



Strategic Framework of ReSPA 2016 - 2020

I. ReSPA Objectives

The Agreement Establishing ReSPA sets out the organisational objectives as follows:

- Improve co-operation 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.

II. ReSPA Purpose

ReSPA is a regional international organisation serving primarily as an instrument of regional cooperation and primary regional hub for public administration in the Western Balkans. Its purpose is to help governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and prepare for membership of the European Union. Bearing its mandate stipulated by the Agreement Establishing ReSPA, ReSPA's overarching purpose is to develop and execute a comprehensive regional response to common public administration strategic needs in its Members. These joint capacity development needs relate to the European Integration and the implementation of Public Administration Reform (PAR) improvements.

ReSPA works primarily through regional networks. These operate at three levels: Ministerial, Senior Officials, and networks/ working groups of experts and senior practitioners. ReSPA establishes close co-operation with ministers, senior public servants and heads of function in member states. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, specifically Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional players such as SIGMA and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as well as agencies and civil society organizations. Since ReSPA Members face a number of common challenges, it is clear that many of these challenges could be addressed more efficiently through training, peer review, peer-to-peer learning and sharing of good practices. These elements are important in the process of preparation for EU membership and they might be achieved through structured coordination of the regional networks of senior officials and practitioners.

Over the next years new concepts of improved governance will be explored and proposed to respond efficiently to the Members' needs in all areas of ReSPA actions.

ReSPA supports and co-ordinates the nexus of networks/working groups. It is the permanent presence during the rotation of the Regional Chairing. Its purpose is to facilitate discussion that focuses on progress towards beneficial public administration reform and European integration.

The European Union plays a hugely important role in helping the region move towards public administration reform and European Integration. ReSPA plays an important intermediary role in this process. As a regional inter-governmental organisation, it understands the complexities, tradition and practices of public service in the Western Balkans, and offers the opportunity to intermesh the EU's agendas and those of the member states. ReSPA's purpose working with the EU is therefore to build bonds and bridges between the regional stakeholders and the EU institutions.

ReSPA holds in common the EU's core commitment to the promotion of democracy and the rule of law. It also recognises the importance of good neighbourly relations in the context of regional co-operation and the development of the stabilisation and association process.

In order for ReSPA to achieve its purpose, it is important to set a strategic framework offering a long term perspective of its development and functioning, following its mission, vision and values, within the given environment in which it strives for accomplishment of its concrete goals and objectives.

ReSPA's purposes are therefore to:

- Support the development and improvement of effective public services in member states;
- Support innovative and comparative research that would guide policy recommendations and would allow public sector decision makers in member states to measure their performance within the region and recognise potential for improvement;
- In addition to providing training, to foster the exchange of experience and learning within the region and also from the European Union, and sharing of good practices;
- Build closer ties with the European Union and its programmes for the region and ReSPA members;
- Be recognised as the leading regional organisation for public administration development;
- Build co-operation 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;
- Operate by using different models of cooperation with its Members (observers and beneficiaries) as defined by the Agreement Establishing ReSPA;
- Through networking and peer-to-peer learning promote the principles of good governance and democracy;
- Promote the values, standards and ethos that underpin good public service throughout the region.

III. ReSPA Mission

ReSPA mission is to improve regional co-operation, promote shared learning and support the development of public administration within Western Balkans region and through this, support integration into the EU.

IV. ReSPA Vision

ReSPA vision is the realization of a modern, effective, innovative, accountable and professional public administration in the Western Balkans.

V. ReSPA Core Values

- To be a model of public service excellence;
- To put the citizens of the region at the heart of all PAR and related EI goals and activities;
- To foster good working relations between the member states, and also with regional organisations, and the European Union and its institutions;
- To be proactive in service delivery and to concentrate on outcomes and impact rather than process and procedure;
- To be honest, open and transparent in dealings with stakeholders and partners;
- To uphold the primacy of the rule of law and democracy in all actions and observe the spirit as well as the letter of laws which govern its actions.

VI. ReSPA Environment

The region's political environment is complex and changing rapidly. There are both immediate crises and long-term problems that act as restraints on progress towards reform and integration. Several ReSPA Members face complex and difficult political and developmental problems. These pressures affect how countries interact with ReSPA and the priority that they can give to ReSPA's overall aims.

The recent global crisis caused severe economic problems for ReSPA Members and they continue to battle against the effects of that crisis. The European Union also suffered during the crisis and prolonged austerity has limited its capacity to focus on European expansion in the region.

For ReSPA this means that it should focus on ensuring its relevance, improved services delivery and increased effectiveness which should provide benefits to its Members. Integration is expected to greatly expand market opportunities, and economic expansion and growth. ReSPA focus is not simply on the process but on the benefits that accrue from its successful completion. Public administration reform enhances transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and brings a greater focus on the needs of citizens, business and social partners. The effective management of human resources, better policy planning, co-ordination and development, sound administrative procedures and improved public financial management are of fundamental importance for the functioning of a state and the implementation of reforms needed for EU integration.

There is a range of actors working in the area of public administration reform and European integration. Each has its specific niche and is committed to making its specific contribution. ReSPA works closely with those actors sharing its vision and objectives to achieve the

outcomes and impact that ReSPA seeks to achieve. ReSPA encourages co-operation and collaboration to achieve synergies and to deliver better results more effectively. Thus, ReSPA works closely with RCC in delivering the objectives of the SEE 2020 Strategy, in particular related to the Governance for Growth Pillar, Dimension Effective Public Services. It shares these targets and objectives and tailors its own activities to contribute towards achieving these common aims.

In an environment of scarce resources, ReSPA constantly works to remain relevant and to adapt to the changing needs of administrations in member states. In particular, ReSPA recognises the need for it to continue to build and deepen its interactions with its members particularly at ministerial and senior official level. ReSPA is strengthening these links by increasingly organising events throughout the region. In this way, ReSPA is increasing its visibility and potentially creating the sense of genuine region-wide ownership.

VII. ReSPA Goals

Goal 1

The SEE 2020 Strategy sets a target for Pillar 5 Governance for Growth of Increasing Government Effectiveness (World Bank Governance Index) from 2.3 to 2.9 by 2020. This index covers more than ReSPA's area of interest and influence. ReSPA concentrates on three of the indexes components: Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, and Control of Corruption.

ReSPA will support ReSPA Members to achieve more significant improvement in each of the ratings.

ReSPA will achieve this by:

- Helping to simplify administrative procedures in the region, and strengthening administrative justice;
- Leading the discussion and helping develop thinking in the areas of procurement, public private partnerships and anti-corruption through research and expert support to working groups and regional networks;
- Helping ease the administrative burden on businesses and improve the business environment through promoting better regulation;
- Promoting and supporting 'citizen/client oriented' approach as underlying concept of the Good and Economic governance improvements.

Goal 2

Increasing the capacity of public administration in the ReSPA members necessary for successful conducting of the European Integration process.

ReSPA will achieve this by:

- Ensuring the strategic coordination and cooperation in the European Integration process at the regional level through the support to the ReSPA Programme Committee for European Integration, and promoting cooperation among relevant political representatives involved in the European Integration process of its members;

- Increasing the institutional capacities for the successful IPA programming and utilization of EU funds;
- Supporting national institutions in the successful harmonization of national legislation with the EU *acquis*;
- Strengthening institutional capacities for quality translation and development of national version of the *acquis*;
- Improving administrative capacities for the successful conduct of the European Integration process and particularly the accession negotiations.

Goal 3

Professionalise and modernise public administrations across the region and build a shared commitment to a quality public service.

ReSPA will achieve this by:

- Strengthening and consolidating ReSPA PAR Network and regional working groups;
- Supporting its members in implementation of European Principles of Public Administration;
- Promoting the sharing of experience both within the region and from countries in the European Union through conferences, meetings, workshops, study visits, mobility schemes and other activities;
- Conducting research into the current regional progress and issues, and sharing the results and policy recommendations with decision makers in ReSPA Members;
- Promoting quality in public services throughout the region, through the development and implementation of standards for international best practice;
- Fostering the development of excellent human resource management practices matching those in EU member states;
- Concentrating greater effort on the development of dynamic leaders and an emergent leadership cadre within members' administrations;
- Promoting best technological practice through eGovernment solutions.

VIII. *Turning strategy into action*

ReSPA sees its Strategy as a document adapts to the changing context in the Western Balkan region and the EU.

ReSPA's short and medium-term programmed actions flow from the above Strategy and are made manifest in its bi-annual Programme of Work (PoW). Each activity is tested against the Strategy and priorities assigned according to interventions that are most likely to achieve real impact both in its activity area, and also in the wider context of national and regional change. ReSPA's bi-annual Programme of Work shall include specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) indicators. A mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of implementation of these indicators should be developed within the Programme of Work.

ReSPA will use its Strategy to improve its focus on achieving the outcomes that are essential for public administration reform and European integration. Its structures, working methods and programme are and will remain subservient to the achievement of its strategic objectives.

IX. Financial perspective

ReSPA is co-funded through annual contributions of ReSPA members and biannual EU Grants, supported by additional EU funded projects. ReSPA will prepare its Fundraising Strategy that will contribute to its sustainability in a longer perspective.

- ReSPA members' contributions have been decided on the annual basis (€ 150.000 per ReSPA Member, from 2011) and they are compiled in the Core ReSPA Budget (€750.000 in 2015, compared to €900.000 from 2011-2014 while Croatia was still the member of ReSPA) intended to cover ReSPA operational expenditures.¹
- EU has provided bi-annual Grants from Multi-beneficiary IPA (€2.4 mil. for 2011/2013, and € 3.5 mil. for 2014/2015) for the direct management of ReSPA programme activities.² New EU grant of € 3.5 mil. will support the biannual ReSPA Programme of Work for 2016-2017.
- With expected accession to ReSPA of another Member in 2016, and comparable EU assistance for 2016-2020, it is reasonable to expect that the strategic objectives identified here might be achieved.
- Future challenges of ReSPA that might influence its financial framework, and in particular its operational costs could be:
 - Opening of ReSPA membership to other candidate countries to the European Union (i.e. Turkey);
 - Reduction in the number of ReSPA Members beyond August 2017;
 - Alignment and cooperation with other potential funders for ReSPA activities.

ReSPA Secretariat, 31 December 2015

¹ The highest share of Core Budget expenditures goes for Human Resources (cca 66%), Office expenses (cca 17%), travel (cca 5%), contingency reserves (cca 3%) and other costs and services (cca 9%).

² Additionally, two regional projects (€ mil 2.5) were committed within wider support to ReSPA (*Strategic planning and budgeting* implemented by the Centre of Excellence in Finance from Ljubljana, Slovenia, and *Quality of Public Services* which provided technical assistance to ReSPA, implemented by external contractor Galway Development Services International (GDSI).