good governance, democracy and gender equality through networking and peer-to-peer learning.

## 1.4. Coordination and networking

As an international and regional organisation, ReSPA maintains active communication with a number of stakeholders in Europe and globally. The successful accomplishment of ReSPA's mandate requires cooperation and coordination with a number of entities that are implementing a similar mission within the Western Balkan region. Synergetic efforts have been recognised as the main guiding principles for ReSPA's interaction with the entities entrusted with the corresponding tasks.

The EU plays an important role in supporting the Western Balkan region in conducting public administration reforms in accordance with the European PAP and in fulfilling necessary criteria for accession to the European Union. ReSPA is playing an important intermediary role in this process. ReSPA is well-positioned to build long-term partnerships with EU Member States' partner institutions, government bodies, universities, think tanks and NGOs around particular topics and to encourage and facilitate exchanges and cooperation with them and Western Balkan countries.

Bearing in mind ReSPA's strong EI orientation, its main partner is the EU. ReSPA cooperates with the EC's services, in particular with the DG NEAR, which is the main donor for its programme activities. ReSPA also maintains good communication with the EU Delegations in its members. ReSPA has established strong links with academia, research institutes, think tanks and civil society organisations within the Western Balkan countries.

ReSPA's activities are aimed at the following target groups: senior and mid-level public servants, policy makers and sector specialists working in the ministries and governmental agencies responsible for PAR and EI.

### 1.4.1. Programme Committee

ReSPA has positive experience with the functioning of the Programme Committee for European Integration and the Public Administration Reform Network. Building upon such experience and bearing in mind that the implementation of the ReSPA Strategy requires comprehensive and structured coordination and the representation of key actors/institutions of ReSPA members, it would be useful to create an enlarged Programme Committee composed of the representatives of institutions in charge of PAR, PFM and government policy planning and the EI coordination process.

The Programme Committee will be responsible for inter-sector coordination of the themes and activities performed by ReSPA within the implementation period of the Strategy. The Programme Committee will serve as a multilateral platform for the identification of issues of regional relevance and their transposition into concrete programme priorities and activities. The Programme Committee will also contribute to better streamlining of Good Governance. Thus, full adherence to the balanced definition of activities of common interest within the strategic objectives will be ensured and coordinated operations of other bodies and networks facilitated by ReSPA will be enabled. The Programme Committee will meet at least twice a year and its sessions will be chaired by the representative of the presiding ReSPA member. The engagement of the ReSPA Programme Committee will ensure the functioning of a developed framework for the continuous exchange of experiences and a regional platform for peer learning.

### 1.4.2. Other coordinating and networking structures

ReSPA has relied on a different framework to bring the relevant representatives of its members together to discuss, consider and propose activities related to certain thematic areas. The implementation of the Strategy also requires a reliance on intergovernmental frameworks where the relevant institutions of ReSPA members will be represented. Besides the Programme Committee, which will provide more strategic guidance for ReSPA's activities, these frameworks will be aligned with the thematic content of ReSPA's operations as defined by this Strategy and the Biannual Programmes of Work enacted accordingly. The networking and coordinating structures will be composed of the relevant representatives which have a focus on the specific thematic issues.

Experience shows that, apart from the large number of working groups, more coordination within each working group/networking structure has to be secured. Therefore, each structure will be chaired by the representative of the presiding member of ReSPA. It will provide more ownership and greater accountability in providing relevant inputs and follow-up of its implementation. The ReSPA Strategy envisages the functioning of the following five working groups:

- The Working Group of Centre-of-Government Institutions,
- The Working Group on Better Regulation,
- The Working Group on Human Resource Management and Development,
- The Working Group on E-Governance, and
- The Working Group on Quality Management.

Normally, during the period covered by the Strategy, possibilities will be opened up for the continuation of previously established working groups and/or the creation of other working groups. This will be organised in accordance with the recognised needs for additional activities at the regional level devoted to the improvement of PAR in ReSPA members.

## 2. ReSPA's strategic context and drivers for change

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The EC declared that PAR was an essential process in enabling the professionalisation and depoliticisation of the civil service and in fostering meritocratic principles, tackling corruption and ensuring adequate administrative procedures.<sup>12</sup> Therefore the importance of the enhanced and more focused approach to PAR was pointed out in a number of assessments made by the EC, OECD/SIGMA and ReSPA's studies, as well as the various statements and activities of ReSPA's members. All these factors invigorated the need to review the current ReSPA Strategic Framework. An important driver for the update was provided by the Governing Board's (GB) conclusions made in December 2017<sup>13</sup>. The recommendation of the GB was to take into account the outcomes of ReSPA's own activities, as well as the external recommendations from the EU ROM Report<sup>14</sup>. More comprehensive and structured activities are required by the current ReSPA members' developmental needs in the field of public administration.

The EU Enlargement Policy sets out the administrative capacity criteria together with those for the Rule of Law and Economic Governance, one of the fundamentals of the EU Enlargement Strategy since 2015.<sup>15</sup> This commitment to public administration principles (PAP) is still valid, as per the 2018 Enlargement Strategy<sup>16</sup>. Being one of the main pillars of European integration, the public administration reform calls for the strong commitment of ReSPA and its members.

The EC provided a more recent driver for the strategic upgrade of ReSPA in its *Western Balkans Enlargement Perspective Communication* in spring 2018, in which the ambition to further support the EU integration of the Western Balkans was expressed.<sup>17</sup> This Communication reiterated the EU's commitment to fostering integration of the Western Balkans' into the political, economic and social mainstream of the EU by offering a credible enlargement perspective in accordance with the merit-based prospect of accession, thus enabling the necessary transformative efforts.<sup>18</sup> EU enlargement towards the Western Balkan region was assessed as "a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values".<sup>19</sup> The accomplishment of the accession goal requires significant efforts to achieve concrete results in the process of reforms and wider modernisation within societies.<sup>20</sup>

It has been understood by the ReSPA members that the EC considers PAR to be vital to strengthening governance at all levels, thus allowing an improvement in the quality and

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<sup>12</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014, COM(2013) 700 final, Brussels, 16/10/2013, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Preliminary conclusions, ReSPA and GB Workshop Cyprus, 6-7 December 2017

<sup>14</sup> ROM Report on the project Support to ReSPA in its Efforts to Contribute to the Public Administration Reform under the European Union Integration Process in the Western Balkans, C-373854, 02/05/2017.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions – Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-15, COM(2014) 700 final, Brussels, 08/10/2014, p. 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions 2018, Communication on EU Enlargement Policy Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 COM(2018) 450, p. 1. See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417\\_strategy\\_paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417_strategy_paper_en.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions – A Credible Enlargement Perspective for and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans, (COM(2018) 65 final), Strasbourg, 06/02/2018.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 1.



accountability of the administration, increasing professionalism, depoliticisation and transparency, as well as in recruitment and dismissals, more transparent management of public finances and better services for citizens.

## 2.1. Challenges and lessons learned

Along with the successes, the main challenges have been clearly identified: the limited impact of ReSPA's actions in the Western Balkan region due to a wide set of PAR-related issues that are being covered; unequal recognition of ReSPA's services and deliverables by ReSPA's stakeholders, and, in some cases, a lack of political commitment by some governments; the satisfactory profile of public servants participating in the activities of ReSPA's working groups and networks remains a challenge, and should be addressed in the future; the need for improvement of (bi)annual programmes and intermediate targets for in-country support projects, as well as cross-cutting programmes related to PAR and EI demands expressed by the ReSPA members.

One of the main challenges for ReSPA is meeting the requirements of its members which are at different levels of development regarding PAR, as well as the accession negotiations with the EU.

The fundamental lessons learnt so far are that PAR requires strong political commitment and that tangible achievements in PAR need more time.

The most important recommendations for improvement were also proposed in the ROM Report<sup>21</sup>, as follows:

- Ensuring better coordination mechanisms with all PAR-related initiatives, and therefore close coordination with thematic and geographical units in the DG NEAR, EU Delegations in ReSPA members, the relevant line EC Directorate Generals and other donors or international organisations.
- Greater responsibilities of ReSPA members, in particular in: maintaining a strategic focus in formulating the relevant support required by ReSPA during implementation of the Annual Programmes of Work; ensuring that satisfactory public servants are participating regularly in the relevant ReSPA activities; consolidating communication between various ReSPA stakeholders in the member countries; and, finally, a commitment to the active implementation of national PAR strategies.
- Building of stronger in-house monitoring and evaluation capacities of the ReSPA Secretariat, including systematised processes for the collecting and collating of the monitoring data provided by the ReSPA members, and setting up a monitoring and evaluation system that measures the outcomes achieved; and, finally, follow-up on the key recommendations of ReSPA's comparative studies and other activities.

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<sup>21</sup> ROM Report on project – Support for ReSPA in its Efforts to Contribute to the Public Administration Reform under the European Union Integration Process in the Western Balkans, C-373854, 02/05/2017.

- Enhancing the presentation of key recommendations from various documents aimed at decision makers and introducing benchmarks for the key steps towards achieving outcomes.
- Improvement in the communication of success stories about positive outcomes, and increasing the visibility of ReSPA's role in the Western Balkan region, with a special focus on key multipliers, such as the EU Delegations.

The changes and challenges faced over the last few years in the Western Balkans require ReSPA to ensure more efficient and effective, and thus responsive, support for its members in the areas of PAR, PFM and EI.

### 3. Main achievements in PAR in the Western Balkans and ReSPA's contribution

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#### 3.1. State of play in PAR in the Western Balkans

In accordance with the latest published EU Communication Reports on Enlargement, almost all the Western Balkan countries, with the exception of BiH, which is at an early stage, are moderately prepared in the area of public administration reform.

Albania has made some progress, especially in improving the efficiency and transparency of public service delivery, training civil servants, establishing more transparent recruitment procedures and strengthening the administration's capacity to undertake merit-based recruitment. The implementation of the public administration reform and public financial management reform strategies has continued, although for the past few months some steps in the process have been on hold, following general elections and central government restructuring.<sup>22</sup> Any further reorganisation of the public administration needs to be carried out in a consistent and evidence-based manner. The Commission's recommendations from 2016 were partially addressed. In the coming year Albania should in particular carry out the following: implement the regulatory and fiscal impact assessments across all the ministries with a view to improving the quality of legislative and policy proposals, reflecting their financial estimates and their costing, and the budgeting of the Medium-Term Budget Plan; develop a comprehensive salary policy for a fair, transparent and merit-based salary scheme in public institutions and enable automated payrolling through the human resource management information system and the treasury; ensure effective implementation of the Code of Administrative Procedure by completing the harmonisation of the relevant regulations with the code.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Commission staff working document, Albania 2018 Report Accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy", Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 SWD(2018) 151. p. 6. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-albania-report.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.13.



The EC assessed BiH to be at an early stage of the public administration reform. No progress has been achieved during 2017 and the EC recommendations from 2016 have not been implemented.<sup>24</sup> There has been an increase in political support for the development of a country-wide public administration reform strategy. The civil service in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and at the cantonal level remains fragmented. The weaknesses in policy development and coordination and accountability have yet to be addressed. A national programme for the approximation of the legislation with the *acquis* remains to be adopted. In the coming year, Bosnia and Herzegovina should in particular carry out the following: adopt and start the implementation of a new countrywide strategic framework for public administration reform and for public financial management; ensure implementation of an effective human resources management system, in particular in recruitment, and amend civil service legislation to reduce the risk of the politicisation of the civil service at all administrative levels; adopt a national programme for legal approximation with the EU *acquis*.<sup>25</sup>

Kosovo\* made some progress especially with the review of agencies and (semi-)independent bodies.<sup>26</sup> The continued politicisation of the public administration remains a concern and is adversely affecting the efficiency and professional independence of the public administration. The EC recommends that Kosovo\* carry out the following: adopt a legislative package covering laws on the civil service, salaries and the organisation and functioning of the public administration in an inclusive and evidence-based process; adopt and start to implement the action plan to rationalise agencies and (semi-)independent bodies, as agreed by the parliament and the government; and improve legal predictability for citizens and businesses by gradually amending the identified special laws and implementing regulations that contradict the new law<sup>27</sup>.

Macedonia has made good progress with the adoption of the Public Administration Reform Strategy and the Public Financial Management Reform Programme.<sup>28</sup> Concrete efforts have been made towards increasing transparency and accountability and towards involving external stakeholders in policy making. The capacity of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration to drive and coordinate public administration reform needs to be improved. Strong political commitment to guarantee the professionalism of the public administration – especially regarding senior management appointments, respect for the principles of transparency, merit and equitable representation in line with the spirit and the letter of the law – remains essential.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Commission staff working document, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018 Report Accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy", Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 SWD (2018) 155, p. 4. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-bosnia-and-herzegovina-report.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Commission staff working document, Kosovo\* 2018 Report Accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy", Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 SWD(2018) 156, p. 4., See: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-kosovo-report.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Commission staff working document, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report Accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy", Strasbourg, 17/04/2018, SWD(2018) 154, p. 6. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-report.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

In Montenegro good progress has been made, notably through the adoption of the new laws on civil servants and state employees and local self-government, aimed at implementing merit-based recruitment across the public service.<sup>30</sup> Strong political will is still needed to effectively address the depoliticisation of the public service and optimisation of the state administration, as well as to ensure efficient implementation and financial sustainability of reforms.<sup>31</sup>

In Serbia, some progress has been achieved in the area of service delivery with the adoption of several new laws.<sup>32</sup> Serbia needs to implement its reform targets, professionalise and depoliticise the administration, especially senior management positions, and needs to ensure systematic coordination and monitoring of the 2016–2020 public financial management reform programme. The country is required to better harmonise its policies, promote better regulation based on the impact assessments and the timely inter-institutional and public consultations, amend the civil service law, as well as monitor and report on the implementation of the public financial management reform programme in line with the reporting established for the PAR strategy.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.2. ReSPA's main achievements and their connection with future initiatives

Through implementation of its activities, ReSPA has become recognised as the leading regional organisation for public administration development. However, in the past ReSPA's activities have been too fragmented and have addressed too wide a set of PAR-related issues in the region. For that reason, ReSPA, in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders, has decided to concentrate its efforts in the next six years on a number of key horizontal issues where most of the benefits have been provided in the region in the past six years of its functioning. The mentioned key horizontal issues have also been supported through the development of a number of studies and baseline analyses<sup>34</sup> with recommendations for follow-up activities and these can be found on the ReSPA website at <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-and-research-18>.

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<sup>30</sup> Commission staff working document, Montenegro 2018 Report Accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy", Strasbourg, 17/04/2018, SWD(2018) 150, p. 5. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-montenegro-report.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Commission staff working document, Serbia 2018 Report Accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy", Strasbourg, 17/04/2018, SWD(2018) 152, p. 4. See at: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-serbia-report.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> **PAR** (The Optimisation of Public Administration in the Western Balkan Region: Comparative Study with Baseline Analysis, October 2016; Analytical Paper on Managing the Process of Implementation of Public Administration Reform Strategies in ReSPA Members, December 2016); **PFM** (Methodological Guide for Costing PAR Strategies, December 2017); **Better regulation** (Comparative Research on Better Regulation in Western Balkans, September 2018; Legal Remedies in Administrative Procedures in Western Balkans, May 2016; The Study on the Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights Applicable in Administrative Disputes, December 2017; Recommendation on Public Participation in the Policy-Making Process for the Western Balkans, November 2017); **Budget support** (Analytical Paper on Budget Support, March 2017); **HRMD** (Improving the implementation of merit recruitment procedures in the Western Balkans: Analysis and recommendations, May 2015; Update of the Study on Merit-Based Recruitment, November 2018; Baseline Analysis on the Performance Appraisal in the Western Balkans, November 2018; Comparative Study with Baseline Analysis on Coaching in Public Administrations in the Western Balkans, May 2017; Western Balkan recommendations on introduction of coaching, May 2018); **e-Government** (E-Government Analysis: From E- to Open Government, November 2015; e-

Further to this, and bearing in mind the latest EC Communication on Enlargement Policy<sup>35</sup> which emphasises that the management of public finances is not always seen as an important part of public administration, more focus on the interconnection between PAR and PFM is needed. It will be ensured through the **establishment of a new Programme Committee which will include high-level representatives dealing with PAR, PFM and EU integration**. This structure should support the regional cooperation in the area of PAR, PFM and EI as the main benefit of implementation of the Strategy.

**ReSPA has contributed to the optimisation of the Public Administration in the ReSPA members through the** development of the Comparative Study on the Optimisation of Public Administration in the Western Balkans and the Paper on Managing the Implementation of PAR Strategies. Based on the findings of the mentioned documents and with the support of ReSPA's in-country mechanism, ReSPA has contributed to the adoption of the National Plan on the Optimisation of Public Administration by the Government of Montenegro for the first time.

**ReSPA has contributed to an improvement in financial planning for the implementation of PAR and the other government strategies by the ReSPA members –** discussions on the recommendations from the study on optimisation and on comparison of models of managing the implementation of PAR strategies, were the basis for the development of the Methodology for the Costing of PAR strategies. The methodology document encompasses the basic concepts of cost analysis, principles and methods, and methodological guidelines for the costing of strategies in general, as well as the costing of PAR strategies in particular. The methodology is contributing to a more efficient public administration reform process in the region by strengthening financial frameworks for the implementation of the PAR strategies.

Recognising public internal control as an important segment of PFM, at the end of 2016 ReSPA established a new WG on PIFC. Various activities have been organised for the PIFC WG regarding managerial accountability, risk management and auditing.

In June 2018, ReSPA organised the Ministerial Conference on Good Governance in the Western Balkans, which highlighted the importance of ensuring the financial sustainability of reform processes and a higher level of convergence in the implementation of PAR and PFM strategies. Therefore, this issue will be particularly tackled within this Strategy.

**ReSPA supported the re-establishment of a network of the representatives of Centre-of-Government (CoG) institutions** in cooperation with OECD/SIGMA. The network provided the framework for discussion and exchange of experience on better coordination of policies, in particular in line with the European integration processes.

**The Better Regulation agenda was strengthened** through the activities of the ReSPA Working Group on Better Regulation and through cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Recommendations on improving public participation, jointly developed by ReSPA and the

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Participation Roadmap for the Western Balkans, December 2016); **Quality management** (Quality Management in Public Administration and Public Services in the Western Balkans – Baseline analysis, September 2017; Feasibility report on ReSPA's Quality Management Centre, October 2017; Regional Study on Public Service Delivery in the Western Balkans, November 2018).

<sup>35</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions 2018, Communication on EU Enlargement Policy Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 COM(2018) 450, See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417\\_strategy\\_paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417_strategy_paper_en.pdf).

RCC, were endorsed by the ministers in charge of PA at the ReSPA Governing Board meeting held in November 2017. The implementation of the recommendations started through peer-review missions and other activities. Further to this, ReSPA produced the Study on Better Regulation with relevant recommendations. ReSPA will continue its efforts in the field of Better Regulation and, in particular, in relation to improving public participation in the policy-development and legislation-drafting processes.

**Improvement of the merit-based recruitment process was supported in Albania with the aim of increasing** the number of applicants. A video tutorial provides instructions in a user-friendly manner to potential applicants on how to apply for the posts. Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown interest in the Albanian e-recruitment model and, with the support of ReSPA, experience was exchanged and initial software for e-recruitment was developed. Through the development of the comparative studies and baseline analysis, ReSPA has supported its members in identifying the recommendations<sup>36</sup> for further actions in the improvement of the merit-based recruitment, performance evaluation, coaching and HRMIS.

In line with promoting an inclusive approach on PAR, ReSPA successfully organised two regional conferences on **Gender Equality and PAR** and it will continue with its efforts in promoting gender equality within PAR. Particular focus will be placed on Gender-Responsive Budgeting.

**Improvement of the quality of data in public administration** – Due to the complexity of the topic, ReSPA identified the needs of its members for improvement of the quality of their data as well as the scope of their work. Based on ReSPA's previous experience in this particular area, it was observed that ReSPA could, in order to develop competencies in this area, act as a training centre (a local supporter or promoter of data and quality initiatives developed by other international or European organisations which provide assistance to the public administration and public-service institutions).

Based on the Feasibility Study on a QM Centre in ReSPA and the signed Partnership Agreement with the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), ReSPA has initiated the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This project, which will be being implemented for 33 months, is focused on enabling ReSPA to become a QM Centre. In addition, the introduction of CAF will be piloted in six institutions in the region.

In the upcoming period, the focus will also be put on the introduction of a biannual PA Award in the region.

**ReSPA has contributed to increasing transparency through open data and open government.** Building on the work and achievements made by the ReSPA e-government working group has resulted in a comprehensive analysis of the beneficiaries' continued progress towards e-participation and open government, including the deployment of open government data. ReSPA's work has contributed to raising awareness on Open Data and Open Government partnerships. Best practices and ongoing trends in the region, the EU and globally have been identified. ReSPA has supported deploying ICT to improve the quality of public services and to

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<sup>36</sup> Update of the study on Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans (2018), Performance Evaluation Study (2018), Coaching in Public Administrations in the Western Balkans – Baseline Analysis (2017), Western Balkan Recommendations on Introduction of Coaching (2017), and Baseline Analysis on HRMIS in the Western Balkans (2017).

develop good and open governance in general and, more specifically, to increase the take-up of e-participation and open data.

**ReSPA has supported its members in the EI process** by strengthening their administrative capacities for the successful conduction of negotiations and programming and utilisation of IPA funds.

ReSPA has also organised a number of training activities on legal harmonisation and translation of the *acquis*. It has been recognised that seasonal schools on accession negotiations (in particular for chapters 23 and 24) may be promoted up to ReSPA Flagship activities.

**In all of the achievements mentioned above, ReSPA has had strong cooperation with OECD/SIGMA, which will be continued in the future.**

These achievements will serve as the basis for further continuation of activities in all the fields relevant for an improvement in PAR in ReSPA members, but the focus will be on implementation of defined strategic and specific objectives in the next six-year period.

## 4. Objectives of the 2019–2024 ReSPA Strategy

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In formulating its strategic objectives, ReSPA has been guided by the following:

- Relevant EC Reports published in 2018 – The recently published *Communication on the EU Enlargement Policy* identified the following areas where improvement is needed: delays in the implementation and the financial sustainability of reforms; the quality of central government strategic planning and links to sector planning; introduction of systematic preparations of policies, legislation and public investments through the consultative approach; further professionalisation of the civil service and more strategic approach and coordination when it comes to the e-government services. Another concern remains the slow process of harmonising the special administrative procedure laws with the GAPA.<sup>37</sup>
- Complementarity with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – ReSPA will be particularly supporting Goal 16<sup>38</sup>: To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, to provide access to justice for all, and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The specific aspects of this goal, which ReSPA will promote, are: a) To promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all; b) To substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms; c) To develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; and d) To ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions – 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, COM(2018) 450 final, Strasbourg, 17/04/2018, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

<sup>39</sup> See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.

- Principles of coordination and complementarity among national and international actors, as well as alignment with the PAR priorities of the ReSPA members.
- ReSPA's comparative advantages in implementing PAR in the region and achievements resulting from previous activities.
- The available ReSPA instruments and mechanisms.
- The principle of continuity of ReSPA's activities.

The Strategy's objectives were formulated as outputs of the different participatory steps taken during the strategising exercise, while taking into account ReSPA's mandate, the Governing Board's decisions, as well as the recommendations of the SIGMA Monitoring Reports of 2017.

The objectives were shared with ReSPA's stakeholders. Specifically, the objectives take into account were: i) ReSPA members' individual needs and demands (their own developmental targets); ii) The overall demands of ReSPA members in the field of public administration; iii) The evolution of ReSPA's Secretariat towards being a hub for regional public administration excellence.

### *Strategic goal*

**The strategic goal** of ReSPA over the next six years will be to contribute to the **effective response of the public administrations of ReSPA members to the needs of citizens and businesses. It will be achieved through strengthened regional cooperation in the area of PAR and EUI.**

In meeting this strategic goal in the Western Balkans, ReSPA will work on the further improvement of implementation of PAR and PFM strategies, the professionalisation and depoliticisation of the senior civil service and the improvement of the quality of public services.

### *Mechanisms of intervention*

ReSPA will achieve its strategic objectives through the organisation of high-level political dialogues, conferences, networking events, working visits, mobility schemes, the delivery of capacity-building activities (workshops, seminars, training, seasonal schools), production of analytical papers, studies and research, followed by policy recommendations based on the best regional, European and international practice, and other innovative methodologies. Through this kind of activity, ReSPA will transfer new knowledge and skills, as well as facilitate the exchange of experiences and best-practice examples both within the region and between the Western Balkan administrations and the EU Member States.

ReSPA will ensure the provision of a unique framework for **networking and peer-to-peer learning**, and therefore the mutual exchange of experiences and practices in area of PAR and PFM will be an important segment of all further actions.

The ReSPA interventions will be simultaneously organised in a twofold manner: **regionally** – to cover the common interests of its members; and directly as **in-country** support – targeting the specific demand driven topics defined by its members. These topics are expected to be raised by

the operational conclusions from the PAR Special Group meetings, or the deficiencies identified in the action documents for implementation of PAR strategies. Direct in-country support activities will also be initiated to support the policy recommendations from the ReSPA regional studies.

### *Cooperation with governmental institutions in the Western Balkans*

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

#### ***Albania***

Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania (ADISA); Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA); Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; Commissioner on the Right to Information and Data Protection; Department of Public Administration of 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 the Prevention of Corruption and Coordination of the Fight against Corruption of BiH; Agency for the Information Society of the Republic of Srpska; Public Administration Reform Coordinator's Office (PARCO) of BiH; Civil Service Agency 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 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\*; the Prime Minister's Office.



## ***Macedonia***

Administrative Court; Food and Veterinary Agency; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of the 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; the 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.

## ***Coordination with other partners***

ReSPA's activities will be coordinated with other actors which cover PAR and PFM. The coordination will be conducted and some activities, potentially, jointly organised with European Commission services (particularly the DG NEAR and other line DGs), EU Delegations to the ReSPA members and OECD/SIGMA. ReSPA will continue and extend its already established cooperation with other international organisations and donors. Based on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF), joint activities related to the interconnection of PAR and PFM<sup>40</sup> will be organised. Regarding the improvement of the EI process and promotion of EU integration through regional cooperation, specific cooperation will be established with the GIZ Open Regional Fund.

Activities related to Better Regulation and Policy Development and Coordination will continue to be closely coordinated with OECD/SIGMA, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), USAID-funded projects in the region, the Council of Europe's efforts, and other actors, such as business associations and civil-society organisations.

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<sup>40</sup> CEF is an international organisation with a mission to support capacity development for finance officials in South-East Europe through learning. See: <https://www.cef-see.org/>.



The activities related to HRMD will continue to be closely coordinated with OECD/SIGMA, Council of Europe, GIZ and other actors.

Service-delivery-related activities will largely include organisations that ReSPA has collaborated with so far. OECD/SIGMA, EUPAN organisation (DISPA and CAF user events) will be focused on – while UNPAN and UNDESA will continue to play an important role in particular in – benchmarking in a wide spectrum of areas (e-government, public services, good governance, etc.). OGP collaboration is expected to foster open government partnerships. Open data will be mainstreamed by setting up collaboration with worldwide-recognised actors (ICEGOV, JRC, etc.). Activities related to improvement of Quality Management will be organised in close cooperation with KDZ. ReSPA will continue to actively collaborate with relevant think tanks, academia and civil-society organisations.

### *Specific objectives*

In order to achieve its strategic goal, ReSPA will focus on achieving the following three specific objectives:

**Specific objective 1:** Improved implementation of PAR and PFM Strategies in the Western Balkans

**Specific objective 2:** Improved professionalisation and depoliticisation of the Senior Civil Service

**Specific objective 3:** Improved quality of public services

These objectives will be achieved through activities precisely defined in the bi-annual Programmes of Work and annual plans of activities.<sup>41</sup> The Programme of Work also precisely defines the institutions of the ReSPA members which will be involved in the activities.

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<sup>41</sup> The Programme of Work 2019–2020 is annexed to the Strategy.

## 4.1. Specific objective 1: Improved implementation of PAR and PFM Strategies in the Western Balkans

The 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy highlights that public administration reform is paramount to strengthening governance at all levels, although there are still delays and shortcomings in the implementation of both PAR and PFM strategies in the Western Balkans in general. It reports that, for Western Balkan countries, delays in implementation and the financial sustainability of reforms remain a concern.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the 2017 SIGMA Monitoring Reports of the Principles of Public Administrations indicate that overall there is a low rate of implementation of both PAR and PFM Strategies in the Western Balkan countries.<sup>43</sup> During last few years the strategic frameworks of PAR and PFM have been developed in all the countries<sup>44</sup> except BiH<sup>45</sup>, and the policy dialogue on PAR and PFM has recently been strengthened. However, public administration reform strategies cannot be considered to be fully complete and reliable in the Western Balkan countries. The PAR strategic documents should contain information about the estimated costs for most of the planned activities. There are discrepancies between the cost estimates of planned PAR measures and the actual funding allocated for those reforms in the state budget. The PAR strategic documents in the Western Balkan countries should contain information about the foreign donors supporting reforms, as currently they do not provide full details about specific projects and/or the extent of the planned financial assistance. Organisational responsibility for PFM reforms is led by the MoFs. The Western Balkan countries reflect similar weaknesses accordingly. SIGMA reports that significant discrepancies exist in Albania between the estimated costs and the actual funding allocations in the state budget. A similar situation exists in Kosovo\* where, although most of the activities in the key PAR Strategies have been costed, the financial sustainability of planned reforms is not ensured due to heavy reliance on donor funding, the majority of which is unsecured. In Montenegro, although most activities in the Strategies have been costed, the financial sustainability of the planned reforms is not consistently ensured, as both Strategies (Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy 2016–2020 and Public Financial Management Reform Programme 2016–2020 (PFMRP) include activities not yet funded either from the domestic budget or from donors. In Serbia, the key PAR planning documents still contain numerous non-reform-oriented activities, and costing of the reform actions is not complete.<sup>46</sup>

The SIGMA indicators measuring success in the implementation of the PAR and PFM strategies in the WB countries have a very low regional average. The indicator of the quality of the strategic framework of public administration reform has a regional average of 3 out of 5.<sup>47</sup> The other indicator measuring the effectiveness of the PAR implementation and comprehensiveness of

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<sup>42</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 COM (2018) 450/ See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417\\_strategy\\_paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417_strategy_paper_en.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> See COUNTRY OVERVIEW 2017: Summary of key findings from SIGMA reports (2017), recommendations from PAR Special group meetings, recommendations from ReSPA comparative studies/baseline analysis and recommendations for possible interventions.

<sup>44</sup> In February 2018 the Government of Macedonia adopted the Strategy for PR 2018–2022 and the Action Plan for its implementation. The reforms include priority areas, policy creation and coordination, public service and human resource management, responsibility, accountability and transparency, public services and ICT support for administration, as well as public finance management.

<sup>45</sup> Brcko District, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Council of Ministers at the state level adopted the new PAR Strategy, but the Republic of Srpska did not.

<sup>46</sup> See: SIGMA Monitoring Report: *The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries*.

<sup>47</sup> Albania (4/5), BiH (3/5), Macedonia (3/5), Kosovo\* (3/5), Montenegro (5/5) and Serbia (3/5).

monitoring and reporting has a regional average of only 1 out of 5.<sup>48</sup> The financial sustainability of PAR has a regional average of only 1 out of 5.<sup>49</sup> Accountability and coordination in PAR has a regional average of 2 out of 5.<sup>50</sup> This group of indicators has the lowest regional average together with the indicators on PFM. As per the SIGMA data on the latter, the quality of the medium-term budgetary framework, the quality of the annual budget process and budget credibility, the transparency and comprehensiveness of budget reporting and scrutiny and the indicator for the functioning of internal auditing all have a regional average of 2 out of 5, while the functioning of internal control has a regional average of 1 out of 5.<sup>51</sup> These very low values for the indicators require interventions in at least three reform areas: the conceptual approach for the PAR Strategy, the PFM Strategy and policy development and coordination.

Regarding the coordination process, the PAR Strategies usually foresee coordination at the political and administrative levels, however the quality of central government strategic planning and the links to sector planning need to be substantially improved in the Western Balkans.<sup>52</sup> Coordination between the PAR and PFM strategies is especially important, as is coordination among many subjects. The majority of WB countries have problems in such coordination. Such coordination of the activities of the political level bodies responsible for PAR and PFM reforms is limited in Albania. Coordination at the administrative level in Kosovo\* is not fully functional. Serbia has an overly complex coordination structure with intermediary forums duplicating coordination at both the political and administrative levels.<sup>53</sup> Resolving these problems means close cooperation between the Centre-of-Government institutions and ministries responsible for public administration and finance.

One of the recommendations from the ReSPA Study on Optimisation and the analytical paper on managing implementation of PAR Strategies is to align medium-term budget decisions with the set policy priorities (e.g. PAR, PFM) to guarantee financial sustainability for their implementation. Well-managed PAR requires clear objectives, a strategic framework and realistic planning of the implementation for which financial sustainability is ensured. The management of PAR requires the development of implementation capacity.

ReSPA has established a regional network of legal professionals involved in modernising general administrative procedures and in administrative justice. ReSPA has supported the process of preparation of new General Administrative Procedure Acts (GAPAs) in the region, and will continue to monitor and support developments in this field. ReSPA has published two studies in this area that will be further promoted<sup>54</sup>. The intervention area of accountability will be unavoidably connected with the transparency of public administration, which will highlight the importance of open data, data protection and access to information.

In line with the Public Administration Principles, ReSPA will contribute to the improved performance of beneficiaries in the fields of horizontal governance and public administration

<sup>48</sup> Albania: (1/5), BiH (1/5) Macedonia (1/5), Kosovo\* (2/5), Montenegro (1/5) and Serbia (1/5).

<sup>49</sup> Albania (2/5), BiH (0/5), Macedonia (0/5), Kosovo\* (1/5), Montenegro (1/5) and Serbia (1/5).

<sup>50</sup> Albania (3/5), BiH (3/5), Macedonia (2/5), Kosovo\* (2/5), Montenegro (2/5) and Serbia (2/5).

<sup>51</sup> See: SIGMA, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries*.

<sup>52</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 COM (2018) 450/ See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417\\_strategy\\_paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417_strategy_paper_en.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> See: SIGMA, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries*.

<sup>54</sup> All the studies are listed in footnote 33.

reform identified in the national PAR and PFM strategies and in line with the requirements stemming from the EI process. ReSPA will enhance regional cooperation through the meetings of the Programme Committee, the working groups and other networking events. ReSPA will also organise a number of capacity-building activities, such as workshops, seminars and seasonal schools, peer-to-peer exchanges among national institutions from different countries, high-level meetings and regional conferences, and will produce policy papers on the topics defined by the Programme Committee and working groups. In addition, ReSPA will support the implementation of the national PAR Strategy Action Plans mainly through in-country support to the ReSPA members.

For the implementation of the Overall Goal of the Strategy and, in particular, for this specific objective, a new Programme Committee would play the role of a strategic programming body through which better coordination of the PAR/ PFM/ EI policies and related ReSPA activities, as well as Good Governance, would be streamlined. This Programme Committee will be composed of senior civil servants representing the ministries responsible for public administration, the ministries of finance and the institutions in charge of the coordination of the EI process in the ReSPA members. The Programme Committee will be responsible for inter-sector coordination of the themes and activities performed by ReSPA and will serve as a multilateral platform for the identification of issues of regional relevance and their transposition into concrete programmatic priorities and activities. In this way, the effects of ReSPA's regionally organised activities related to the coordination of PAR/PFM/EI policies will be incorporated into national policy frameworks. Furthermore, intergovernmental conferences will ensure a structured framework for policy dialogue on PAR, PFM and EI. In addition, working visits to relevant international partners and third countries will be organised and thematic policy papers containing policy recommendations will be produced.

In order to improve the implementation of the PAR/PFM Strategies in the Western Balkans, ReSPA will work on the following key areas:

- Coordination of PAR and PFM policies;
- National monitoring and reporting systems;
- Quality of policy planning in Centre-of-Government institutions; and
- Alignment of policy making and legal drafting with the EU Better Regulation agenda.

#### 4.1.1. Coordination of PAR and PFM policies

The interconnection, implementation and long-term sustainability of the PAR and PFM strategies, associated with requirements stemming from the European integration process of the Western Balkans, need to be ensured. Progress on PAR is uneven and requires further support. Generally, political instability, frequent changes of governments and their organisational structure, and the influence of politics on the work of public institutions cause a low level of trust in the public administration among citizens and other subjects.

Policy Coordination is generally inadequate even though it is listed among the key objectives in the Western Balkan national strategies. Thus, the Albanian PAR Strategy points out that consolidation of the framework of the Integrated Planning System still remains a challenge,<sup>55</sup> setting as aims for this area: policymaking, legislation drafting, monitoring and evaluation systems, which are clearly defined and regulated, linked with government priorities and budget planning in order to enhance efficiency by enabling the government to have analysis-based policies, drafting of qualitative policies and legislation and approximation of legislation to the *acquis*.<sup>56</sup> Macedonia considers a strategic framework of public administration reform, policy development and coordination to be a general objective of its PAR Strategy (2018–2022)<sup>57</sup> Kosovo's Strategy recognises that the public administration needs to have a leadership role, which cannot be performed fully unless there is a focus on strategic planning, policy making, monitoring of policy implementation and proactive leadership in the processes.<sup>58</sup> The Montenegro Public Administration Reform Strategy (2016–2020), sets policy development and coordination as one of its goals and identifies improvements in the annual Government Work Programme, development of the reporting methodology, improvements in coordination with the European integration process, application of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), the coherence of the legal system and the quality of laws as its specific objectives.<sup>59</sup> Serbia has adopted a 2018–2020 Action Plan for implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia. This Action Plan contains a measure for the improvement of the management of the public policy system of the government, establishment of a legal and institutional framework for integrated strategic management and adoption of medium-term work plans of state administration bodies harmonised with the strategic priorities of the government and the programme budget.<sup>60</sup> BiH still has not adopted a current strategy for public administration reform, although the implementation of the PAR Strategy in the previous period has significantly enhanced a number of elements of the public-policy development system and planning at the almost all levels of administration (except the Brčko District of BiH). Future challenges in the new reform cycle involve the improvement and integration of elements of strategic planning and public-policy development.<sup>61</sup>

Even though such strategies have been developed in the WB countries and have already been implemented for a certain number of years, the policy coordination processes are still suffering from a lack of proper policy analysis capacity, a low quality of legislative drafting and policy development, a lack of inter-ministerial coordination, inadequate public consultations and weak fiscal and regulatory impact assessments. A lack of inter-institutional cooperation, as well as systematic and coherent stakeholder engagement in all phases of the planning and policy-making processes are leading to shortcomings in the coordination of policies. Interconnection between the European integration process and legislative plans is often missing. As an example, the SIGMA 2017 Monitoring Report for Albania indicates that the actual implementation rate of the EI

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<sup>55</sup> Albanian Crosscutting Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2015-2020, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>57</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy (2017-2022), p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Strategy on the Modernisation of Public Administration (2015-2020), p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> Public Administrative Reform Strategy in Montenegro (2016-2020), p. 24–31.

<sup>60</sup> Action Plan for Implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018–2020, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform in BiH (2018–2022), draft version, p.24.

plan is low, and a significant proportion of the measures envisaged have been postponed until the following years. Alignment between the National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) and the Government's Analytical Programme is low as well.<sup>62</sup> According to the SIGMA reports for 2017, the quality of policy planning for European integration has a low regional value – 2 out of 5. Similarly, the sub-indicators which constitute this composite indicator are also very low: the quality of planning documents for EI has a value of 2 out of 5. The indicator, the implementation rate of the government's plans for EI-related legislative commitments (%), has a value of 0 out of 4. The EI-related commitments indicator carried forward has a value of 1 out of 4. According to the indicator the legal framework enables harmonised planning of EI, which has a value of 2 out of 2, the legal framework is at an adequate level regarding planning harmonisation. According to the SIGMA 2017 Report, the legal framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina required for the performance of key Centre-of-Government functions and the critical functions required for European integration (EI) has been established at each level of the administration. Major challenges remain with regard to the coordination and scrutiny of the policy content of proposals at all levels of the administration and to the vertical communication needed for effective policy coordination.<sup>63</sup> Because of the complex constitutional arrangements, Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a unified, countrywide approach to policy planning, development and coordination, and no single CoG. The composite indicator on the quality of policy planning for European integration has a value of 1 out of 5 in this country. The related sub-indicators are at the same low level. The existing legal framework does not enable harmonised planning of EI (the indicator value is 0 out of 2 and the implementation rate of the government's plans for EI-related legislative commitments, also has a value of 0 out of 4).<sup>64</sup>

In order to provide support for the improvement of the coordination of PAR and PFM policies, during the first years of implementation of the Strategy, ReSPA will organise regular meetings of the Programme Committee and a working visit, prepare a policy paper on coordination issues and organise a ministerial conference devoted to financing reforms with a focus on PAR and managerial accountability.

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<sup>62</sup> SIGMA Report, Albania 2017, p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> SIGMA 2017 Report, BiH, p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> See: SIGMA, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries*.

### 4.1.2. Quality of national monitoring and reporting system

The monitoring and reporting systems for implementation of PAR are established but the capacity to enforce and sustain implementation rates is limited. The reports are usually output-oriented and focus mostly on stating formal achievements and less on the impact of interventions. Hence, the data is often not used to make RIA and ex-post assessments.

As an example, BiH includes in the draft PAR Strategy, in Measure 4, the ensuring of an inclusive approach and public participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of strategic plans, public policies and regulations.<sup>65</sup> Montenegro sets as an objective of the current national PAR Strategy the establishment of a comprehensive and rational system of planning, coordination and monitoring implementation of government policies.<sup>66</sup> Albania includes such a goal under Objective 3 – the building of an effective monitoring and evaluation system of strategies, programmes and the legal framework in force<sup>67</sup>, while Macedonia includes among the objectives regarding policy coordination and monitoring, the setting up of efficient structures and control mechanisms for the support and coordination of policies, and a high-quality decision-making process is the objective in this regards<sup>68</sup>. Serbia also includes among the activities of the national PAR Strategy the improvement of inter-sector coordination by monitoring the achievement of the priority goals of the Government Programme through mechanisms of the AP for Government Programme.<sup>69</sup>

As per the 2017 SIGMA Monitoring Reports all the WB countries have established a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework for the PAR Strategy and reports are being produced and in general published on the respective official websites.<sup>70</sup> However, the actual implementation rate of the reforms is low in Albania.<sup>71</sup> There are weaknesses and shortcomings in the performance indicator frameworks of selected strategies, which affect the quality and effectiveness of PAR monitoring and reporting. Civil society organisations and external stakeholders are participating in monitoring PAR, but this is not being done regularly and consistently across all PAR strategic documents.<sup>72</sup> The composite indicator on the effectiveness of PAR implementation and the comprehensiveness of monitoring and reporting has an overall value of only 1 out of 5 in all the WB countries.<sup>73</sup> Fulfilment of the PAR objectives, has a value of 0 out of 4 in Albania, and the implementation rate of PAR activities has a value of 1 out of 4.<sup>74</sup> The comprehensiveness of PAR reporting and monitoring systems is valued slightly better at 3 out of 8. In BiH, according to the SIGMA 2017 Report, the methodology for such reports does not give an accurate picture of the achievement of the PAR objectives for the whole country.<sup>75</sup> The system also lacks outcome-based performance indicators. The sub-indicators on the effectiveness of PAR implementation and the comprehensiveness of monitoring and reporting have low values, similar to in Albania. In Macedonia, reports on its implementation similarly focused almost exclusively on

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<sup>65</sup> Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform in BiH (2018-2022), draft version, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Public Administrative Reform Strategy in Montenegro (2016-2020), p. 50.

<sup>67</sup> Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020, p. 36.

<sup>68</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy 2017-2022, p. 25.

<sup>69</sup> Action Plan for Implementation of Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020, p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> See: SIGMA, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries*.

<sup>71</sup> SIGMA Report, Albania 2017, p. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> See: SIGMA, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries*.

<sup>74</sup> SIGMA Report, Albania 2017, p. 15.

<sup>75</sup> SIGMA Report, BiH 2017, p. 18.



outputs. The achievement of the objectives was not systematically assessed and the reports were not published. The values of the indicators are very low.<sup>76</sup> According to the SIGMA 2017 Report on Kosovo\*, despite low implementation rates, the reports focus mostly on achievements and less on challenges and how to overcome them. Kosovo\* has a higher overall value of the effectiveness of PAR implementation and the comprehensiveness of monitoring and reporting (2 out of 5) than Albania, BiH and Macedonia. The comprehensiveness of PAR reporting and monitoring systems is valued at 6 out of 8.<sup>77</sup> Serbia is currently focused only on monitoring the implementation of activities against the set deadlines and there is a lack of analysis in terms of the achievements against the identified outcome-level indicators, and the targets do not allow decision makers or the wider public to judge whether the actions implemented have had an impact on the situation or have failed to lead to significant improvements.<sup>78</sup> In Montenegro, outcome-level indicators have been developed and are linked to the objectives of the Strategies, but the most recent annual reports still focus on the implementation of activities only. The implementation rate of PAR activities is low.<sup>79</sup> The comprehensiveness of PAR reporting and monitoring systems has a value of 4 out of 8. The implementation rate of PAR activities and fulfilment of PAR objectives have the lowest value of 0 out of 4. The implementation of PAR activities and fulfilment of PAR objectives are at the very lowest level (0 out of 4) in both Montenegro and Serbia.

Addressing reforms in the areas of the rule of law, fundamental rights and good governance remains the most pressing issue for the enlargement countries as per the 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy.<sup>80</sup> The fostering of regional cooperation among institutions and stakeholders in the Western Balkans in mainstreaming and promoting the development of Good Governance in the perspective of EU integration leads the way to all the other reforms. ReSPA is best situated to encourage and promote good governance approaches and practices and to encourage WB countries to adopt activities and practices that are more conducive to good governance. The Good Governance Agenda in the Region is key to guaranteeing the stability of the European reforms and it is essential to try and find how much the EU-related reforms are liked. Enforcing a platform through the Regional Platform Cooperation and Networking on Promoting Good Governance would enhance Good Governance, through enhancing coordination & cooperation mechanisms among institutions and stakeholders in the region, and would improve the strategic framework, programmes and policies in the Western Balkan countries, thus being the backbone for the next programming phase IPA 3.

One of the major recommendations from the ReSPA analytical paper on managing the implementation of the PAR Strategies (and other sectoral strategies) in the Western Balkan is the establishment of a clear monitoring and reporting system through the development of guidelines, instructions, manuals.<sup>81</sup> ReSPA will support its members through capacity-building activities to establish/upgrade the current monitoring and reporting systems and it will enable peer relationships among them. ReSPA will organise seminars on strategic planning, monitoring and

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<sup>76</sup> SIGMA Report, Macedonia 2017, p. 10 and 15.

<sup>77</sup> SIGMA Report, Kosovo\* 2017, p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> SIGMA Report, Serbia 2017, p. 15.

<sup>79</sup> SIGMA Report, Montenegro 2017, p. 15.

<sup>80</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014, COM(2013) 700 final, Brussels, 16/10/2013, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Analytical paper on managing the process of implementation of Public Administration Reform Strategies in ReSPA members, ReSPA, 2016.



reporting where the key personnel will have the possibility to improve their skills and knowledge related to monitoring and reporting at the national level. ReSPA will explore options to support capacity building in this area through partnering with relevant institutions and organisations.

#### 4.1.3 Quality of policy planning in Centre-of-Government institutions

The ReSPA members are pursuing their EU integration agendas by making efforts to plan in a timely way the fulfilment of necessary reforms and adoption of legislation harmonised with the *acquis*. The preparations for EU accession and membership require administrative capacities for policy planning and development and for their adjustment with the EU integration agenda. These efforts are to be performed by the Centre-of-Government (CoG) institutions, in the first place, but the fulfilment of policy priorities is also the responsibility of line ministries. The line ministries and other relevant bodies have to possess sufficient administrative capacities for policy development and to define its strategic objectives in the medium term. The institutions in charge of coordinating the EI process should play a role within the policy-development process and ensure the systematic and timely transposition of the EU *acquis*. Strategic and other policy documents should be adjusted both in terms of their substance and time sequencing with the European Integration Programme.

Albania is developing its policy-planning system based on an Integrated Planning System (IPS) aimed at establishing a harmonised policy-planning system. Objective 1 in the country's PAR Strategy is improved planning and coordination policies for drafting government strategic documents, which turn priorities into concrete actions.<sup>82</sup> Also, a transparent and all-inclusive system of drafting laws, which is based on policies and which ensures alignment with the *acquis*, is another objective of the PAR Strategy.<sup>83</sup> However, according to the Albania SIGMA Monitoring Report 2017, the legal framework for monitoring and reporting on Central Government planning documents is fragmented, and the roles and responsibilities of the various CoG units involved in this process have not been clearly established.<sup>84</sup> There is no requirement in the existing regulatory framework to prepare and publish regular reports on the Analytical Programme, and monitoring reports prepared on the operational plans have not been published. The quality of policy planning received a value of 3 out of 5 in the SIGMA Monitoring Report 2017.<sup>85</sup> BiH has no single, medium-term policy-planning system covering the whole country,<sup>86</sup> even though the draft PAR Strategy, through its Measure 2, aims to improve the strategic, medium-term and annual planning in BiH at all administrative levels, in line with the budgeting process, available financial resources and the European integration requirements, observing the BiH's constitutional and legal set-up.<sup>87</sup> Kosovo\* has established a framework for policy planning, however it consists of too many short- and medium-term plans with inconsistencies involving planned commitments and their deadlines in central planning documents. The quality of policy planning is valued at 2 out of 5 in the SIGMA

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<sup>82</sup> Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020, p. 35.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>84</sup> SIGMA Report, Albania 2017, p. 38.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> SIGMA Report, BiH 2017, p. 37.

<sup>87</sup> Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform in BiH (2018-2022), draft version, p. 28.

2017 Report on Kosovo\*. Montenegro has a well-established legal framework for policy planning and has significantly reduced the number of strategies in the country, even though the strategic planning system remains fragmented.<sup>88</sup> Serbia and Montenegro are both assessed at 1 out of 5 regarding the quality of policy planning. Montenegro lacks a comprehensive medium-term planning framework which is not linked to policy plans. Strategies contain limited information on costing in this country.<sup>89</sup> In Serbia, the regulatory framework governing policy planning is not sufficient to establish a coherent and harmonised policy-planning system aligned with the budgetary limits of the country. The country has no set rules for the development of sector strategies, and there are no clear links between sector strategies and the medium-term budget.<sup>90</sup> The quality of policy planning for Serbia is rated very low at 1 out of 5.<sup>91</sup> In Macedonia, “The rules governing CoGs management of the government’s decision-making process are defined. However, they are not being consistently followed: most agenda items are submitted later than foreseen, and the quality control by CoG institutions is inconsistent. Furthermore, the government’s decision making is not transparent: the agenda items, the material submitted and even the government’s decisions are not published on regular basis.”

Regarding the European integration plans, all the WB countries are adopting annual plans, even though, according to the 2017 SIGMA reports for all WB countries, the implementation rate of legislative activities is very low in general. Albania adopts annually a National Plan for European Integration (NPEI), as well as an Analytical Programme, however alignment between these and some other central planning documents varies significantly and full alignment is not yet ensured estimated. Montenegro has an appropriate level of planning of tasks arising from each negotiation chapter, but lacks complete budgeting and this is not fully aligned with other policies. The legal framework for EI-related planning is in place in Kosovo\*, but coordination between the responsible institutions in preparing EU integration plans remains weak and the plan is over-ambitious.<sup>92</sup> The 2017 SIGMA country reports rate Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro at 2 out of 5 regarding the quality of policy planning for European integration, while Albania and BiH are rated 1 out of 5. Kosovo\* has a slightly higher value – 3 out of 5.

Through the previous activities of the EIPC, ReSPA has been focused on policy planning and alignment with European integration, and the need to continue providing support on the basis of the above values is self-evident. ReSPA will build on its results achieved to date, especially through further development of regional cooperation among the CoG institutions of the Western Balkans. Thus, the Working Group on CoG will offer a regional platform for experience exchange, peer learning and programme streamlining and will organise a number of working visits to the OECD and EU Member States. Relevant forums for policy dialogue will also be facilitated and supported. Following the guidance by the Working Group, ReSPA will produce policy papers containing relevant recommendations for the improvement of its members’ planning and coordinating systems.

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<sup>88</sup> SIGMA Report, Montenegro 2017, p. 31.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>90</sup> SIGMA Report, Serbia 2017, p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>92</sup> SIGMA Report, Kosovo\* 2017, p. 33.

#### 4.1.4. Alignment of policy making and legal drafting with the EU Better Regulation agenda

The EU accession process has not only significantly accelerated activities in the area of legislative reforms, but has also contributed to a more systemic and comprehensive approach to creating a new legal system. The growing awareness in the countries of the region that the efficiency and quality of regulations affects economic performance has led to their more strategic approach to regulatory reform. All the countries in the Western Balkan region have adopted regulatory strategies, with the aim of simplifying and making their business environment more competitive. The EU Better and Smart Regulation agenda is having a significant impact on the Western Balkan countries' legislative reforms.

Almost all Western Balkan countries have generally taken a comprehensive approach to better regulation/regulatory policy and have made it a pillar of their public-sector reform efforts. Most Western Balkan countries have adopted either an explicit regulatory reform strategy or else the regulatory policy represents a key portion of the PAR strategy. Most Western Balkan countries have designated either a minister or high-level body responsible for promoting government-wide progress on regulatory policy. All the countries have established a body charged with regulatory oversight. Governments are increasingly locating responsibility for Better Regulation within a central administrative unit. This "whole-of-government" approach represents a major step taken in recent years, embedding administrative simplification in the overall regulatory quality system at the national level.

The Montenegro PAR Strategy considers that, in the process of drafting laws, it is also necessary to make sure that the RIA is developed simultaneously with the preparation of draft laws and for this to be the part of the material discussed at the public discussion, as well as to ensure the simultaneous preparation of secondary legislation whose adoption stems from these laws.<sup>93</sup> Albania includes quality-of-impact assessment analysis and evaluation of the implementation of the relevant drafted and published legal acts in Objective 2 of its PAR Strategy.<sup>94</sup> Macedonia states in its PAR Strategy that a Unique National Electronic Registry of Regulations (ENER), which contains the existing regulations, draft laws at the initial stage of preparation and reports on the conducted RIA, has been introduced.<sup>95</sup> BiH, in its draft PAR strategy, acknowledges that higher levels of implementation of public consultation instruments and impact assessments remain a challenge that needs to be further addressed in the upcoming period.<sup>96</sup> Serbia includes in its actions for 2018-2020 the determination of the methodological framework and manuals for policy management and linking with the preparation and execution of programme budgeting by adopting bylaws, part of which is a policy impact assessment.<sup>97</sup>

Based on ReSPA's Study on Better Regulation, published in 2018, ReSPA will support its members, in particular, in strengthening RIA functions, strengthening public consultation

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<sup>93</sup> Public Administrative Reform Strategy in Montenegro (2016-2020), p. 51.

<sup>94</sup> Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020, p. 35.

<sup>95</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy 2017-2022, p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform in BiH (2018-2022), draft version, p. 15-16.

<sup>97</sup> Action Plan for Implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020, p. 7.

processes (both on-line and off-line) and improving monitoring of the implementation of the consultation requirements. In addition, ReSPA will support development of a policy framework for ex-post reviewing of regulations by application of RIA methodology. The Working Group on Better Regulation will continue to offer programmatic streamlining of ReSPA's activities within these intervention areas and will enable peer exchange among the ReSPA members.

## **4.2. Specific objective 2: Improved professionalisation and depoliticisation of the civil service system**

In all ReSPA members further professionalisation and depoliticisation are needed in order to improve the capacity of public administrations to adequately serve the needs of their societies. The national Strategies on Public Administration recognise the need to improve professionalisation and depoliticisation of human resources.

In accordance with the SIGMA findings, the institutional and legal framework for the professional management of the civil service in almost all WB countries is more or less in place.<sup>98</sup> However, the institutional capacities to ensure adequate implementation of HRM practices are limited. The most critical category of the civil service in the WB countries is that of senior civil servants whose engagement, based on merit and strong professional development, is the driver for changes. Despite the fact that the legal framework clearly stipulates political neutrality, empirical experience shows that this is not being followed in practice. Similarly, the WB countries' 2017 SIGMA Reports support this.

The 2015 *ReSPA Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans*<sup>99</sup> finds that the capacity of the civil service remains far lower than desired, which contributes to a general problem in government performance and development in the region. The Study concludes that six factors are particularly relevant for the whole region in order to formalise the institutionalisation of merit-based recruitment procedures: incomplete regulation and implementation, a lack of expertise, low examination standards and a lack of fairness and of efficiency.<sup>100</sup>

In 2016, the ReSPA Comparative Study on the optimisation of public administration in the Western Balkan region recommended to all WB countries the following potential interventions in the area of HRM: the development and introduction of a competency framework; a reduction of discretion in the selection of candidates; improvement of HR planning; the development of standards and procedures for the functioning of HR registries; development of the strategic HRM legal framework and policy, as well as the respective instruments; improvement of the professional development and training system; introduction of measurable criteria for performance appraisal; and

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<sup>98</sup> Analysis of Professionalisation of the Senior Civil Service and the Way Forward for the Western Balkans, SIGMA , 2018.

<sup>99</sup> The update of the study is ongoing and will be completed in October 2018.

<sup>100</sup> Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans: Analysis and Recommendations, ReSPA, 2015, p. 10-11.

improvement of the salaries and other income system of public servants (introduction of a new fair salary system, introduction of better management and monitoring of salaries).<sup>101</sup>

Despite ReSPA's findings and recommendations, problems still persist. According to the 2017 SIGMA Report on Albania, public service and HRM are insufficiently improved<sup>102</sup>, even though the latest Civil Service Law of 2013 regulates well the horizontal, vertical and material scopes of the civil service in the country. According to SIGMA Paper No. 55<sup>103</sup>, the position of SCS in Albania legally is mainly at an appropriate level, even though the report highlights several weaknesses. Some related to the law itself include unjustified exceptions to the horizontal and vertical scopes of the civil service with some institutions subordinated to the prime minister (PM) and line ministries, or use of "exceptional" procedures in the recruitment of SCS, and the lack of the implementation of ordinary admission procedures for filling senior managerial positions. Others are related to low implementation, such as: incomplete development of the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS); shortcomings in job descriptions; a decline in the ratio of effective participation in job vacancies; the lack of a policy document on salary reform; and performance appraisal not being well implemented.<sup>104</sup> The number of eligible candidates per position in Albania is still low, at only 2.1.<sup>105</sup> Also, Albania has listed the competencies required for the senior civil servant positions but has not yet specified their content.<sup>106</sup>

In BiH, despite a solid legal basis, merit-based recruitment is not sufficiently safeguarded in practice. The application procedures are overly formal at some levels (the state and the FBiH), and the capacities of the selection/competition committees are inadequate. Exceptions from merit-based recruitment in the hiring of temporary personnel and ensuring ethnic representation are impairing the application of the merit principle.<sup>107</sup> The 2017 SIGMA Report on BiH identifies several other shortcomings, such as: the existence of a very fragmented public administration system; an insufficiently safeguarded merit-based recruitment procedure, thereby allowing direct or indirect political influence on appointments to senior managerial positions at all levels of the administration, as well as the appointment of "acting heads" at all levels of administration and limited resources being available for training.<sup>108</sup> In addition, the country has not yet adopted the new Public Administration Reform Strategy and its Action Plan.<sup>109</sup> At the PAR Special Group meeting held in January 2018, the European Commission called on all levels of the BiH government to prevent any further politicisation of the civil service by harmonising and aligning civil service laws with Public Administration principles, and ensuring open, transparent and merit-based recruitment for high-, middle- and expert-level civil servant positions, using written tests and interviews, with the

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<sup>101</sup> The Optimisation of Public Administration in the Western Balkan Region – Comparative Study with Baseline Analysis, ReSPA, 2016, p. 124-125.

<sup>102</sup> SIGMA Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administrations, Albania, November 2017.

<sup>103</sup> Analysis of the Professionalisation of the Senior Civil Service and the Way Forward for the Western Balkans, SIGMA, 2018.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>105</sup> In Serbia for instance, that number is 5.2., but in Montenegro 1.4. Data is missing for the other administrations.

<sup>106</sup> Analysis of Professionalisation of the Senior Civil Service and the Way Forward for the Western Balkans, SIGMA, 2018, p. 52-53, 57-58.

<sup>107</sup> SIGMA Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administrations, BiH, November 2017, p. 71.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>109</sup> BiH has not fully developed and adopted a new strategic framework since the PAR Strategy and Revised Action Plan 1 (RAP1) expired in 2014. See: <http://rju.parco.gov.ba/en/o-rju/strateski-okviri-za-rju/>.

high involvement of civil-service agencies and independent experts, impartial selection panels and by selecting the best-ranked candidate.<sup>110</sup>

Similar problems exist in the public service and HRM reform areas in Macedonia as well, according to the 2017 SIGMA Report.<sup>111</sup> Among the problems, the Report lists the exclusion of some institutions from the scope of the Law on Public-Sector Employees, including specific ministries such as the Ministry of the Interior, or even the passive role of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) and the Administration Agency (AA) in jointly coordinating the civil service and public employment systems.<sup>112</sup> In addition, the ongoing political crisis is noted to have negatively impacted the preparation of plans and strategies, as well as the implementation of the new legislation.<sup>113</sup> The PAR Special Groups Meeting of October 2017 concluded, among other things, that the appointment of top managerial positions, secretaries (category A), heads of agencies and other institutions from the executive branch should be based on merit and open competition. Also, the key findings/recommendations from the ReSPA Studies recommend the further training of personnel managers.<sup>114</sup>

With regard to the public service and HRM in Kosovo\*, the SIGMA Report of 2017 praises the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) for the substantial progress in the implementation of the civil service job classification in government institutions, even though it identifies several challenges that remain to be solved.<sup>115</sup> The capacity for strategic planning and human resources management is limited in the country. The other key weaknesses are as follows: the ad-hoc composition of the selection panels, undefined job profiles, political influence on SCS recruitment, an inconsistent salary system and an insufficient training budget. In addition, the public perception of corruption is high.

Concerning Montenegro, the SIGMA Report Montenegro 2017 assesses that the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees (CSL) defines a clear horizontal, vertical and material scope of the civil service, but is limited to the state authorities and the administrations listed in the CSL.<sup>116</sup> The country reflects several weaknesses in the Public Service and HRM. The ReSPA study of 2015 proposed at least two recommendations to Montenegro to improve these weaknesses, such as the introduction of written examinations for senior civil servants and the introduction of competency-based interviews<sup>117</sup>. However, the SIGMA 2017 report still identifies several of those problems as remaining. The concerns identified by SIGMA include: a lack of strategic approach in the identification of staff needs; insufficient continuous training and internal mobility; incomplete personal data in the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) and no interoperability with the payroll information system; a lack of adequate entry requirements, competency profiles, professionalism of assessment panels and methods, as well as political

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<sup>110</sup> BiH has not fully developed and adopted a new strategic framework since the PAR Strategy and Revised Action Plan 1 (RAP1) expired in 2014 <http://europa.ba/?p=54715>, 14/08/2018.

<sup>111</sup> SIGMA Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administrations, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, November 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>114</sup> Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans: Analysis and Recommendations, ReSPA, 2015, p. 68.

<sup>115</sup> SIGMA Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administrations, Kosovo\*, November 2017, p. 53.

<sup>116</sup> SIGMA Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administrations, Montenegro, November 2017, p. 52.

<sup>117</sup> Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans: Analysis and Recommendations, ReSPA, 2015, p. 71.

discretion in the appointment of senior managers; unequal payment for equivalent jobs; not sufficiently clear criteria and procedures to award bonuses, etc.<sup>118</sup> In addition, SIGMA found that the commitment to the training of senior managers is low and the state budget in this area is not sufficient.

Similar issues are identified in Serbia as well. According to the 2017 SIGMA Report on Serbia,<sup>119</sup> the scope of the civil service has improved since 2015, thanks to the adoption of two important pieces of legislation: the Law on the Salary System in the Public Sector and the Law on the Police. However, the main weaknesses of the CSL remain and these include: the limited application of recruitment and selection requirements to all civil service positions; the lack of a clear distinction between political and senior civil service positions; and appointments not being based on merit. SIGMA also identified a limitation in the remit of the Human Resource Management Service (HRMS), low capacity of the Administrative Inspection (AI), as well as the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) not being updated and not being connected with the other national databases.<sup>120</sup> SIGMA also identifies direct and indirect political influence on the recruitment of senior managers in the civil service. Regarding the latter, one of the conclusions of the PAR Special Group Meeting in November 2017 was to ensure that the amendments to the civil service law provide suitable solutions for guaranteeing the stability of senior positions.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned, it can be concluded that all WB countries face similar challenges in the public service and HRM. Considering that improving the professionalisation and depoliticisation of the senior civil service has been in focus of ReSPA ever since its establishment, a scaled-up approach would best serve the mentioned issue. In consultations with the beneficiary administrations of the region, ReSPA's contribution to the improvement of professionalisation and depoliticisation was identified in the following:

- Merit-based recruitment and selection, and
- Performance appraisal and career development.

The Working Group on Human Resource Management and Development will continue to be a relevant intergovernmental framework for the competent institution for regional cooperation and exchange in this area.

#### 4.2.1 Merit-based recruitment and selection

The integrated, efficient and modernised work of the administration, using a human resources management model based on competences is one of the strategic priorities of the Government of Macedonia.<sup>121</sup> Kosovo's Strategy includes the management and development of the civil service among the areas in which this strategy aims to direct resources and capacities in the next medium-term plan.<sup>122</sup> Albania has also set as a policy goal the development of a professional, impartial and independent and merit-based civil service.<sup>123</sup> Merit-based recruitment is also a strategic

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>119</sup> SIGMA Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administrations, Serbia, November 2017.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>121</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy 2017-2022, p. 27.

<sup>122</sup> Strategy on the Modernisation of Public Administration 2015-2020, p. 13.

<sup>123</sup> Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020, p. 26.



commitment in Serbia, Montenegro and BiH.<sup>124</sup>

The ReSPA Regional Study on *Improving the Implementation of Merit-Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans* (2015) shows that the ReSPA members and Kosovo\* have made considerable progress with regard to the formal institutionalisation of merit-based recruitment procedures, as far as access to the permanent civil service is concerned. The study further shows a high degree of compliance with the existing formal legal frameworks. However, across the region there is a widespread perception that recruitment procedures are not delivering high-quality outcomes and, as a result, the capacity of the civil service remains far lower than desired.

The main recommendations from the above-mentioned Study are focused on improving the quality of testing and interviewing, strengthening the capacities of the selection commissions, creating a more effective framework for human resources planning in order to support the timely implementation of personnel policies.

Analysis of the merit-based recruitment and selection indicators shows that in all WB countries merit-based recruitment has not been fully reached. The adequacy of policies, the legal framework and institutional set-up for professional human resource management in the public service has a regional average of 2 out of 5.<sup>125</sup> The merit-based termination of employment and demotion of civil servants<sup>126</sup>, as well as the merit-based recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants, also has a regional average of 2 out of 5.<sup>127</sup> Meanwhile, meritocracy and the effectiveness of the recruitment of civil servants<sup>128</sup> has a slightly higher regional average – 3 out of 5. In almost all WB countries SIGMA has identified shortcomings regarding the selection/appointment committees being mostly ad-hoc, with wide discretion in the recruitment and selection of civil servants (especially senior civil servants), a low number of eligible applicants for vacant civil service positions (especially for senior civil servant vacancies), a lacking or undeveloped competency framework, ineffective appeal system, etc.<sup>129</sup>

In providing support for the development of merit-based recruitment and selection, ReSPA will focus on the implementation of the professionalisation of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) Framework as defined by SIGMA, which consists of: a clear, non-discriminatory and appropriate eligibility criteria; an approachable, reasonable and transparent application process through competition; relevant professional competency profiles to communicate the expected performance and needed competencies; a merit-based recruitment and selection through competition; a set of selection criteria relevant for SCS positions; testing methods that comprehensively screen professional competence; professional, neutral and well-informed selection committees; transparent and timely appointment, ensuring both the principle of merit and political acceptance and an effective appeal system. As a result, it is expected that: the recruitment and selection system is trusted and legitimate; the number of candidates is sufficient; competent candidates with integrity are appointed to the SCS positions; the SCS positions are duly filled; the SCS is representing the societal composition (gender, ethnicity, disabilities, etc);

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<sup>124</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia, p. 11; Public Administrative Reform Strategy in Montenegro (2016-2020), p. 18; Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform in BiH (2018-2022), draft version, p.34;

<sup>125</sup> Albania (3/5); BiH (1/5); Macedonia (2/5); Kosovo\* (3/5); Montenegro (3/5); Serbia (2/5).

<sup>126</sup> Albania (2/5); BiH (3/5); Macedonia (2/5); Kosovo\* (3/5); Montenegro (2/5); Serbia (2/5).

<sup>127</sup> Albania (4/5); BiH (2/5); Macedonia (1/5); Kosovo\* (2/5); Montenegro (2/5); Serbia (2/5).

<sup>128</sup> Albania (4/5); BiH (1/5); Macedonia (4/5); Kosovo\* (3/5); Montenegro (2/5); Serbia (2/5).

<sup>129</sup> See: SIGMA, Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries.



and a stable SCS will result from the appointment of competent people.

As per the above-mentioned and many other indicators and analyses, ReSPA is best positioned to take action to improve merit-based recruitment and selection in WB countries. ReSPA will provide support in upgrading the legal framework, strengthening the capacities of the Selection Committees, development/improvement of guidelines for conducting interviews for senior civil servants, improvement of a competency framework, etc. It will support its members in exchanging experiences, learning from one another, but also learning from other countries where examples of good practices exist.

ReSPA will continue to support the countries through its mechanism of support. The recommendations from the ReSPA Regional Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit-Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans updated in 2018 will serve as a basis for developing applications to be supported by ReSPA through the in-country support mechanism.

#### 4.2.2 Performance appraisal and career development

There are two basic forms through which the depoliticisation process is carried out: the development and strengthening of career systems, including guarantees for promotion based on professional merits and the contribution given; and the establishment of mechanisms that will prevent political influence on the work of career officials.

Performance appraisal is a useful feedback tool for assessing professional development needs and ensuring a more systematic approach to professional development. The appraisal at the level of senior civil servants (SCS) should be adjusted to the position of senior civil servants in the hierarchy and their proximity to the political sphere. Senior civil servants' direct superiors are often ministers, and this is sometimes used as an excuse to exclude some SCS sub-groups from appraisal procedures. Deciding about the second instance in performance appraisals of SCS is a challenge.

All the Western Balkan administrations have the relevant legislation in place, which also covers SCS, at least to some extent, but there is little evidence of its effective use. Even though appraisals are mandatory, the SIGMA 2017 monitoring reports revealed that there are often problems of compliance with this requirement at the general civil-service level. Serious doubts about the actual use of appraisals, especially at the SCS level, were also expressed in the ReSPA Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit-Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans.

Kosovo\*, in its PAR Strategy, sets as a priority policy the implementation of a new performance system based on the clear individual and institutional objectives and linked with the general planning system of the government.<sup>130</sup> In Objective 7, Albania includes strengthening of the appraisal methodology, as well as a salary upgrade as a result of the performance appraisal,<sup>131</sup> and Macedonia includes the latter in the expected results.<sup>132</sup> Serbia has listed among the actions

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<sup>130</sup> Strategy on the Modernisation of Public Administration 2015-2020, p. 21.

<sup>131</sup> Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020, p. 29.

<sup>132</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy 2017-2022, p. 38.

of the Action Plan on PAR Strategy amendments to the Civil Service Law to improve, among other things, performance appraisals as well.<sup>133</sup> Montenegro highlights in its PAR Strategy that it is necessary to improve the existing performance appraisal system, in order to reward the best individuals in accordance with the results achieved.<sup>134</sup>

All the Western Balkan administrations have stated that the primary purpose of appraisals is performance assessment, i.e. evaluation of the achievement of objectives. In Albania, BiH (RS), Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia this instrument is also used to assess management competencies. However, considering that the generic criteria applied to the entire civil service are not precise or practical enough to evaluate the performance of senior managers, designing a specific assessment system for the SCS similar to EU member countries, would be positive.

The SIGMA sub-indicators related to performance appraisal, such as: professionalism of performance assessments;<sup>135</sup> linkage between performance appraisals and measures designed to enhance professional achievement<sup>136</sup>; and the right of civil servants to appeal mobility decisions<sup>137</sup> have average values – 2 out of 4. Linkage between the performance appraisals and measures designed to enhance the professional achievement is at the highest level in Albania and Kosovo\* (4 out of 4), the lowest in BiH (0 out of 4) and is average in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (2 out of 4). All WB countries entitle civil servants to the right to appeal against performance appraisal decisions (maximum value 2 out of 4).

According to the SIGMA research, performance appraisals are viewed by all Western Balkan administrations as a formality with a very little practical value. Furthermore, the performance appraisal systems are formal or not linked to professional/career development activities when used. The only apparent practical value of appraisals is as grounds for dismissal, although they are not used in this way in practice.

Albania, BiH, Kosovo\* and Montenegro have designed distinct appraisal systems for at least some positions within the SCS group, laying out criteria more specific to managerial tasks.

In the WB countries, establishing a linkage between the performance appraisal and the need for training and education remains the main challenge. Also, linking the performance appraisal with promotion and remunerations in either a positive or a negative direction remains a challenge. This way of building an objective performance appraisal system which would support professional achievement and career development is needed in the region. Performance appraisals should be used to support the professional/career development and performance of managers.

In 2018 ReSPA prepared a regional study on Performance Evaluation with recommendations which will be taken into account when organising the activities. Bearing in mind the above, ReSPA will provide support in the development and strengthening of career systems and advocate for promotion based on professional merits. ReSPA will also support the upgrading of the legal frameworks, development of policy papers for medium-term career development, development of

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<sup>133</sup> Action Plan for Implementation of Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020, p. 13.

<sup>134</sup> Public Administrative Reform Strategy in Montenegro 2016-2020, p. 41.

<sup>135</sup> Albania (2/4); BiH (2/4); Macedonia (2/4); Kosovo\* (3/4); Montenegro (3/4); Serbia (3/4).

<sup>136</sup> Albania (4/4); BiH (0/4); Macedonia (2/4); Kosovo\* (4/4); Montenegro (2/4); Serbia (2/4).

<sup>137</sup> Albania (2/2); BiH (2/2); Macedonia (0/2); Kosovo\* (2/2); Montenegro (2/2); Serbia (2/2).

guidelines and strengthening of the skills and capacities for proper implementation of the performance appraisal, and job classification.

### 4.3. Specific objective 3: Improved quality of public services

The main goal of public administration reform is to provide a prompt, efficient and transparent public service to citizens and businesses. Kosovo\*, recognising that public administration is responsible for providing efficient and effective administrative services, acknowledges that it needs to create the conditions for equal access to services, to eliminate procedural red tape and to use new methods through information technology, efficiency and effectiveness, both in terms of monetary costs and in terms of their time efficiency.<sup>138</sup> In 2014 at the Ministerial Governing Board meeting in Skopje, it was proposed and decided that Quality Management in Public Administration and Public Services (QM in PA and PS) would become part of ReSPA's portfolio. Indeed, the introduction of QM into any organisation leads towards the cultivation of an organisational culture by providing equal attention to the most important QM building blocks: Needs Assessment; Reengineering and Optimisation; Digitalisation; and Measuring Client Satisfaction. Consequently, within Specific Objective 3: Improved quality of public services, the relevant intervention areas were defined, including accountability.

In the domain Albania sets improved and concentrated public services as Objective 5, to be reached by reducing the causes of corruption and strengthening a civic-based ethic for public service delivery.<sup>139</sup> Macedonia sets the increased quality and availability of public services as an expected result.<sup>140</sup> Concerning service delivery, Montenegro intends to: improve efficiency, effectiveness and citizens' satisfaction with the quality of delivered administrative services; ensure interoperability between registers, and the availability of data from the registers to users; and the further development of an e-government portal.<sup>141</sup> In the area of service delivery reform, BiH plans to: improve the quality of the services delivered by the public administration; improve the accessibility of services through different channels of communication; and ensure a coherent improvement of the administrative and legal framework.<sup>142</sup> Measure 1.4 of the AP prescribes the establishing of solid coordination mechanisms enabling the harmonised development and functioning of e-government, and finalising the legal framework and procedures for development of e-government in Serbia.<sup>143</sup>

Apart from Albania, which has established a one-stop shop in two towns (Kruja and Kavaja), the other WB countries still cannot offer this comprehensive set of services to its citizens and businesses. One of the major findings in the SIGMA Monitoring Report 2017 is for a strategic framework for service delivery to be adopted and public institutions to be informed about it. Responsibilities for coordinating service delivery reforms for the delivery of physical and digital services are fragmented. The decision of whether to provide a physical or a digital channel for

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<sup>138</sup> Strategy on the Modernisation of Public Administration 2015-2020, p. 21.

<sup>139</sup> Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020, p. 25.

<sup>140</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy 2017-2022, p. 58.

<sup>141</sup> Public Administrative Reform Strategy in Montenegro 2016-2020, p. 45-46.

<sup>142</sup> Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform in BiH (2018-2022), draft version, p. 49-51.

<sup>143</sup> Action Plan for Implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020, p. 9.

each service is therefore not always optimal. While administrative simplification to reduce the time to deliver services is taking place in the course of the services' re-engineering, there is a need to determine a comprehensive strategy.

According to SIGMA, the key requirement in service delivery is a citizen-oriented public administration and for the quality and accessibility of public services to be ensured. The latest assessment of this carried out by SIGMA in 2017 indicates that delivery of citizen-oriented services<sup>144</sup> and the fairness and efficiency of administrative procedures<sup>145</sup> have a regional average score of 3 out of 5. On the other hand, the existence of enablers for public service delivery<sup>146</sup> and the accessibility of public services are assessed lower, with a regional average score of 2 out of 5.<sup>147</sup>

In order to raise awareness on this issue, and in strong cooperation with SIGMA, ReSPA recently completed a regional comparative study on service delivery, whose findings and recommendations will be the basis for the ReSPA support to WB countries in the coming years. The contribution to the improvement of quality of public services will be targeted at:

- Accessibility of public services
- Quality management in public services
- Digitalisation of public services
- Open Government Partnership

#### 4.3.1. Accessibility of public services

In Albania despite the fact that access to administrative services is constantly improving through the installation of new one-stop shops and increasingly available digital services on the e-albania.al portal, the accessibility of public buildings remains low and web accessibility standards have not been adopted.<sup>148</sup> According to the SIGMA sub-indicator, the perceived satisfaction with public services across the territory by population is very low (0 out of 3). The value of the sub-indicator on perceived time and cost of accessing public services by population is 1.5 out of 3.<sup>149</sup>

The accessibility of public services suffers from a high variation in the arrangements across BiH. The differences are present not only between the entities, but also between individual cantons. Except for business registration in the RS, no one-stop shop exists for either citizens or businesses. People with disabilities face a highly fragmented framework of strategies, laws and institutions without any systematic monitoring or analysis. The SIGMA composite indicator of the accessibility of public services in BiH has a value of 0 out of 5.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Albania (3/5); BiH (1/5); Macedonia (3/5); Kosovo\* (3/5); Montenegro (2/5); Serbia (3/5).

<sup>145</sup> Albania (4/5); BiH (3/5); Macedonia (4/5); Kosovo\* (2/5); Montenegro (4/5); Serbia (3/5).

<sup>146</sup> Albania (4/5); BiH (2/5); Macedonia (2/5); Kosovo\* (1/5); Montenegro (1/5); Serbia (1/5).

<sup>147</sup> Albania (2/5); BiH (2/5); Macedonia (3/5); Kosovo\* (3/5); Montenegro (2/5); Serbia (1/5).

See: SIGMA-OECD, Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration, 2017 for all WB countries.

<sup>148</sup> SIGMA Report, Albania 2017, p. 120.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>150</sup> SIGMA Report, BiH 2017, p. 135.

Kosovo\* does not have a general policy on accessibility to public services for people with disabilities. Public buildings remain inaccessible for people with limited mobility. There is also no e-government portal at present. Satisfaction with the general public services across the country is low, while people are more satisfied with accessibility to digital public services, reporting that the time required to use public services and their costs are reasonable.<sup>151</sup>

Macedonia has established a network of intermediaries, as well as an online one-stop shop for business start-up services. Citizens, however, do not have the same ease of accessing public services: there is a network of service providers across the country and some mobile service delivery units, but there are no one-stop shops or notable digital services to significantly facilitate administrative matters. The value of the SIGMA sub-indicator for the adequacy of the policy framework for public service users with special needs is 3 out of 4.<sup>152</sup>

Montenegro lacks a general policy on access to public services for people with disabilities, including physical access to public buildings for people with limited mobility. The level of satisfaction with the general public services across the country is low, however people are satisfied with the access to, response times of and costs of digital public services, assessing these as reasonable.<sup>153</sup> In Montenegro the government has also utilised one-stop shops and digitalisation to improve access to selected services, such as business registration, taxation and social security. There is still a large body of services that would benefit from easier access through better digitalisation. The information on government websites is in general well-presented and largely complies with international accessibility standards. The policy framework for the accessibility of services for people with disabilities is quite comprehensive, but the government faces major challenges in its implementation.<sup>154</sup> A main weakness identified is the inadequacy of the policy framework for public services for users with limited abilities.<sup>155</sup> The population is in general not satisfied with public services across the territory,<sup>156</sup> also reflecting a low perception of accessibility of digital public services<sup>157</sup>.

In Serbia, the government has made some progress in improving accessibility to services. One-stop shops have transformed and focused service delivery on specific areas. Digitalisation is contributing to better access through enhanced user interfaces and more efficient back-office workflows. However, fully digital services are still lacking. Progress has been made on the overall policy framework to integrate people with disabilities into mainstream service delivery. However, the government is collecting and producing very little data that would allow it to systematically monitor and reduce access barriers<sup>158</sup> and the overall level of accessibility of public services is assessed as low (1 out of 5). Government performance on accessibility in Serbia is also very low.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> SIGMA Report, Kosovo\* 2017, p. 112.

<sup>152</sup> SIGMA Report, Macedonia 2017, p. 108.

<sup>153</sup> Perceived satisfaction with public services across the territory by population (%) – 0/3. Perceived accessibility of digital public services by population (%) – 1/3. Perceived time and cost of accessing public services by population (%) – 2.5/3.

<sup>154</sup> SIGMA Report, Montenegro 2017, p. 108.

<sup>155</sup> Sub-indicator: Adequacy of policy framework for public service users with special needs – 1/4.

<sup>156</sup> Sub-indicator: Perceived satisfaction with public services across the territory by population (%) – 1/3.

<sup>157</sup> Sub-indicator: Perceived accessibility of digital public services by population (%) – 1/3.

<sup>158</sup> SIGMA Report, Serbia 2017, p. 124.

<sup>159</sup> Sub-indicators: Perceived satisfaction with public services across the territory by population (%) – 0/3; Perceived accessibility of digital public services by population (%) – 0/3; and Perceived time and cost of accessing public services by population (%) – 0.5/3.

In order to address this issue more strategically, a horizontal regional set of activities have been proposed. These are comprised of:

- Discussion on comparable international standards and best practices in addressing the question of the accessibility of public services. This would result in preparation of background materials for guidelines for addressing the issue of accessibility;
- Peer exchange in the domain of the regional best practices that have been identified (accessibility) and discussion on the possibilities of mapping excellent practices in ensuring the Accessibility of Public Services and through this development/moderation of the growing community of practitioners in the Western Balkans using the collaborative (on-line) space.

#### 4.3.2. Quality management in public services

Quality Management (QM) is a useful improvement managerial tool whose main feature is the endeavour for compromise with the customers' needs. It is interconnected with different processes starting with needs assessment, reengineering and digitalisation and measuring client satisfaction. All those processes may be implemented in a more sustainable manner if supported by the introduction of Change Management and it will be a constitutive element of the area of QM intervention. Quality, satisfaction and continuous improvement are becoming central elements in the reforms and the ways to enhance the institutional capacity, and are improving the efficiency (and effectiveness) of the public administration. The defining and positioning of quality management is especially important for the Western Balkans countries, since in reform documents it has quite often been placed under different topics and reform areas. Montenegro considers the achievement of improved efficiency, effectiveness and citizens' satisfaction with the quality of delivered administrative services as a priority of its national PAR Strategy<sup>160</sup>. Serbia is among the regional continues that in its Action Plan on PAR Strategy has included a specific action on the gradual introduction of a quality management system for the quality of public services through a pilot project in one selected state administration body.<sup>161</sup>

QM is either not introduced or not implemented in WB countries. Except for Macedonia, the SIGMA sub-indicators on the use of quality management tools and techniques are very low in the region.<sup>162</sup> In Albania and Kosovo\* a government-wide policy on introducing quality management models into the public administration is completely lacking. Albania has introduced a quality management framework sporadically, such as the pilot case of the ADISA, where standards to improve service delivery have been introduced.<sup>163</sup> Initial steps to introduce central tools to collect citizens' and businesses' feedback on service delivery have been taken in Kosovo\* as well, however the citizens' feedback collection tool, the E-box, provides little quality or usable feedback.<sup>164</sup> In BiH, quality management is being introduced at the state level, as well as in the Republic of Srpska, but is absent at the other administrative levels. It is recommended to both

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<sup>160</sup> Public Administrative Reform Strategy in Montenegro 2016-2020, p. 45.

<sup>161</sup> Action Plan for Implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020, p. 28.

<sup>162</sup> Albania: (1/4), BiH (0/4) Macedonia (3/4), Kosovo\* (0/4), Montenegro (0/4) and Serbia (0/4).

<sup>163</sup> SIGMA Report, Albania 2017, p. 117.

<sup>164</sup> SIGMA Report, Kosovo\* 2017, p. 102.

Kosovo\* and BiH to continue with initial promotion and training and to carry out the stage of piloting with the next steps.<sup>165</sup> Another key recommendation for BiH is to complete the stage of piloting the introduction of QM systems by involving other administrative-level institutions leading in PAR by making adjustments and preparing appropriate regulation before scaling it up.<sup>166</sup> A scaling-up of the QM systems and practices, and, based on the lessons learnt, the re-adjustment and re-regulation of the legal/policy and institutional framework, are recommended for Macedonia as well, as per a ReSPA study. In Montenegro, the PAR Strategy (2015-2020) also includes the introduction of quality management and several individual institutions are introducing quality management (e.g. ISO 424 standards) or conducting customer satisfaction surveys.<sup>167</sup> In both Serbia and Montenegro there is no effective promotion of quality management or best practices in user orientation due to a lack of capacities and human resources. Therefore, the recommendation is to promote QM tools to strengthen the quality of services and managerial accountability. Both Serbia and Montenegro could follow similar development paths with more emphasis on promotion and training, as well as reaching coherence between the QM systems and tools and the other aspects of the reforms.<sup>168</sup>

A clear strategic opportunity is the implementation of CAF in ReSPA, which will, besides enhancing ReSPA's internal capacities, engage the implementation of other QM instruments. In addition, benchmarking and bench learning should be promoted for various activities. The most important findings and recommendations from the Feasibility Study on a QM Centre in ReSPA are the following:

- Most of the tools/practices should be introduced with more emphasis on their interactions and potential synergies as demonstrated in some success cases, e.g. in the case of one-stop shops, where many processes had to be restructured and simplified (based on a previous understanding of users'/citizens' needs and expectations) as a precondition for a new kind of citizen service centre; or in the case of e-permits, where again many processes had to be restructured and red tape removed before an effective e-solution was possible.
- Building and branding an institution as a successful change agent in a context with many traditional barriers to reforms and changes, such as the case of the ADISA in Albania, could be a good example and inspiration for other countries to invest more in creating and branding champions of reform.
- The key focuses of ReSPA as a regional hub could be: support for countries in the area of promotion and training with a pool of trainers/experts and practitioners from the region and from the EU; networking activities for the exchange of experiences and tools/practices between the countries with a focus on emerging practices and success/failure factors; promotion of a more systemic and complexity-sensitive approach to the reform in this area, with a focus on reflection and adjustment as aspects missing in the current approach; coordination between donors and international support to make regional cooperation and the exchange of practices and solutions more dynamic and coherent.
- A long-term strategy for the information society (or digital society) should be developed and adapted to serve as an umbrella, covering, inter alia, the areas of e-government, open

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<sup>165</sup> Quality Management in Public Administration and Public Service in Western Balkans, ReSPA Beeline Analyses, 2017, p. 119.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>167</sup> SIGMA Report, Montenegro 2017, p. 102.

<sup>168</sup> Quality Management in Public administration and Public service in Western Balkans, ReSPA Beeline Analyses, 2017, p. 119-120.



government and cloud computing. This strategy should define the general goals that need to be achieved in each area.

The entire QM area will involve advancing capacities in the domain of different QM instruments (CAF, EFQM, ISO, etc.), which are related to the processes as well as the product (service optimisation) – initial capacity-building activities devoted to lean and agile learning, design thinking, etc. It will also include the development of methodology (with criteria and categories) for the application, selection and recognition of excellent examples of public services developed, as well as upgrading the knowledge, skills and enforcing network through bench learning and benchmarking (PA awards in the region, UNDESA, etc.).

In this area, the Working Group on Quality Management in Public Services will continue to provide programmatic guidance and serve as an intergovernmental forum for regional cooperation and exchange among the relevant institutions of the ReSPA members.

### 4.3.3. Digitalisation of public services

Complex administrative procedures are barriers to economic development. Therefore, for many countries, policies to reduce administrative burdens – cutting red tape – are a political priority. ReSPA's Comparative Regional Study on Legal Remedies in Administrative Procedures recommends the review and harmonisation of special procedural laws with new GAPAs, and a reduction in the number of special procedures to a level that guarantees the required scope of transparency and predictability in administrative proceedings and decision making.

As per the 2017 SIGMA reports, the fairness and efficiency of administrative procedures in WB countries were assessed with a regional average of 3 out of 5.<sup>169</sup>

Several ReSPA studies (e.g. From E- to Open Government, Abuse of IT for Corruption, E-Participation Guidelines, etc.) produced important recommendations that lead to the formulation of the Digitalisation of Public Services intervention area. It is also linked with the Berlin Process agenda, as well as with the EU–Western Balkan Six Flagship Initiatives (Initiative for a Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans).

A key aspect of government IT systems is improving their ability to communicate, exchange information and make use of existing information. By offering electronic and informative services, the accessibility of information about public services will be improved, as well as the level of public awareness about the procedures of public service delivery. These services will act as a catalyst in reducing queues in public agencies' receptions, reducing corruption and bureaucracy, providing equality among citizens, decreasing service obtainment time and promoting government transparency. A long-term strategy for the information society (or digital society) should be developed and adapted to serve as an umbrella, covering, inter alia, the areas of e-government, open government and cloud computing. This strategy should define the general goals that need to be achieved in each area.

The activities will be related to building capacities in the ReSPA countries to improve open data in the Western Balkans, including: metadata guidelines, including instructions on how to close possible gaps in terms of the metadata design process (standard) and metadata maintenance. It

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<sup>169</sup> Albania (4/5), BiH (3/5), Macedonia (4/5), Kosovo\* (3/5), Montenegro (4/5) and Serbia (3/5).

will encompass also design of “Zero Open Data guidelines”, i.e. design of guidelines with a special focus on opening up data and cyber security, as well as learning from the region and abroad through: open data summits illustrating the quality of open data. The entire digitalisation segment will be aimed at improving public services (e-services) in the process of its transformation (digitalisation) with a special emphasis on open data and metadata, cyber security and the use of new IT technologies.<sup>170</sup>

There is a need for interoperability in the cross-border services in line with EU practice. It is expected that, after Montenegro, other ReSPA members will also be included in ISA 2 activities.

In this area, the Working Group on E-Governance will continue to provide programmatic guidance and serve as an intergovernmental forum for regional cooperation and exchange among the relevant institutions of the ReSPA members.

#### 4.3.4. Open Government Partnership

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was launched in 2011 to provide an international platform for domestic reformers committed to making their governments more open, accountable and responsive to citizens. The Open Government Partnership brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive and accountable. ReSPA has organised a number of activities related to the OGP agendas of its members and has enabled connection with key international players.

Further efforts are needed in the implementation of the OGP's adoption of monitoring and measurement tools, as well as the implementation of open data and the measurement of transparency and the impact of open data. An OGP Western Balkan Forum to discuss enhancing regional cooperation could be ‘used’ as a fast-growing platform for meaningful exchange.

Building on its positive results, ReSPA will continue promoting the OGP in its future activities and will support the participation of its members in the OGP global summits. This intervention area will be intrinsically connected with the transparency of public administration, which will highlight the importance of cooperation with the relevant institutions and IT institutions/departments (regarding the use of open data).

## 5. Monitoring and evaluation

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The Strategy covers the period 2019–2024. Bearing in mind its period of six years, it is envisaged to conduct an interim update of the Strategy.

The Strategy will provide the basis for a well-functioning monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system in ReSPA, while contributing to spreading the M&E culture among ReSPA members and strengthening their capacities in this domain. In support of M&E development, an intervention logic has been developed that articulates what the activities to be implemented within the Strategy are

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<sup>170</sup> ReSPA members will be involved in two large projects organised by the DG CONNECT, which will include blockchains and the use of artificial intelligence.

expected to produce, starting from the outputs, which are under direct control of ReSPA, to the outcomes (subject to direct influence) and impact (subject of indirect influence). The intervention logic has been developed as a collective endeavour by ReSPA staff, GB and WG members, the Advisory Board and the EC.

A proper M&E will help ReSPA to achieve greater effectiveness, efficiency and visibility. A well-established monitoring system would primarily contribute to:

- Better reporting on the progress achieved to both the ReSPA members and the stakeholders, as well as the donor community.
- A better decision-making process at different points in time;
- Better measuring of ReSPA's own contribution to the ReSPA members' public administrations;
- Improved effectiveness of ReSPA's actions;
- Timely undertaking of corrective measures based on the identified problems and/or potential risks.

In order to monitor the progress achieved, a monitoring and evaluation matrix has been developed with defined indicators linked to the different levels of the strategic planning defined in the previous chapter. For each indicator, baselines will need to be defined, together with the data collection tools and methods, responsibilities and frequency for reporting. Monitoring will be focused only on the outputs since the outcomes and impact are out of the reach of the monitoring system. Collection of the data required for monitoring ReSPA's activities will be conducted on both a daily and a quarterly basis, depending on the data that needs to be collected. The timeline of data collection will be provided in the M&E matrix. The collected data will provide systemic information on where the activities are at any given time relative to the outputs and related indicators.

The monitoring that will be conducted on quarterly basis will start with the Working Group members, to the National Coordinators and then towards the ReSPA Secretariat, and further to the GB at the senior official level and to the GB at the ministerial level.

ReSPA has initiated monitoring of the recommendations from its comparative studies/baseline analysis and their linking with the projects supported through the in-country support mechanism. ReSPA Programme Assistants and National Coordinators are included in the process of the collection of data from the relevant institutions.

Reporting on monitoring of the ReSPA Strategy (2019-2024) will be conducted quarterly, in line with the respective contractual obligations towards the EC and the requirements of the Rules of Procedures on reporting to the GB. Analysis of the data will be conducted by the Secretariat.

Evaluation of the ReSPA Strategy (2019-2024) will be conducted on two-year basis with the particular focus paid to: outcomes and impact. The following five criteria will be addressed during the evaluation: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact. The evaluation will be founded on the intervention logic. Following consideration of the evaluation report by the GB, ReSPA will organise an annual conference at the ministerial level which will gather representatives of the ReSPA members, stakeholders, civil-society organisations and other relevant entities in order to present the Evaluation Report

## 6. Developmental opportunities

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### 6.1. Additional members, observers and participants

ReSPA provides for modalities that may enable enhanced cooperation between ReSPA and third countries, as well as, the admission of additional members into ReSPA.

The ReSPA Agreement envisages that additional members may be admitted into the organisation. It is stipulated that other candidate and potential candidate countries to the European Union, as defined by the European Union, may apply to accede to the present Agreement and thus to become members of ReSPA. Resolutions regarding applications to accede to the Agreement will be adopted by the Governing Board of ReSPA by a unanimous decision of all the members of ReSPA. All the members of ReSPA enjoy the same rights and duties and contribute to the ReSPA budget in equally.

Furthermore, besides the status of ReSPA member, the ReSPA Agreement has envisaged the possibility for other candidate and potential candidate countries to the European Union, as defined by the European Union, to apply to become observers in ReSPA. Observers in ReSPA may attend meetings and participate fully in the Governing Board without the right to vote. Resolutions regarding applications to become an observer in ReSPA for a two-year period, as well as resolutions on renewal of the status of observer, will be adopted by the Governing Board of ReSPA by a unanimous decision of all ReSPA members. The activities of ReSPA may be financed by observers.

Finally, it is also envisaged that other candidate and potential candidate countries to the European Union, as defined by the European Union, the Member States of the European Union or European Economic Area, and other states and organisations may apply to participate in the activities of ReSPA. Resolutions regarding applications to become participants in ReSPA will be adopted by the Governing Board of ReSPA by a unanimous decision of all members of ReSPA. ReSPA may charge for such participation according to its Financial Regulations.

ReSPA will explore the modalities, interests and possibilities of involving Turkey, being a candidate for EU membership, and other countries covered by the EU Neighbourhood Policy, into ReSPA's programmes and activities (Georgia and Moldova)

### 6.2. Potential partnering

Given the importance of the PAR as one of the three preconditions for EU accession and the ever growing need for enhanced public-sector capacities as recognised by the EC report, OECD/SIGMA and strategic and programmatic documents of the ReSPA members, ReSPA needs to provide adequate support and to help address these challenges in the Western Balkan region.

The key objective is to help establish a framework for resource mobilisation that will increase the scope and impact of those activities of ReSPA which are contributing to the implementation and reach of ReSPA's strategic goals.

To achieve this, ReSPA will take a two-pronged approach.

- 1) In relation to the donor organisations active in the Western Balkan region, it will identify thematic areas of work that will match the interest of a donor with ReSPA's field of expertise. Upon mutual agreement, the financial assistance will be used to build up ReSPA's administrative basis, to expand the existing ReSPA initiatives and/or to develop new ones within this Strategy. In this respect, ReSPA will seek to engage national and regional organisations/institutes with the relevant expertise in the implementation of such initiatives.
- 2) Joint initiatives may be explored and agreed with the relevant international organisations and other recognised organisations/institutions. The aim will be to pool financial and human resources jointly, in order to maximise the impact on the ground and build on mutually reinforcing strengths in PAR. In interacting with its partners, ReSPA will use its own institutional mechanisms with the aim of establishing cost- and resource-sharing arrangements, as well as to collect revenues from related activities.

In the environment of a number of funding opportunities, ReSPA will provide support to its members in fundraising, based on the recommendations provided in ReSPA's regional comparative studies that have been generated so far. In this way ReSPA will support the members in obtaining donor funds for the solving of some of their issues and achieving a wider-range impact from the EU funding provided for ReSPA's activities. The cooperation that was established with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom and the British Council is one of the examples of a successfully implemented cooperation project. The leadership programme for civil servants will be developed and implemented in cooperation with and with the support of the Council of Europe.

It is worthy of note that the expansion of ReSPA activities will require additional operational and human resources for their quality implementation.

### **6.3. Business development**

In the past period, ReSPA has been tentatively exploring the possibilities for business development, through communication with a few potential partners. Simultaneously, ReSPA has been searching and evaluating the potential for the supply and demand of services for which ReSPA, in partnership with other organisations and institutions, could offer its customised services and deliverables. Bidding for new projects requires established partnerships in order to enrich the portfolio of potential deliverables, and then applying for additional donor funds in line with ReSPA's interests and capabilities and those of other partner organisations. Success in business development would enable ReSPA to generate additional income for its Secretariat and increase the impact of its activities in the region.

Besides the programmatic objectives, the key outcome would be to secure ReSPA's sustainability. ReSPA will explore the potentials and results from the development of ReSPA's business

activities. The document defining ReSPA's Business Development Potentials should include the following issues:

- Identification of the services, segmenting and positioning of the international public service market which could be approached by ReSPA, conducting market analysis of the trends and needs, and ReSPA's positioning within them;
- Development of a database of the presently active organisations and institutions involved in similar activities – identifying potential viable partners for ReSPA in the implementation of joint activities, fundraising and similar efforts;
- A SWOT/PEST analysis of ReSPA regarding the viability and sustainability of the proposed business development model;
- Methods and activities for establishing strategic alliances, the promotion of deliverables and potentials including a financial planning strategy and methodology;
- Personnel Plan – estimate of the allocation of the required minimum capacities necessary in the next three years, along with estimates of the related costs;
- Identification of the proper controls to ensure discipline in the implementation of the plan, and contingency planning;
- The considering of the introduction of a regional professional journal in which the papers of public servants and scholars could be published;
- Exploration of the possibilities for development of a regional executive Masters in Public Administration (MPA) programme in cooperation with the relevant academic institutions from the EU Member States and academics from the Western Balkan region and its implementation in ReSPA.

## 7. Financial and human resources for strategy implementation

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The indicative financial plan/funds needed for implementation of the Strategy for the period 2019–2024 (6 years) amounts to approximately €11,900,000.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Institutional Costs/Core Budget	900,000	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>
Activities – Objective 1	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000
Activities – Objective 2	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
Activities – Objective 3	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,800,000</b>	<b>1,900,000</b>	<b>1,900,000</b>	<b>1,900,000</b>	<b>1,900,000</b>	<b>1,900,000</b>

Besides the commitment of ReSPA's members, the following elements will also influence ReSPA's longer-term sustainability:

- A potential increase in annual contributions, involvement of new members/participants, other donors/partners to reach €1 million/year for operational costs;
- Urgent solving of accession by Kosovo\* to the ReSPA Agreement and payment of the contribution by Kosovo\*;
- Commitment of the EU to continue funding ReSPA's activities/provide grants from 2019 onwards;
- ReSPA's capability to provide added value to the public governance and PAR agenda of its members and to their EU association and accession policies;
- Diversification of funding sources.

ReSPA will show its ability to overcome or mitigate the effects of the risks and to carry on its continuing readiness to adapt its way of work to a changeable environment and the increasingly demanding needs for capacity development of the public administrations of its members. ReSPA is currently considering diversifying its funding and may decide to start fundraising efforts in the coming years, in order to provide funds for activities that cannot fit within the budget approved by the EC, as well as to contribute to its core budget. In addition, comparative studies and policy recommendations have been produced, and the recommendations of these studies are valuable information for encouraging further work on the diversification of activities and funding.

## 8. Potentials for ReSPA beyond 2024

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The ReSPA Agreement (Article 30 thereof) envisages the limited duration of ReSPA with the possibility of extending this period. The duration of the ReSPA Agreement was extended in 2016, and it will be in force until 31 July 2024. The issue of a possible extension should be decided by the ReSPA members at least two years before the expiration of the validity period, i.e. by July 2022.

Since the Strategy covers the period of the Agreement's validity, it is worth pointing out the potentials for continued cooperation among the ReSPA members beyond 2024: regional cooperation was conceptualised as a trajectory that should lead the participating parties towards full integration within the EU. Furthermore, regional cooperation has spread over different areas of mutual exchange and enhanced support among the involved parties and their connections, not only with the EU but also with its members, other international organisations and third countries.

ReSPA has offered a structured, institutionalised and reliable framework for cooperation and support since 2010 in the area of public administration, has strengthened exchange with the EU and its members and has contributed to the development of administrative and human capacities in the Western Balkans in accordance with the European Principles of Public Administration. During this period, ReSPA has demonstrated its ability to reconsider its concrete programmes and



activities within the given mandate in order to adapt its operations and cooperation modalities to the best needs of the region. Thus, ReSPA has evolved from a training institution into a regional hub offering a wide range of cooperation modalities and support instruments to its members.

These dynamics of change and evolution proved their flexibility and sensitivity for adapting to new roles and tasks, and demonstrated ReSPA's readiness to explore and implement the best ways to support its members to respond to particular challenges and reform requirements. This momentum should be followed beyond 2024 and ReSPA should be further used as a tool for strengthening regional cooperation among its members. ReSPA will continue to support the policy coordination efforts and the specific networking and exchange platforms that it has already established and would be able to develop and empower further. The long-lasting reforming and modernising efforts, as well as the need to foster their effects and the further need for constant exchange among the administrations, would also require ReSPA's presence as a cooperative framework in the future. The possible accession of some ReSPA members to the EU should be used as a good opportunity to enhance their exchange within the existing framework and particularly to enable a spill-over of the acquired experience gained through the work and national representation within the EU intergovernmental bodies and structures.

If further support by the EU and commitment from ReSPA's members to regional cooperation in the area of ReSPA's mandate is present, it is reasonable to expect another extension of the duration of validity of the ReSPA Agreement beyond 1 August 2024 for the period as agreed by its members.