

Joint Statement on the occasion of High-Level Policy Dialogue

“Data-Driven and Anticipatory Governance: Shaping Resilient Public Institutions for the Future”

WE, the Ministers and High-Level representatives responsible for public administrations in the Western Balkans, gathered on the occasion of the High-Level Policy Dialogue “Data-Driven and Anticipatory Governance: Shaping Resilient Public Institutions for the Future”, held in Rome, Italy, on 17 November 2025:

FULLY COMMITTED to creating public value and adhering to principles of good governance in order to serve the public interest in the best possible way;
AWARE that merit-based, citizen-oriented, and capacitated public administration is the backbone of democratic governance and a foundation of the European integration process, and ACKNOWLEDGING that civil servants are key drivers of reform who carry the weight of complex and lengthy processes of translating European policies and practices into benefits for citizens and businesses;
SHARING a common commitment to further modernise administrations by advancing Public Administration Reform and a goal of building civil services guided by inclusiveness, transparency, integrity, and accountability;
DETERMINED to strengthen further regional cooperation, exchange of knowledge, and sharing of best practices underlying the Principles of Public Administration;
RECALLING the strategic commitment to modernise human resource management systems by fostering merit-based recruitment, competency-driven career progression, and the digital transformation of HRM through the use of HRMIS, data analytics, and artificial intelligence grounded in ethics, fairness, and accountability;
WELCOMING the collective pursuit of leadership and talent development through agile, inclusive, and ethical leadership at all administrative levels, nurturing a new generation of public sector leaders equipped with strategic foresight and digital fluency to navigate complex governance challenges;
ACKNOWLEDGING the themes recognised in the EU’s Toolbox for Practitioners as useful guidance in enhancing the quality of public administration;
STRESSING the need to advance regulatory simplification and administrative burden reduction by adopting citizen- and business-centred approaches, integrated service delivery points, and interoperable digital solutions that improve user experience, transparency, and trust in public institutions;
TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the important role that the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) has in bringing the administrations of the Western Balkans closer to the European Administrative Space, and the unique platform of the regional high-level Ministerial dialogue on PAR guiding these processes;
COMMENDING the unwavering support that the European Union and its Member States are providing to the PAR processes in the enlargement administrations;

HAVE today agreed on this Joint Statement, by which WE:

- ACKNOWLEDGE that Public Administration Reform remains at the heart of the Fundamentals of the EU accession process, and REAFFIRM our shared understanding that only professional, accountable, and resilient institutions can effectively deliver the European agenda and sustain citizens’ trust. We therefore COMMIT to reinforcing institutional governance, policy coherence, and administrative capacity, ensuring that our public administrations are fit for purpose to lead the accession process and to deliver tangible results for our societies and economies in a context of increased complexity of policy issues.
- CONTINUE to strengthen regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and good practices to advance green, open, accountable, and digitally empowered public governance in line with European and international standards;
- COMMIT to strengthening the role of Centres of Government and policy coordination structures to ensure coherence, foresight, and strategic alignment across reform agendas and priorities, including within the implementation of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the respective Reform Agendas, with particular emphasis on Public Administration Reform measures as key enablers of sustainable growth, competitiveness, and EU integration;
- UNDERTAKE to advance evidence-informed and inclusive policymaking, advance regulatory simplification and administrative burden reduction by embedding robust regulatory impact assessment practices, promoting the use of behavioural insights, foresight methods, and ex-post evaluation, and ensuring meaningful participation of citizens, academia, and civil society throughout the policy cycle;
- COMMIT to strengthening institutional capacities and public servants’ competencies across public administrations by supporting digital-ready policymaking, an AI competency framework, and strategic foresight, and AGREE to enhance cybersecurity and digital resilience within public institutions;
- COMMIT to modernising human resource management systems across the region by fostering merit-based recruitment, transparent and competency-driven career progression;
- PLEDGE to strengthen performance management and professional development frameworks, transforming performance appraisal from a formal procedure into a meaningful developmental tool that supports learning, motivation, and excellence;
- AGREE to invest in leadership and talent development by promoting agile, inclusive, and ethical leadership across all levels of administration, and to further support strengthening of public servants’ capacities in the areas of public finance, procurement, and use of EU cohesion funds;
- SUPPORT the promotion of mobility opportunities for public servants within the Western Balkans, building on successful regional initiatives and inspired by the EU’s “Erasmus for Civil Servants” programme, and PLEDGE to actively support and promote exchanges, mobility and cooperation with the public administrations of EU Member States, as well as with European professional networks dedicated to public administration, with a view to enhancing the gradual integration and acculturation of civil servants to the European administrative environment and best governance practices, thereby fostering administrative convergence and facilitating deeper integration within the European framework;
- COMMIT to the regular enrichment of the Western Balkans Knowledge Management Platform, with particular attention to the e-learning modules, to support distant and self-paced learning and foster continuous capacity development across the civil service;
- WELCOME the interest expressed by the public administrations of Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia and, prospectively, Georgia to join ReSPA’s activities, and CALL UPON the ReSPA Secretariat to take the necessary preparatory measures that will facilitate the participation of civil servants from these administrations in the implementation of actions under the new financing framework, also in view of their potential ReSPA membership in the future;
- ENCOURAGE ReSPA to continue acting as the regional hub for HRM and professional development excellence and a unique regional platform for facilitating dialogue among policy coordination, regulatory and simplification bodies, fostering peer learning with EU institutions and networks and Enlargement partners, promoting innovation and meritocracy in public employment, enhancing evidence-based policymaking capacities and connecting with the global open government community, promoting integrity, transparency, citizen participation, and secure digital governance.

ENDORSED in Rome, Italy, on 17 November 2025.