



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

Managing Implementation of Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategies

**Open Session of the ReSPA Governing Board
Meeting at Ministerial Level**

PAR Conference



Conference Concept and Programme

Background

ReSPA's mission is to improve regional co-operation, promote shared learning and support the development of public administration within the Western Balkan region and through this, to support integration into the European Union. ReSPA is in the process of its strategic transformation from being primarily a training and capacity building institution, to an institution which creates a platform and facilitates dialogue among public administration officials and policy makers on issues and challenges confronting Western Balkan countries on their path towards the membership in the European Union.

ReSPA's vision is the realization of a modern, effective, innovative, accountable and professional public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA's Strategic Framework 2016–2020 defines three related goals: to increase governments' effectiveness, to increase the capacity of public administration among ReSPA's members necessary for the successful conducting of the European Integration process, and to professionalize and modernize public administrations across the region and build a shared commitment to a quality public service. Consequently, ReSPA's Programme of Work 2016–2017 consists of three pillars: European Integration, Public Administration Reform (PAR) and Governance for Growth – Effective Public Services.

The European Commission is trying to strengthen the credibility of enlargement policy, and enhanced its transformative power by ensuring a stronger focus on the three pillars of enlargement process: the rule of law, economic governance and **public administration reform (PAR)**. At the same time, PAR is recognized as a cross-cutting issue of fundamental importance for success in political and economic reforms and building a basis for implementing EU principles and standards. This approach to prioritization of the enlargement process influences the additional efforts among ReSPA Members and Kosovo*¹ to optimize their public administrations. These efforts include **well organized coordination framework** within the public administration system responsible to implement current PAR processes.

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

Rationale

Following the 9th ReSPA Annual Conference related to the Optimization of Public Administrations in Western Balkans organized in November 2016, this PAR Conference is organized in accordance with the need to enhance the outcomes of the regular Annual Meeting of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial Level. The Conference is focused on specific topic in the context of overall optimization process: analysis of the existing **coordination models** of the PAR structures in governments of ReSPA beneficiaries and their readiness to effectively **manage implementation of the PAR strategies**.

A well-functioning public administration is necessary for democratic governance and accountability. The precondition for well-functioning is **an adequate organizational structure** of the public administration bodies, as well as adequate **coordination mechanism for managing the process of implementation of PAR strategies**. The quality of administration also directly impacts governments' ability to provide public services, to prevent and fight corruption and to foster competitiveness and growth. Embedding meritocratic principles in the management of the civil service and ensuring adequate administrative procedures are essential. Some progress was made over the past year in some ReSPA members, but much more remains to be done.

Following the lessons learned from the EU Member States, Western Balkans' countries also need to find an appropriate balance between central, regional and local government that best supports implementation of reforms and the delivery of services to citizens and businesses. The role of regional and local authorities in the EU alignment process, and eventual application of EU principles is of vital importance.

The synergy between the European integration process and reforms in the area of public administration provokes specific needs for ReSPA's engagement in improvement of regional cooperation of responsible institutions and officials from its Members and Kosovo*. Within the broad framework of European Integration and Public Administration Reform processes a number of specific ongoing activities deserves important additional attention. The **interconnections of PAR and EU integration processes** require, *inter alia*, full political support for PAR process presented through precisely defined **decision-making hierarchy for key actors of the PAR structures** within the Government. Another set of activities is connected with the **PAR coordination mechanism** itself which should be developed, equipped and trained to fully manage the implementation of the PAR strategies. Closely connected with these activities is the **level of development of monitoring mechanism for the PAR strategies and their action plans**. All these issues open a new space for further regional initiatives and potential ReSPA engagement in supporting activities through the PAR Network and beyond.

Objectives

The main objective of this PAR Conference is to **exchange experience and practices aimed at facilitating the PAR strategies implementation process** through optimal PAR coordination mechanism. Our aim is to discuss and compare **various models of managing implementation of the PAR strategies** in ReSPA Members, and to define a potential role for ReSPA in supporting these processes.

The expected outcomes are related to **sharing information, best practices, common challenges, and lessons learned, thus facilitating PAR efforts on a practical level**. In addition, it is expected that this Conference will identify **how ReSPA can best support the activities of the ReSPA Members and Kosovo*** which are related to utilization of results of the Regional Comparative Study on Optimization of Public Administration in the Western Balkans, as well as how regional cooperation, led by ReSPA, can complement national efforts for improvement of managing ongoing PAR processes. Therefore, the discussion throughout the Conference will contribute to defining the key issues and topics for further ReSPA activities.

In order to facilitate the discussion, ReSPA will provide an **Analytical Paper on Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies in the Western Balkans**.

This Analytical Paper offers some preliminary conclusions, as follows:

- **Governments are committed to reforming public administrations, and the EU integration is a key driving force for public administration reforms;**
- **As a rule, PAR strategies are prepared with significant support of various technical assistance projects using external expertise;** Such situation offers opportunity to apply best practices, but ownership of the PAR agenda remains limited; and
- **The administrative capacities of institutions in charge for PAR management,** to coordinate the monitoring process are rather limited and need to be strengthened.

One of key recommendations of this Analytical Paper is related to the **necessity to strengthen capacity of leading institutions for PAR**, to enable them to coordinate preparation, implementation and monitoring of the strategies. This recommendation calls for a discussion about a broader initiative to develop an overall regional capacity building programme in ReSPA committed to enhancement of strategic competencies of the targeted civil servants. Another important topic for discussion is the need for **engagement of wider public in PAR monitoring, and evaluation of implementation of PAR strategies**.

Based on the analysis, comparative data and recommendations defined in the Analytical Paper, the participants of the Conference will discuss the ways for further improvement of developed mechanisms for managing the implementation of PAR strategies. Discussion on these issues will provide a chance for **practical utilization of recommendations from the** Analytical Paper, and more precisely, will help us define how ReSPA could further contribute to improvement of managing implementation of PAR strategies in the Western Balkans.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 13 December 2016

- 9:00 – 9:15 *Registration of Conference Participants*
- 9:15 – 9:30 **Opening remarks by Ratka Sekulovic, ReSPA Director**
- 9:30 - 10:45 Presentation of the main findings of the Analytical Paper:
Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies in Western Balkans
Gordana Djurovic, Blazenka Stojanovic and Memet Memeti
Discussion
- 10:45 – 11:15 *Coffee Break*
- 11:15 – 12:30 **Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies in Western Balkans**
Discussion on best practices in the region – presentations and discussion:
Albania - Blerta Xhako,
Kosovo - Ibadete Mehmeti,*
Macedonia – Biljana Zagar,
Moderator: Memet Memeti
- 12:30 – 13:30 **Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies in Western Balkans**
Discussion on best practices in the region – presentations and discussion:
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Anita Raic,
Montenegro – Danijela Nedeljkovic,
Serbia – Ljiljana Uzelac,
Moderator: Blazenka Stojanovic
- 13:30 – 14:30 *Lunch*
- 14:30 – 15:00 **Presentation of the 2016 Enlargement Package of European Commission**
Ritva Heikkinen, PAR/PFM Coordinator, European Commission

15:00 – 15:30

Coffee Break

15:30 – 16:45

PAR Efforts in the Western Balkans

Reports from Annual and other ReSPA Conferences

- Optimization of Public Administration
- Administrative Justice
- Better Regulation and Competitiveness

16:45 – 17:00

Conclusions / Closing Remarks