



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

**Launching of the ReSPA regional
Comparative eGovernment study and holding
eGovernment networking event
21-22 February 2013
Skopje, Macedonia**

Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is a unique historical endeavour to support the creation of accountable, effective and professional public administration systems for the Western Balkans on their way to EU accession. The initial objective behind the ReSPA initiative was to boost regional co-operation in the field of public administration and strengthen administrative capacity and the development of human resources in line with the principles of the European Administrative Space. The main goal of this initiative is the development of an effective system of professional networking, as well as management and knowledge sharing, so that collaboration and cooperation on regional/national projects for the introduction of eGovernment systems/services and their promotion are based on the actual requirements of the countries in the region. These activities will be carried out primarily between civil servants responsible for the process of establishment of the eGovernment system in the context of the public administration reform process in the countries of the Western Balkans, harmonized with European principles and practices in this field.

This unique network of senior eGovernment officials from six ReSPA member countries and Kosovo has proved itself as a solid and sustainable group of committed civil servants. It was discussed and accepted at the previous meeting in September 2012 to have next meeting in one of the ReSPA member countries in order to gain a deeper inside view of eGovernment related activities and to discuss the progress and findings of the eGovernment Comparative Study, currently in progress. The Government of Macedonia has generously offered to host this special meeting in Skopje. The focus of the meeting is as follows:

- To discuss the main findings and conclusions of the eGovernment Comparative Study;
- To discuss the topic “User-friendly and accessible eGovernment services”.

ReSPA has commissioned a regional study on the Comparative Overview of the Provision of E-Services to citizens in the Western Balkan region. Interpretations of eGovernment are broad and divergent. Generally speaking, eGovernment can be defined as the use of ICT for delivering more effective and efficient government services to citizens, businesses or government agencies, by various electronic means of communication, such as the Internet, telephone, kiosks, wireless devices or other systems. eGovernment is still not widely used by government institutions in the Western Balkan (WB) countries, in particular in the domain of communication between government and Citizens (G2C) and government and businesses (G2B). However, it is very important for modern society, including for transition countries like the WB, to enable all relevant stakeholders (citizens, enterprises and organizations) to conduct necessary government tasks efficiently and effectively in terms of time, cost and organizational management.

It is thus essential to detect the extent to which eGovernment (as the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by government) is being developed in WB countries, how it is maintained and upgraded, its state of art in terms of human capital knowledge (knowledge and skills), and the needs for further upgrade through capacity building and training. eGovernment has been a very important field of exploration in the past few years in most countries around the world, including in the developing countries of the WB region.

The topic for discussion “User-friendly and accessible eGovernment services” was selected jointly by the group members as one of the priority discussion topics for the network.

If successfully implemented, eGovernment will bring wide societal benefits, such as greater efficiency, accountability and accessibility of public services. The main public institutions responsible for providing services to citizens must identify the critical factors needed for the successful introduction of eGovernment, both at the national and municipality level. They will need to focus on the following key drivers: legislative framework, ICT usage, institutional and capacity building including the training of personnel, municipal leadership support and appropriate funding. With the appropriate use of ICT, countries have the opportunity to make significant progress in a relatively short time period and to place themselves alongside other efficient, citizen-oriented governments.

The key components of user-friendly and accessible eGovernment services are similar in every country, although cultural and administrative traditions may cause differences in implementation and user interfaces.

The key success factors are (1) systematic approach to eServices implementation and (2) the development of win-win situations between government and end users (citizens, businesses, NGOs). The government should consider the transition to eServices as a general, non-reversible and integral part of the administrative reforms in all government institutions, not simply as a campaign gimmick. Win-win situations for eGovernment also means that benefits accrue both on the government side as well as to society as whole, i.e. less administrative burden for citizens and businesses, less time, transportation and money needed from citizens and businesses to get public services, in general – more efficiency in the society.

Overall objectives

The overall objective of the launching event is to support eGovernment development in six ReSPA member countries and Kosovo^{*1} via the exchange of practical experiences in the participating countries together with the best practices from EU member countries.

The main goal of the launching event for the study is to present and discuss the findings of the comparative study with the stakeholders. It will present the study report and provide recommendations for specific improvements to eGovernment to emulate state of the art standards in the provision of eServices to citizens in the Western Balkans. It will also support other core activities of ReSPA, mainly the eGovernment network as well as training modules encompassing this important topic.

¹ * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and it is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

Specific objectives

There are four specific objectives of the event:

1. Present the comparative study report focusing on its results and recommendations regarding:
 - support to the training organisations of the six ReSPA member countries and Kosovo² to help build the capacity of their public sectors to deliver efficient and effective eGovernment and particularly beneficial public eServices for citizens.
 - identify appropriate regional project opportunities for Western Balkans, particularly in relation to beneficial public eServices for citizens, and in relation to any available European and other international funding and support programmes
 - contribute to medium- and longer-term strategic eGovernment development in the seven countries, including recommendations for further initiatives, studies and policy enhancements.
2. Discuss the report's findings and recommendations with the main regional stakeholders.
3. Agree with the main regional stakeholders on the way forward and next steps.
4. Discuss the topic "User-friendly and accessible eGovernment services", share existing experience and define best practices in the participant countries.

Main outcomes

The main outcomes of the launching event will be common appreciation of the importance of eGovernment to the creation of accountable, effective and professional public administration systems for the Western Balkans on their way to EU accession, common understanding around the issues which need to be tackled and the strategies which can be put in place, and an agreement on the way forward and next steps. The more specific outcomes of the event are:

- Lessons learned from the launching event in implementing eGovernment
- Suggestions and recommendations to develop user-friendly and accessible eGovernment services in the participant countries.

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Draft programme

Day 1 – 21 February 2013

09:30	10:00	Welcome and introductory remarks to ReSPA and to the launching event
10:00	10:45	eGovernment in Macedonia <i>Minister Ivo Ivanovski</i>
10:45	11:00	Coffee break
11:00	11:15	Launching of the eGovernment Comparative Study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• context, goals, objectives and outcomes: <i>Jeremy Millard</i>
11:15	12:30	Main findings of the eGovernment Comparative Study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global and European eGovernment context• Comparative analysis of eGovernment in the Western Balkans <i>Jeremy Millard and Louise Thomasen</i>
12:30	13:30	Lunch
13:30	14:45	Main recommendations of the eGovernment Comparative Study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Country proposals for eGovernment capacity building• Country proposals for eGovernment project opportunities• The main recommendations of the comparative study <i>Jeremy Millard and Louise Thomasen</i>
14:45	15:00	Coffee break
15:00	16:30	Round Table: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• each of the seven countries has 7 minutes to present their views and feedback on the comparative study• Q&A and discussion <i>with Louise Thomasen and Jeremy Millard as interlocutors, Hannes Astok and Goran Pastrovic as Chair</i>
16:45		End of Day 1 <i>Goran Pastrovic</i>

Day 2 – 22 February 2013

09:30	09:45	Welcome and introductory remarks to Day 2 <i>Goran Pastrovic</i>
09:45	10:30	User-friendly and accessible eGovernment services. Administrative, financial and social aspects. <i>Hannes Astok</i>
10:30	10:45	Coffee break
10:45	13:00	Round Table on user-friendly and accessible eGovernment services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each of the seven countries has 10 minutes to present their views and feedback • Q&A and discussion <i>with Louise Thomasen and Jeremy Millard as interlocutors and Hannes Astok as Chair</i>
13:00	14:00	Lunch
14:00	15:00	Concluding session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreement on the way forward and next steps <i>Hannes Astok, Goran Pastrovic</i>
15:00		Coffee and end of Day 2 <i>Goran Pastrovic</i>