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ACHIEVING ADMINISTRATIVE SIMPLIFICATION THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Draft Programme
24-25 May 2022

Marriott Sisli Hotel
Istanbul, Turkey
(with online participation on Zoom)

Introduction

Laws and regulations are critical instruments for delivering government policies and public services. However, if not prepared and designed well, laws and regulations can create unnecessary administrative burdens and costs for businesses, citizens and the public sector, stifle economic growth and reduce the quality of public services. Effective use of policy planning and policy development tools, such as regulatory impact assessment (RIA), are essential for achieving better policies with minimal costs and burdens. Administrative simplification through regular review of the stock of existing regulations can help remove red tape and improve the quality of public service delivery. On the other hand, monitoring and evaluation of policies and public service delivery provide critical input to government policy and reform agenda formulation, while digitalisation helps deliver better and more client-centric services with minimal costs and burdens.

Over the past decade, all administrations of the Western Balkan region have been implementing different strategies and reform programmes aimed at improving the quality of policy making, public service delivery and administrative simplification. Many of these reforms were designed and delivered through the respective national strategic frameworks of public administration reform (SFPAR). The Western Balkan administrations have also been attempting to strengthen the quality of regulatory policy and better regulation through implementation of targeted reforms in policy making, such as RIA and public consultations. These tools are now institutionalised in all administrations of the region but many challenges remain and their full potential, including for controlling the flow of unnecessary administrative burdens and costs, is not yet realised.

The 2021 EC Enlargement package acknowledges that policy planning has improved somewhat, but further efforts are needed to ensure a strong quality control by central governments; strengthen capacities for evidence-informed policy making and enhancing a culture of evidence-based policy making in the public administration. The EC notes that some progress was made in implementing regulatory impact assessments, improving governance arrangements on public consultations and establishing IT systems for integrated planning; nevertheless, in general, policies, legislation and public investments in the region are still often prepared without impact assessments.

The 2021 SIGMA Monitoring Reports show that service delivery is the single main area that has recorded significant improvements across all administrations in the region since 2017. Progress has also been made in the area of evidence-based policy making in many administrations of the region. However, many implementation challenges remain to ensure policy-making processes and tools take into account the need to ensure efficient and effective public service delivery. Despite the improvements in digitalisation, many services are still only provided in a traditional form, leaving the potential provided by digital tools underutilised. Preparation, strategic planning and implementation of administrative simplification require further improvement.

The 2018 ReSPA Study on Better Regulation in the Western Balkans has also noted that some of the administrations in the region made meaningful efforts to ensure the implementation of RIA and to continue working on the administrative simplification agenda, even though there is plenty of room for further action. The study also confirmed that the need for an effective regulatory management system is now well recognised in all Western Balkans administrations.

The 2022 EU Ministerial Declaration on “Common values and challenges of European Public Administrations”, identifies administrative simplification and a user-centric approach as important priorities.

Objective

The conference, which is jointly organised by SIGMA and ReSPA, will bring together senior government officials from all six Western Balkan administrations (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia), EU and OECD experts and officials to discuss the current challenges of reforms in the areas of policy making and public service delivery for achieving better administrative simplification. Up to six senior government officials will be invited from each administration (representing the centre of government institutions responsible for better regulation/policy making/RIA areas, as well as officials from key public service delivery institutions).

Presentations and discussions at the conference will be in English to ensure smooth and effective discussion and exchanges on various topics at different sessions. Officials and experts from the region will be able to follow the discussions via online broadcasting on Zoom.

SIGMA Monitoring Reports and follow up activities

The 2021 [SIGMA Monitoring Reports](#) were published in November 2021. They were subsequently presented and discussed in several bilateral events in all administrations. A high-level conference was organised by SIGMA in February 2022 ([SIGMA Ministerial Conference: Good public administration for better lives in the Western Balkans](#)) to discuss the main regional and thematic findings. Additionally, SIGMA identified three cross-cutting, high-priority policy themes to initiate further regional discussions with the administrations:

- Digital government (online event), was organised in April 2022
- Administrative simplification and policy making (co-hosted with ReSPA), 24-25 May 2022
- Managerial accountability (online event) mid-June 2022.

ReSPA Programme of Work 2022

The ReSPA Programme of Work for 2022 supports the implementation of the ReSPA Strategy 2019 – 2024 and is a mixture between further upgrading of ReSPA "typical" activities (such as Working Groups meetings, Workshops, Conferences, Seasonal Schools, Trainings, etc.) as well as innovative/new initiatives such as the Regional Network of Policy Coordinators, ReSPA Academy on Public Policies, organisation the PA Awards competition, etc. ReSPA will support the exchange of best practices as well as networking through participation at the Annual NISPACee Conference focused on resilience of public administrations in times of crisis, while a Better Regulation Seasonal School and a Regional Conference on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Western Balkans societies are also envisaged to be organised in the second half of the year. The main activities in support of evidence-based policy making are listed below:

- Attending NISPACee Conference and organisation of ReSPA panel on the impact of COVID-19 to public administrations in the Western Balkans, June 2022;
- Kick-off of the Academy on Public Policies, September 2022;
- Seasonal School on Better Regulation, October 2022;
- Regional Conference on implementation of SDGs and Agenda 2030 in WBs, November 2022.

The current activity is included in the ReSPA Annual Programme of Work for 2022. Representatives from the following Working Groups and networks shall attend the event: CoGs, Better Regulation and eGovernment.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

DAY I: Tuesday, 24 May 2022

08.30 – 09.00 (Time +1 CET)	Welcome coffee and registration of participants <i>Online participants joining via Zoom</i> Conference co-chaired by SIGMA (Bagrat Tunyan) and ReSPA (Gentian Xhaxhiu)
09:00 – 09:15	Opening of the Conference: Introductory remarks <i>Mr Florian Hauser, DG NEAR (TBC)</i> <i>Ms Maja Handjiska-Trendafilova, Director of ReSPA</i> <i>Mr Gregor Virant, Head of the SIGMA Programme (online)</i>
09:15 – 10:00	Policy making and public service delivery in the Western Balkans: Key achievements and challenges ahead for better administrative simplification <i>2021 SIGMA Monitoring Reports (SFPAR, PDC and SD areas, focusing on policy making, service delivery and LGAP implementation issues)</i> <i>SIGMA Presentation (Mr Timo Ligi), followed by Q&A.</i>
10:00 – 10:30	EU Better Regulation Practice: Implementation of regulatory management tools in the EU Member States - Key findings of the 2022 OECD Study <i>OECD/GOV/REG colleague (physical or online presentation)</i>
10.30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00– 12:30	Controlling the Flow: Minimising administrative burden creation through effective policy making: <i>Effectiveness of key processes and tools used during policy making (consultations, impact analysis methodologies, application of the Standard Cost Model (SCM) to assess burdens)</i> <i>A SIGMA presentation, based on the 2021 SIGMA Assessments and the SIGMA Paper 61 on RIA and EU Law Transposition</i> <i>Followed by a panel discussion</i> PANEL 1: <i>Ms Oriana Arapi (PMO, Albania)</i> <i>Mr Toni Santic, Head of Section for Strategic Planning and Aid Coordination, Ministry of Justice BiH</i> <i>Mr Bardhyl Dobra, Deputy Minister (PAR lead, Kosovo*)</i> <i>Ms Milijana Vukotić-Jelušić, DG for Efficient Administration, MPA (MNE)</i> <i>Ms Biljana Zhagar, PM Office, North Macedonia</i> <i>TBC by LO, participant from General Secretariat of Government of Serbia</i> <i>Moderated by SIGMA (Mr Bagrat Tunyan)</i>
12:30-14:00	Lunch
14:00-14:45	Reducing the Stock: Planning and implementation of administrative simplification in the Western Balkans <i>A SIGMA presentation, planning and implementing administrative simplification, selected EU and WB experiences.</i> <i>Followed by reflections by WB representatives - challenges of planning, co-ordinating and implementing better regulation/administration simplification programmes:</i>

Ms Albana Kociu (PAR Strategy, DoPA, Albania)
Mr Nedžib Delić, PARCO, (BiH)
Mr Kushtrim Canolli (ABR Programme Lead, Kosovo)*
Ms Marija Hajdukovic, MPA PAR Coordinator (MNE)
Ms Laura Ajdini (PAR Strategy, MISA, North Macedonia)
Ms Sanja Mesanovic, Acting Deputy Director, Public Policy Secretariat, (SRB)

Moderated by ReSPA (Mr Gentian Xhaxhiu)

14:45-15:15 Streamlining, simplifying and digitalising processes to deliver better services for citizens (Part 1)

The EU approach for designing and delivering user-centric services (EC Toolbox)

Presentation by SIGMA (Mr Nick Thijs)

15:15-15:30 Coffee break

Streamlining, simplifying and digitalising processes to deliver better services for citizens (Part 2)

15:30-16:30

PANEL 3 Short presentations from selected Western Balkan administrations on some of the recent examples of simplification:

Ms Dragana Begic, e-gov office (Serbia)
Mr Denis Turkanovic, Deputy Minister, e-beba (BiH/RS) (or IDEA as back up)
Ms Nikola Nikolov or Ms Nadica BRP approach in simplifying processes (MISA, NMK)
Ms Romina Kostani, Simplification and digital (NAIS, Albania)
Mr Rifat Hyseni, Tax Administration Simplification (Kosovo)*
Ms Zorana Popovic, DG for Electronic Administration (MNE)

Moderated by SIGMA (Mr Jose Diaz) and ReSPA (Ms Oliviera Damjanovic)

19:30 Social gathering and networking

DAY II: Wednesday, 25 May 2022

08.45 - 09.00	Welcome coffee and registration of participants (online)
09:30 - 09.45	Recap of the first day - Key messages SIGMA and ReSPA
09:45 – 11:00	<p>Importance of RIA oversight for achieving administrative simplification and burden reduction</p> <p><i>A panel discussion involving RIA oversight bodies of the WB administration. Discussing the quality and process of quality control of RIAs, issuing opinions, checks and guidance on admin simplification, SCM in RIA.</i></p> <p>PANEL 4: <i>Ms Elira Zaka, PMO RIA Unit, Albania</i> <i>Ms Andrea Merkez, General Secretariat of the Government of the Federation of BiH</i> <i>Mr Arben Krasniqi GS (Kosovo*)</i> <i>Ms Bojana Boskovic, MoFSW, Montenegro</i> <i>Ms Gordana Dimitrovska, MISA RIA Oversight, North Macedonia</i> <i>Mr Ognjen Bogdanovic, RIA Unit, PPS, Serbia</i></p> <p><i>Moderated by SIGMA (Mr Bagrat Tunyan or Mr Timo Ligi)</i></p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee break
11:30-12:00	<p>External scrutiny and quality assurance of regulatory policy and administrative simplification in the EU: The role of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board of the EC</p> <p><i>Ms Dorota Denning, Member of the EC Regulatory Scrutiny Board Q&A</i></p>
12:00-12:30	<p>Closing session: What's next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Final comments and reflections from the WB administrations</i> • <i>Current and planned ReSPA and SIGMA projects and upcoming events in these areas</i> • <i>EC DG NEAR final comments and observations</i>
12:30- 14:00	End of the conference and light lunch

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