

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

Expert for supporting ReSPA in conducting a survey on the mental health of public servants in ReSPA members and producing reports

1. Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organisation for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, while Kosovo* is a beneficiary. ReSPA's purpose is to support governments in the region to develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses and prepare for membership in the European Union.

ReSPA establishes close cooperation with Ministers, senior public servants and heads of units in Member countries. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, specifically Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional actors such as OECD/SIGMA and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as well as agencies and civil society organisations. Since its inception, ReSPA, as an international organisation and a key regional endeavour in Public Administration Reform, has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through on-demand support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research materials.

The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funds to support the ReSPA activities (research, training and networking programmes) in line with the EU accession process.

ReSPA works primarily through regional networks, which operate at three levels: Ministerial, Senior Officials, and networks/working groups of experts and senior practitioners. There is one network – Programme Committee composed of the senior civil servants representing the ministries responsible for the Public Administration, ministries of Finance, and institutions in charge of the European Integration process coordination of the ReSPA Members and four regional thematic groups: (1) Policy planning, better regulation and coordination of Centre of Government, (2) European integration and accession negotiations; (3) Human Resources Management and Professional Development; (4) Service Delivery (digitalisation and quality management).

2. Description of the assignment

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

The World Health Organization (WHO) conceptualises mental health as a "state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". When we talk about mental health and well-being, we are referring to emotional, psychological, and social well-being. These all affect how we think, feel, and behave and contribute to what is described as our "mental well-being". Mental disorders are one of the top public health challenges in the WHO European Region, affecting about 25% of the population every year². Health at a Glance Europe 2018³ report highlighted that mental health problems affect about 84 million people across the EU. In addition to the personal suffering, mental illness's economic and social costs are substantial: estimated at more than 4% of GDP – or over EUR 600 billion – across the 28 EU countries. The Health at a Glance Europe 2020 report⁴ noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis caused a growing burden on the mental well-being of the citizens, with evidence of higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression.

The National Academy for Public Administration of Serbia and the College of Social Work participated in the project "Mental well-being of public servants"⁵ from August 2022 - February 2023 and researched mental health well-being. ReSPA anticipates that regional research on the same topic in other ReSPA members who expressed interest in this initiative (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia) will provide additional and cross-cultural data, which will ensure a solid foundation for taking action for improvement. The topic of the regional research is the mental well-being of public administration officers in the RESPA member administrations, including their emotional, social, and psychological well-being.

Goal and objectives

The main goal of this research is to raise awareness of the importance of mental well-being, prevention measures, and professional help opportunities in the community.

Objectives of the research:

- Gaining insight into the actual state of well-being of the public servants
- Exploring different dimensions of well-being (emotional, social, and psychological)
- Exploring differences depending on demographic criteria (gender, age, health situation, socioeconomic status, position in the work environment)
- Exploring cross-cultural differences in mental well-being within the RESPA members

² https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/280604/WHO-Europe-Mental-Health-Acion-Plan-2013-2020.pdf

³ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/health_glance_eur-2018-en.pdf?expires=1676283943&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E638DAA15A6BB4BFA587F13501C0F6DE

⁴ https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-12/2020_healthatglance_rep_en_0.pdf

⁵ The project "Mental well-being of public servants" is part of the project "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia" implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and financed by the Swedish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (SIDA) with the participation of the National Academy for Public Administration and the College of Social Work.

- Testing the instrument on a wider sample
- And consequently developing corrective measures for the improvement of mental well-being through various professional development activities.

Research on the mental well-being of public servants will provide data that will be the basis for creating recommendations and designing specific capacity-building activities that will improve awareness of the importance of mental health, enable familiarisation with prevention measures and thus facilitate solving problems in these areas.

Methods and techniques

The survey will be conducted online, using a questionnaire that has already been developed and tested within Serbia's "Mental Well-being of public servants" project in October 2022⁶. The survey will be voluntary and anonymous. For the purposes of developing the methodology, the questionnaire that was used in Serbia was translated into English, and certain questions were changed in terms of language as a result of improving the questionnaire after the first realised cycle. After filling out the questionnaire, the participants will receive processed data obtained based on their self-assessment of various aspects of mental well-being and brief explanations of each element. This addition will contribute to increasing the response and motivation of respondents to take part in the research.

The methodology implies that each ReSPA member shall appoint a contact point/research coordinator. The coordinator shall provide data on the entire population of public servants in his/her country and ensure the smooth distribution of the questionnaire to all public servants in his/her administration. He/she will also send reminders if necessary. The convenience sampling method will be used and it will consider geographical proximity, availability at a given time and willingness to participate in the research.

Data analysis

Quantitative data will be presented via mean and standard deviation. The relationship between categorical variables will be explored through a chi-square test. The differences between categories in numeric variables will be tested with univariate analysis of variance or the Student's t-test. The relationship between numerical variables will be presented with Pearson's correlation coefficient. Categorical data will be presented as frequencies and proportions. Answers to open-ended questions will be coded and presented in the same way as categorical variables.

Reliability and validity of the instrument will be tested via item analysis, Cronbach's alpha, and correlations with financial and health states. The factorial analysis will be performed affirmatively to determine whether the measured construct is homogeneous. SPSS software, or similar software, will be used for data analysis, with the statistical significance level set at .05.

⁶ The questionnaire (in Serbian language) is available online at the link <https://akademija.info/ankete/index.php/655133?lang=sr-Latn>

The survey will result in the preparation of the reports in the English language for each administration that will participate in the survey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, and the preparation of the summary report, which will also include the results from the survey conducted in Serbia in 2022.

ReSPA is looking for an expert who will support ReSPA in conducting the survey, analysing results and preparing the reports as per the tasks listed below.

3. Tasks and responsibilities

The Expert will be engaged for up to **18 (eighteen)** days and will perform the following indicative tasks:

- Carefully acquaint himself/herself with the Serbian survey on mental health and the methodology used.
- Conduct analysis and provide examples of two to three practices of the activities undertaken on mental health well-being in the Western Balkans. Include these findings in the respective country reports and the final report.
- Conduct analysis and provide two to three examples of good practices of the activities undertaken regarding mental health well-being in the EU countries and EPSO. Include these examples in the final report.
- Based on the results of the survey in the English language that the Expert will receive in Excel sheets from ReSPA, conduct analysis according to the methodology.
- Prepare a draft report structure for one administration (one ReSPA member) and obtain approval from ReSPA.
- Prepare respective brief draft reports and final reports after ReSPA comments for each administration (one for BiH, one for Montenegro and one for North Macedonia). Reports should be in the English language. The report for BiH shall consist of one combined summary chapter for all levels of administration (institutions at the level of BiH, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska).
- Prepare a draft structure of the final report, and prepare the final structure after ReSPA's comments. Prepare a brief draft summary report in English for those ReSPA members included in the survey, incorporating findings for Serbia obtained in 2022. The report should contain brief findings at the level of each ReSPA member included in the survey. Additionally, it is necessary to examine whether there is statistical significance in the findings between administrations and provide interpretive findings. Prepare a brief final report based on ReSPA's comments with recommendations for follow-up activities and communication messages, which will be constituent parts of the report.
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation with key findings and present in person the results at one ReSPA event.

The abovementioned tasks and responsibilities represent the milestones of the assignment, but the Expert and ReSPA Programme Manager in charge can propose changes/adaptations upon mutual agreement.

ReSPA shall ensure that the questionnaires are translated into the local languages and that the data obtained in local languages are translated into English. ReSPA shall provide feedback on the reports.

4. Timing and Location

The assignment foresees work from home/office through electronic communication, e-mails and e-meetings. The work will be tentatively performed from **September to 15 December 2023**.

Month	Action
July 2023	Preparation of the survey (ReSPA)
August 2023	Translation of questionnaires into local languages (ReSPA)
5 September 2023	Posting the questionnaire on the online platform
September 5th - September 20th	Data collection
25 September	Data delivered in Excel sheets to ReSPA
September/October 2023	Data processing and preparation of the reports
November 2023 (tentatively)	Presentation of the results at one ReSPA event

5. Remunerations

The assignment foresees up to **18 (eighteen) expert days** of up to 7.200EUR.

The payment will be made in one instalment following the submission of the reports and approval of the relevant ReSPA PM.

Note: No other costs will be covered besides the expert cost per day. The expert cost per day comprises of Expert's fee per day and (if needed) a lump sum for covering related costs, which include travel, accommodation, local transport, meals and other incidentals.

4. Necessary Qualifications

The Expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- At least a university degree (at least four years of studies) in psychology, economy, organisational sciences, or social science.

General professional experience:

- At least seven years of experience in the public sector and/or academia.

Specific professional experience:

- At least 5 (five) years of experience in positions and assignments related to human resources management, including experience in conducting surveys and preparation of reports and research;
- Experience using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme package for statistical analysis or any similar programme.

Skills:

- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English;
- Ability to write clear and coherent guidance documents;
- Ability to prepare and deliver well-structures Powerpoint presentations;
- Ability to work with people of different nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds.

7. Reporting and Final Documentation

The Expert will be requested to deliver the following documents before the payment is conducted:

Outputs

- Three brief reports in English for each ReSPA member will be included in the survey, consisting of findings (primarily statistics), recommendations for follow-up activities and communication messages.
- One brief summary report for the region, which will include: findings (primarily statistics) from all ReSPA members that participated in the survey, findings from the survey report on mental health conducted in Serbia in 2022 (primarily statistics), examples of good practices from the region regarding the mental health well being, two to three examples of good practices in the EU countries and EPSO, recommendations for follow up activities and communication messages and power point presentation.

Documents required for payment

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