

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

Expert in Institutional Development and Financial Sustainability

Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is a regionally owned international organisation and a joint endeavour of the European Commission and the Western Balkan administrations. Governed and managed by its five Members - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia - with Kosovo* participating as a beneficiary, ReSPA serves as a central platform for advancing Public Administration Reform, strengthening regional cooperation and bringing administrations closer to the European Administrative Space.

Guided by its Strategic Orientation 2025–2030, ReSPA promotes professional, accountable, resilient, transparent, citizen-oriented and innovative public administrations. Its work covers policy management, better regulation and simplification; European integration and accession negotiations; human resources management and professional development; service delivery, digitalisation and quality management; and public financial management.

ReSPA delivers regional learning, peer exchange, research, mobility and on-demand support. Its sixth EC Grant Contract, “Enhancing public governance and EU integration in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership region: Support to ReSPA for advancing the Public Administration Reform Agenda”, also supports engagement with Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia. ReSPA cooperates with DG ENEST, OECD/SIGMA, European public administration networks and partners including EU Member States.

EU enlargement and the evolving EU funding architecture require ReSPA to assess how its own mandate, governance, operating model, administrative systems and financing should develop. Different accession trajectories may change Members’ needs, eligibility for assistance and expectations of regional cooperation. ReSPA must also prepare for the transition from the 2021–2027 EU financial framework to the proposed 2028–2034 framework, including the proposed Global Europe instrument, as a source of uncertainty to be explored through scenarios.

Description of the assignment

The assignment will provide a Discussion Paper on ReSPA’s Institutional Development and Financial Sustainability, with scenarios for implementation horizon of 2027–2030 and a strategic outlook to 2034, based on the organizational assessment, the existing strategic and

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

institutional framework and identified operational gaps and challenges. It will inform future decisions of the ReSPA's governing bodies and management on a viable future development path, strengthen institutional effectiveness and secure the capacities and resources needed to deliver its mission.

The strategy shall integrate strategic positioning, governance, identify opportunities for developing a new, sustainable business model and potential new sources of revenue and financing, organisational structure, administrative efficiency, staffing, programme development and new implementation modalities, partnerships and financial sustainability. Revenue diversification shall support ReSPA's mandate, regional ownership and quality of service. Recommendations must be proportionate to institutional capacity and supported by costs evidence and clear approval requirements. The analysis shall concentrate on three questions: how ReSPA can finance its core functions sustainably; which limited organisational and administrative improvements are most important to support this; and which feasible funding or delivery options merit further consideration.

3 Scope of work

3.1 Institutional diagnosis and strategic positioning

- Review and synthesize existing organizational assessments and programmatic evaluations, including findings from ReSPA CAF/PEF reports, gap assessments, audit results reports and programmatic evaluations. Establish a baseline of strengths, constraints, institutional risks and capacity gaps.
- Use targeted consultations to assess ReSPA's comparative advantage and relevance to members and beneficiaries, using targeted consultations and a proportionate comparison with relevant regional or international organisations. Identify duplication, unmet needs and opportunities for complementary partnerships.
- Analyse the implications of the latest EU enlargement policy, annual assessments, accession negotiations, public administration reform priorities and gradual integration for ReSPA's future role. Consider differentiated support needs before and after accession without assuming accession dates.
- Assess options for continued cooperation with Members following EU accession and for deeper engagement with Eastern Partnership administrations. Distinguish membership, beneficiary participation and partnership arrangements; identify their legal, governance, financial and operational implications.

3.2 Financial sustainability and resource planning

- Analyse the current financing model, including membership contributions, EC funding and other income; restrictions on use of funds; fixed and variable costs; staff and operating costs; project overheads; cost recovery; cash flow; and exposure to funding concentration or delayed payments.
- Prepare an editable financial model with annual projections for 2027–2030 and indicative assumptions to 2034. Separate secured resources, plausible funding prospects and financing gaps. Show recurrent expenditure, one-off transition costs, staffing implications, cash requirements and the funding of core institutional functions.

- Assess the adequacy and predictability of membership contributions and options for their future development. Model any potential new contributions separately and conditionally. Assess options for liquidity buffers and reserves, subject to applicable rules, and realistic efficiency measures that protect essential capacity and service quality.
- Test financial resilience against reduced or delayed EC funding, contribution arrears, slower fundraising, cost increases and changes in membership or service demand. Identify minimum viable operating requirements, corrective actions and decision triggers.
- Prepare an overview of a new, sustainable financial model and potential sources of revenue and financing, with a business model and financial sustainability strategy, roadmap and an overview of capacities needed to attract and manage the proposed external funding

3.3 EU funding readiness and diversification

- Map relevant opportunities under the current EU framework, including IPA III, the Western Balkans Growth Plan and Reform and Growth Facility, and relevant support for Eastern Partnership administrations. Distinguish instruments financing beneficiary administrations from funding routes that ReSPA itself may access or support through an authorised partnership.
- Analyse the proposed 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework and external action architecture, including Global Europe and enlargement-related support. Assess possible implications for ReSPA's positioning, programming, financing continuity and administrative readiness. Identify uncertainties, scenarios and actions that remain useful under different outcomes.
- Assess complementary bilateral, multilateral and international financial institution partnerships. Rank opportunities by strategic fit, verified eligibility or access route, likely scale and timing, core-cost coverage, co-financing, transaction costs, delivery capacity and risk. Avoid assuming eligibility or funding commitments.
- For up to five priority opportunities agreed with ReSPA, prepare concise access notes covering the instrument and official source, status and verification date, eligibility, partnership route, indicative timetable, documentation, cost-recovery conditions, internal preparations and next steps. For proposals, specify what must be monitored or confirmed rather than providing definitive application instructions.

3.4 Programme and service development

- Recommend adjustments to ReSPA's programme and delivery model in response to enlargement and institutional demand. Assess sustainable combinations of regional learning, leadership development, advisory support, peer exchange, research and communities of practice, including digital and blended delivery.
- Screen new services and fee-based activities where consistent with ReSPA's mandate and applicable rules. Assess demand, additional value, delivery capacity, pricing, full costs and break-even assumptions. Identify implications for equal access, donor conditions and ReSPA's public mission before recommending pilots.

3.5 Development scenarios and implementation roadmap

- Develop and compare at least three credible institutional development scenarios, realistic, optimistic and pessimistic: consolidation and internal modernisation; selective development of services and partnerships; and broader institutional development involving possible changes in membership or geographic engagement. Test each against different EU funding and accession assumptions.
- For each scenario, specify the strategic rationale, service offer, governance and administrative changes, staffing and systems requirements, financial projections, transition costs, risks and approval dependencies. Assess feasibility, affordability, regional ownership and benefits to Members and beneficiaries. Recommend a preferred path, explain trade-offs and identify conditions for moving between scenarios.
- Prepare a prioritised and costed roadmap covering immediate preparations, the first 12 months and subsequent actions to 2030, with review points towards 2034. Assign proposed owners, milestones, funding sources, dependencies, approval bodies and change management measures. Include a manageable set of indicators with baselines where available, proposed targets and reporting responsibilities—for example, core-cost coverage, funding concentration, liquidity, staff capacity, administrative processing times and evidence of programme results.

Methodology and working arrangements

The expert shall combine desk review, focused financial and organisational analysis, targeted interviews and one validation workshop involving the Secretariat and representatives of the Governing Board and Budget Committee. Consultations with DG ENEST and selected Members, beneficiaries and partners shall be arranged through ReSPA. Findings shall distinguish documented evidence, stakeholder views, assumptions and recommendations.

At inception, the expert and ReSPA shall agree the document list, consultation sample, analytical depth, financial assumptions, priority access notes and draft amendments. ReSPA shall designate a focal point, facilitate access to available information and consolidate comments. Where information is unavailable, the expert shall state the limitation and propose a proportionate way to validate the relevant assumption.

The 40-day assignment covers strategic assessment, options and practical implementation planning. It does not include a comprehensive legal audit, complete rewriting of all internal regulations, submission of funding applications or implementation of restructuring. Further work identified shall be prioritised and costed in the roadmap. Changes to mandate, membership, rules, staffing or expenditure remain subject to the competent ReSPA bodies and applicable procedures.

The expert shall maintain confidentiality, disclose any conflicts of interest, handle institutional and personal data securely, and apply inclusive and status-neutral consultation practices. All outputs shall be prepared in English and submitted in editable formats. The financial model shall include transparent formulas, assumptions and instructions for updating it.

Necessary Qualifications, Experience and Skills

The expert shall demonstrate the following qualifications and experience:

- University degree in public administration, economics, finance, business administration, law or a related field; a Master's degree is preferred.
- At least 10 years of relevant experience in institutional and organisational development, strategic planning or financial sustainability, including work with regional or international organisations.
- Demonstrated experience preparing integrated institutional strategies addressing governance, organisational structures, business models and financing, administrative processes, staffing and change management, supported by examples of comparable assignments.
- Strong financial analysis and modelling skills, including institutional cost structures, core-cost financing, cash-flow planning, funding diversification and scenario analysis.
- Extensive knowledge of EU enlargement policy and EU external financing, including the current framework and proposals for 2028–2034; ability to assess funding access, institutional readiness and implications of policy uncertainty.
- Excellent analytical, consultation, facilitation and English drafting skills. Experience with public administrations in EU enlargement partners and the Western Balkans or Eastern Partnership region is an asset.

Timing and Location

The assignment is expected to be implemented from October 2026 to June 2027, according to a timetable to be agreed with ReSPA. The level of effort is estimated at 40 expert days.

The assignment will include a mix of desk work/home-based preparation and in-person facilitation of the discussions at the workshops/meetings. The exact dates and locations of workshops will be agreed with ReSPA in line with the overall programme calendar.

Remunerations

The maximum amount of funds allocated for this assignment is 20,000 EUR for a total of up to 40 expert days, calculated at 500 EUR per expert day. The payment will be made in one installment upon finalization of the assignment, in line with ReSPA contractual procedures and upon satisfactory completion of the agreed deliverables.

Note: This amount covers expert fees only. Travel, accommodation, meals, and other event-related costs will be provided separately by ReSPA and are not included in the expert fee.

Reporting and Final Documentation

The assignment shall run from October 2026 to June 2027, with a maximum of 40 expert days. The schedule below shall be confirmed at inception. Dates may be adjusted by agreement without increasing the overall level of effort or fee ceiling.

Deliverable	Minimum content	Timing	Days
1 Inception note	Methodology, work plan, consultation plan, information needs and agreed priorities.	November 2026	2
2 Institutional diagnostic	Assessment of strategy, governance, staffing, administrative systems and finances; baseline and priority gaps.	November 2026	8
3 Draft strategy and tools	Development scenarios and recommended path; financial model; funding map and access notes; proposed operating model; roadmap and amendment matrix with priority draft wording.	December 2026	20
4 Validation workshop	Presentation and facilitation of one workshop; record of feedback, areas of agreement and decisions still required.	December 2026 – February 2027	3
5 Final strategy package	Revised strategy and all supporting tools; executive summary; response to consolidated comments; brief final assignment report.	By June 2027	7

Documents required for payment

- Invoice (signed original);
- Timesheets (signed original);
- Final brief report on the assignment