



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

ReSPA 10th Annual Conference:

Innovation in Public Administration - Navigating in Times of Change

Budva, Montenegro, 12-13 October 2017

ReSPA activities are
financed by the EU



The focus of 10th Annual Conference of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) was on a variety of topics related to exploration of new ways of thinking, creative ways of resolving problems and identifying the most applicable and desirable solutions for improvements in public services.

ReSPA's 2017 conference on „innovation and transformation“ builds on last year's 9th Annual Conference devoted to „optimisation and incremental change“. Over 150 participants and a wealth of interesting speakers, panelists and moderators came from all ReSPA members, EU, USA, Singapore, Oman, UAR, and international organizations (UNDP, GIZ, etc.).

A Word from ReSPA Director



“Over the past thirty years we have learnt that the public organizations that are most open to trying out new ideas and programmes, discover that their readiness to innovate makes them stronger and more efficient, regardless of which country or public they are serving. That is the reason why this conference opened the door to renowned institutions and speakers not only from the European Union and the Western Balkans, but also from across the globe. We have also understood that a silo orientation in public administration is not an answer but an obstacle to confronting old and new, local and global challenges.”

„A silo mentality is often a barrier to the transformation of public administrations and to the creation of new organizational cultures. This is why we have engaged colleagues from business sector, civil society organizations, local authorities, academia, and representatives of vulnerable groups. We hope that an open dialogue will inspire you to think not just about incremental change but about major transformation, and we urge you to reflect on what you can do differently or very differently to achieve your goals, whilst respecting the Sustainable Development Goals and EU Public Administration Principles. ReSPA will remain dedicated to its motto there is no alternative to regional cooperation, and we look forward to further partnering in new programmes and projects, with all of you worldwide.”



¹ The OECD defines innovation as „the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations“. It suggests a framework for public sector innovation with four components: (1) Generating and Sharing ideas, (2) Empowering the Workforce, (3) Navigating Rules and Processes, and (4) Reviewing Organisational Design.

² If optimisation is about improvement and incremental change, innovation is about transformation and more radical change. While, historically innovation has always been a characteristic of successful public administration, today it is faster and more profound than ever before. The economic crisis has increased the pressure for innovation in the public sector of many countries even more, and nearly all international development organisations are now engaged in propagating innovation.

³ ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while Kosovo* representatives participate in the ReSPA's activities financed by the European Commission.

* 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

Some first-hand stories

Keynote speakers and participants state:

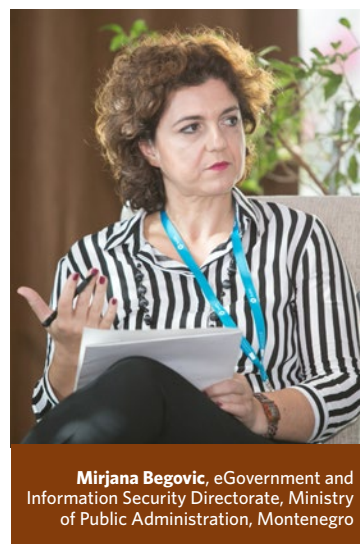


**Josip Grubeša, Minister of Justice
Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The most interesting – and the most difficult – change was complete computerisation in the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is well known that public administrations work on the principle of piles of paper, and I have looked for a model to replace the paperwork with 21st century technologies. It has lasted nearly a year: education, training, model demonstration and positive results. Older employees found it very difficult to get used to, while young people eagerly accepted the changes. Today, when we look back at the time two years ago when we introduced these innovations, no one can believe that papers have ever been used. Everyone has forgotten them... Reactions were very positive to all the services provided by the Ministry; and we transparently presented them to the public. Citizens are very satisfied because there are not so many visits to the Ministry any more, not so many unnecessary costs; and

they get Ministry's information and answers in a more precise and efficient way. (...) States in the region have a common goal: accession to the EU. Some states have already done that, and they can share with us the examples and challenges that they had faced on their way to the EU. We need to be more competent, our public administrations need to be much better prepared to respond to the challenges that await us in the EU; and because of this, such conferences are very good because we can jointly improve our public administrations by sharing ideas and thoughts.

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**Mirjana Begovic, eGovernment and
Information Security Directorate, Ministry
of Public Administration, Montenegro**

What I personally like the most about the innovations that have been brought up to now is something that affects life – maybe not mine because my kids are a little bigger, but the lives of my colleagues. This year, they could use an electronic service that we have introduced on the e-Government portal: it concerns the enrollment of children in elementary schools. This service reduces one go to school by scheduling an online appointment with psychologist, which in those moments means so much to parents. Speaking of school, what is interesting to me is that an electronic diary has been developed. So, from time to time I can take a look at what my kids are doing, and whether they are telling me the truth. In the future, Montenegro wants to see itself as a modern and service oriented country, and innovations are certainly one of the key ways to do so. This implies the development of e-Government, because in this way we believe that the Montenegrin Government, and all state institutions and local self-governments in general, will become more transparent and more open – in fact all that we are striving for in the process of EU integration. The Public Administration Reform Strategy implies a change in each of us, local and state public servants; and we are all here to contribute together to the prosperity of our state and its citizens. Collaboration with ReSPA means a lot and helps a lot. The last time in ReSPA we had a training of trainers who will further educate the employees in public admin-

istration about e-Government, what it is and how it should be implemented. There is also a series of regular activities within sectoral groups involving people from different countries in the region on e-Government, law on administrative procedures, e-participation, open data, etc. Such meetings are precious, as well as this conference, because conversations tête-à-tête and exchange of experiences are of immeasurable significance.

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**Rozalinda Stojova, Ministry of Information
Society and Administration, Macedonia**

The cases I have presented at the 10th ReSPA Conference are significant because they come from the area of social innovation. They have not come from the public administration servants but the other way round – from the community. They have been piloted, tested and replicated,

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and after showing the best results, they have been adopted by the institutions as their own. One of the cases refers to early childhood development centres. Now we have around 22 centres

up and running in rural areas, and 20 more are in the initial phase. The success speaks for itself, and the demand is very strong. I would like to see more changes, and in a wider territory. Baby steps are necessary though, and usually the best practice when introducing innovations. The profile of civil servant of today is changing. Common digital transformation is not giving any benefits if not followed by social innovation. ReSPA enables us to see, to share information and experiences, to show us „do's“ and „don'ts“, and gives us expertise in certain areas. It helps us to continue the right way, not to make mistakes somebody else has already made.

I remember very well the first time I was engaged in the Public Administration Reform process; it was quite a traumatic experience. I was delegated to lead a special working group tasked to define a mechanism for official data exchange. I had no previous experience in that area, so after the first meeting I was completely devastated since none of the participants wanted to talk or even discuss about this theme of providing data to another state body; and all this made my job very complicated. But after a couple of meetings, I noticed that people started to talk with each other realising that there were some opportunities that can further develop their cooperation. A year later we had very good results; our organisation's biggest innovation was the implementation of the eZUP information system, which will provide a quick and simple access to data to the public administration employees and a more efficient and quicker service to the citizens. I am very happy to be a part of it, and yes, despite the fact that I remember it as a traumatic experience, now I am very satisfied with the results we have achieved and with our future plans regarding eZUP information system. (...) There is a lot of opposition from civil servants to the changes and transformation of public administration into a service



**Milan Josimov, Ministry of
public administration and
local self-government, Serbia**

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Now we are gradually widening the circle of people involved, so it is getting easier. ReSPA's support was crucial in this process. They enabled us to learn about the achievements of the people from the Western Balkans region and colleagues from different countries, and to share our innovations. I think that the synergy between all the colleagues from the region is crucial for further development of innovations and also for our future cooperation; therefore, we are grateful for all ReSPA's support.

Excerpts from the interviews conducted by Zorana Vucicevic

oriented towards citizens. I think once you have invited them and explained the aim of transformation, they start accepting the change and they get very much involved. And consequently, they start coming up with innovative solutions. (...) My job is very hard, but a very satisfying one. We have also introduced „One Stop Shops“. Changing the mindset of public servants takes time and a lot of effort, especially from individuals in public administration.



What was it all about? Participants' Innovation Challenges

The first day of the 10th ReSPA Annual Conference has provided a platform and a framework for understanding and integrating innovation in public administration. Different views of young people and special client groups have been articulated, the value of innovation in practice has been critically examined, and various dimensions of innovation, such as the social, technological, organisational aspects of innovation have been actively discussed. Additionally, new innovation methods such as hackathons have been taken into consideration for creative problem solving in the public sphere. Participants in the Conference have also shared their views on major innovation challenges in public administration.



Hermann Spitz, EU Delegation to Montenegro:

„Our societies are changing more rapidly than ever before. So, public administration cannot sit idle and watch. It has to take up the challenge and change by adapting more effective business models, and improve its service delivery for the benefit of the citizens. In this regard, the ReSPA Annual Conference can contribute to the debate by sharing experiences, lessons from the past, new tools and approaches.“

Key Insights from ReSPA Café

During the second day of the Annual Conference, within the ReSPA Café, an open discussion on the structure, culture and personal change has taken place. A central question was how to promote innovation in public administration, and how to address the needed cultural changes. Recognising, measuring and awarding innovation outcomes have been explored in other conference sessions. The exchange on regional and international experiences with innovation award schemes has given the participants valuable insights in how to organise similar learning and sharing processes in the future.



Key Insights from ReSPA Café

Key innovation challenges identified by participants, and a few ideas



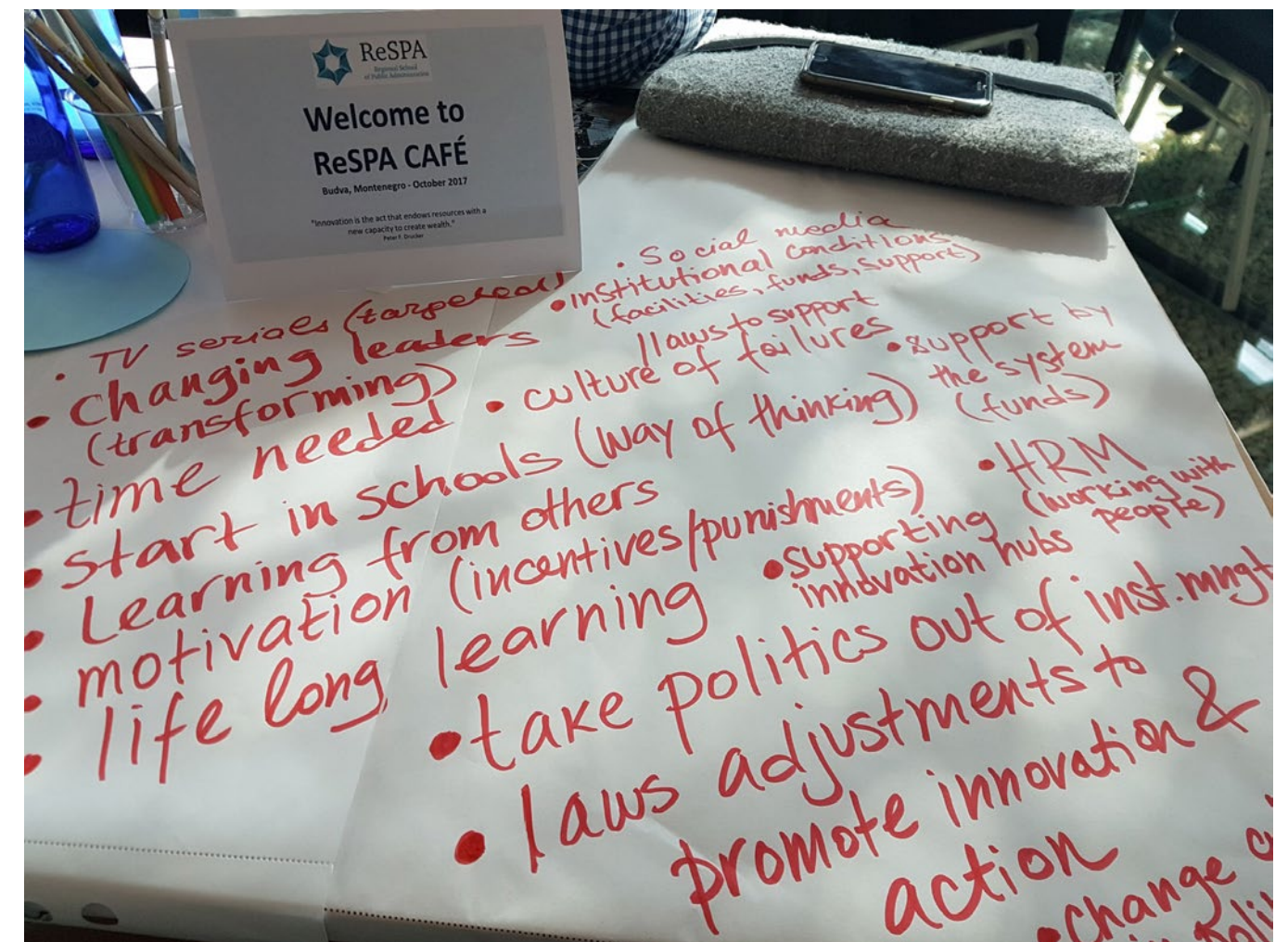
How might we...

- ... discover the purpose of innovation of our own organisation?
- ... overcome resistance to innovation?
- ... cultivate an innovative mindset?
- ... mobilize the necessary resources for innovation?
- ... engage citizens and colleagues and all interested parties?

- ... identify the skills and learning that support our innovative process?
- ... build a safe place for failure?
- ... shape our leadership cultures to promote innovation?

Interesting ideas for ReSPA

1. Establish Innovation Awards. This requires defining measurable criteria on good innovations and setting up a structure to market, collect and evaluate projects submitted by public entities in ReSPA Members. Perhaps this could also incorporate a celebration of failure (each member country submits one failure) to share mistakes and, above all, to learn from others'.
2. Organise "Games Without Borders" where the countries of the region will come to the best solutions on selected issues or crises.
3. Organise a Hackathon to serve as a pilot and an inspiration to ReSPA Members, and ensure dissemination of know-how from the outcomes and hackathon processes. This can also be done by using other tools and methodologies (eg creative problem solving, design thinking etc).
4. Create an Online Idea Sharing Forum for ReSPA Members.
5. Train people in creative problem solving and in systems for collecting and exploiting new ideas.



NALAS's contribution to the ReSPA Café

Findings of the Session on Social, Technological and Organisational Innovation in Public Administration, moderated by Vlatko Naumovski of ReSPA and Stefan Friedrichs

The initial focus of the session was on successful approach to cultivating innovation by setting up and implementing innovation labs. This input from the UNDP Regional Hub in Istanbul was followed by a presentation of the regional study on Costing of PAR Strategies in the Western Balkans developed by ReSPA. It became evident that a proper analysis on cost and investment structure of reform projects in the public sector can serve to identify necessary innovative areas.

Another objective of the session was to investigate different aspects and important factors of fostering innovation in public administration. Many more factors are needed to transform public services than mere procurement of new software packages. The core question discussed was which organisational structures are backing up the necessary cultural changes? During the session, the participants identified the linkages between technological innovations and social dynamics in organisations. Technological innovations comprise new products or processes and significant technological changes of products or processes. An organisational innovation is the implementation of a new organisational method in practice, structural layout of organisations, new workplace organisation or external relations of an entity. Social innovations are new strategies, concepts, ideas and organisations that meet the social needs of different elements which can be from working conditions and education to community development and health — they extend and strengthen civil society. They can also include new approaches in policy formulation and testing its impact on certain groups or society as a whole.

The six regional case presentations from the Western Balkans highlighted successful approaches to the implementation of technological, organisational and social innovation.

Frank van Massenhove, the chairman of the Belgian Federal Office of Social Affairs



In order to get innovation – what should we do? The answer is – give as much autonomy to your people as possible. (...) We are not controlling when people work, where they are, we are not even controlling how they are working, we are simply looking into the results. (...) Trust your people, and afterwards look who is not to be trusted; and it's not a lot of people who are not going to be trusted. Why? Because a lot of people are proud of what they are doing because they have decided what should happen in the organisation. So, they become co-entrepreneurs in the organisation – their organisation, not the organisation of the management. (...) Don't tell people when to work. Someone who can't get up in the morning should not work in the morning. Let them work in the evening, let them work during the weekend if they want to, but they have to achieve their goals. (...) They don't have to be in the of-

fice, they can work from home if they want to, they can work anywhere they want, and in that way they can spend more time with families and friends. (...) The success of innovations in the public sector depends on the people, but you need a leader who thinks in that way. You know, we need leaders who say: „It is not important who makes a decision; what is important is that the best decision is taken“. And we are convinced that the best decision is taken by everyone in the organisation. Not by the Numero

The success of innovations in the public sector depends on the people, but you need a leader who thinks in that way. You know, we need leaders who say: „It is not important who makes a decision; what is important is that the best decision is taken“. And we are convinced that the best decision is taken by everyone in the organisation. Not by the Numero Uno, and this is the case in a lot of organisations.

Uno, and this is the case in a lot of organisations. (...) I think that a great leader, a good leader needn't have that many talents, but (s)he has to be courageous. That is the main thing. You can't copy somebody's model. You need to find out yourself, with your people, which way you have to go. I believe there is only one way to achieve goals, and this is by doing it with your people, discussing it with your people, making sure your people make good decisions. But afterwards, very important, if something fails, you as a leader should take the responsibility. When a decision is made and implemented – if it was a huge success, a leader should tell everybody: „Those people did a wonderful job.“ If it fails, the leader should say: „I made a bad decision.“ (...) The context is different in various parts of the world, but all the people love working in an environment where they are treated as human beings, not as human resources. People are not resources. Money is a resource. Buildings are resources. People are not. So, you must treat your building in a good way, and your people in a better way.

Excerpts from the interview conducted by Zorana Vucicevic



**Suzana Pribilović,
Minister of Public Administration of Montenegro.**

„Changes were never easy in this part of the world. Managing them, it is probably even more difficult. And changes through embracing new ideas and innovations, that is the only way towards a higher level of openness and transparency of public institutions.“

Who brings about change?

10th Annual Conference is over. What next?

Recommendations for future ReSPA events

A good follow-up theme would be: **Leadership and Transformation Significantly Changing our Organisation**

One of future ReSPA's activities may take into account the recommendations from the 10th ReSPA Annual Conference and focus on the importance of leadership in design, implementation and monitoring of change. It may integrate the aspects of good change leadership practices and application of innovation initiatives. Particular attention could be given to the present and the future role of technology. The Innovation Awards idea in Public Administration (quality and public services) has also been mentioned, as well as the organisation of a hackathon. Hackathon can be used to illustrate the pragmatic application of information technologies in everyday life and in public administration; ie to demonstrate basic opportunities such as creating a platform for enabling a dialogue between political leaders, public servants and citizens, or to delineate a more sophisticated usage of IT in public services.



Visual facilitators at ReSPA 10th Annual Conference: Mireille van Bremen and Markus Engelberger



We look forward to continuing to innovate public services together with you!

Your ReSPA Team



ReSPA
Regional School
of Public Administration

10th ReSPA Annual Conference
Innovation in Public Administration - Navigating in Times of Change
Key Issues and Conclusions

The 2017 ReSPA Annual Conference gathered 157 participants and 37 reputable speakers from more than 50 different institutions of the Western Balkans, EU and worldwide to share their experiences and innovative practices.

The conference main task was to identify the best-case examples of innovative processes in Public Administration, and the challenges of their integration for the countries of the Western Balkans.

Storytelling has been highlighted as one of the most practical and efficient ways to examine the opportunities for building an organisational culture, no matter if the focus is on developing countries or not. Nonetheless, challenges and goals are the same: opening to the public needs and exploring even beyond that. During the ReSPA Café, the participants generated a lot of great ideas and inputs for the organisational change and transformation of governments. The enthusiasm of individuals has been underlined as one of the success factors and a driving force of the non-existing formula for innovation in the public sector.

The presented innovation projects from the Western Balkans confirmed that there are good case examples in the region - even though there is a lot of room for improvement, where ReSPA can provide further support.

Conference participants have contentedly voted for the introduction of a Western Balkans Public Sector Award. Establishing of this award will be one of ReSPA's long term objectives, again requiring an effort from all the stakeholders in the region, the EU and around the globe. The aim of the Public Sector Award will be to support a continuous dialogue in

the Western Balkans through an exchange of best practices and fostering of an organisational culture. The conclusion was also that using information and communication technologies through a hackathon could be an added value. This gives ReSPA space to exploit possibilities for organising a hackathon (ReSPathon), or a similar event in the future.

At the conference, ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic mentioned ReSPA's intent to found a regional Quality Management Centre. Director Sekulovic emphasized that such an establishment can follow on all the ideas reflected during the conference, by using quality management tools which represent a holistic approach in addressing the above listed innovation subjects: strategic planning; strong administrative and political engagement; increasing cooperation with citizens and NGOs; social responsibility; client/citizen/stakeholder orientation, and the needed strong political buy-in.

During the event, it became clear that ReSPA would need to put a stronger focus on quality in public service delivery, as well as on enhancing managerial accountability through better use of quality management systems. The results of ReSPA's efforts in this domain will be reflected in its events in the upcoming year, including the next ReSPA Annual Conference.

Final discussions at the conference have led to the conclusion that it is obvious that solutions of the past cannot be the same as for the future. Furthermore, the shifting focus should be on what is being done in Public Administration and how it can be done differently. As for public servants, a safe environment with appreciation and motivation at work must be a priority in changing the internal culture. This can only happen in a culture which allows experimentation, risk taking and potential failure; with a clear role of the leadership that needs to put the organisation in a strategic focus, to serve as an example of how to encourage different team setups, and to foster a new and safe culture in the organisation. Several definitions of innovation have been reflected on during the event, and one of them was: „New things that add value!“

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Conference photos available on:

http://www.respaweb.eu/56/gallery_cats/169/10th-respa-annual-conference-innovation-in-public-administration--navigating-in-times-of-change

ReSPA's video on Innovation and Public Administration: Different Perspectives:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1x496ndvTbE>



ReSPA

Regional School of Public Administration

Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an intergovernmental organisation for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. It is financed by a European Commission Grant and administered with the subscriptions of its members. **ReSPA's 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 them for membership in the European Union.

ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while public servants from Kosovo* participate in ReSPA activities funded by the European Commission.

ReSPA's main achievements in 2014-2017: Over 150 networking and capacity building activities (seminars, workshops, conferences, study visits, seasonal schools, trainings, meetings) involving over 2,500 public servants from the Western Balkans, and more than 300 international and regional experts; 15 regional comparative re-search projects with policy recommendations for Public Administration Reform related solutions.

* 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

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