

Procurement Notice

Assignment name: International Expert in Competency Based Recruitment who will bring a different and wider approach of conducting interviews in the recruitment procedures in the Albanian Civil Service

Section 1. Introductory Information

1.1 Background information on the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is the inter-governmental organization 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, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while Kosovo*¹ is a beneficiary. 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 for the membership of the European Union.

ReSPA establishes close co-operation with ministers, senior public servants and heads of function in Member countries. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, specifically Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional players 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 endeavor in Public Administration Reform, has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through in-country support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research material.

ReSPA supports its members through its mechanisms of support and one of them is the in-country support mechanism. This mechanism addresses the specific needs of ReSPA Members, supporting public administration reforms in the areas covered by the ReSPA Programme of Work.

Department of Public Administration of Albania (DoPA) submitted the request for providing support in improving recruitment process in the Albanian civil service with a focus on interview phase. The implementation of this activity will result in the improvement of the procedures in the recruitment process and will increase the quality of the recruitment of the best and most suitable candidates for announced positions and will strengthen the role of the Evaluation Commission.

1.2 ReSPA now seeks to engage an International Expert in Competency Based Recruitment who will bring a different and wider approach of conducting interviews in the recruitment procedures in the Albanian Civil Service.

¹ * 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

1.3 Expected deliverables of the assignment are: as per Terms of Reference.

1.4 Tentative timeframe: the assignment is expected to be performed from December 2020 to April 2021.

1.5 NOTE: Any individual employed by a company or institution who would like to submit an offer in response to this Procurement Notice must do so in their individual capacity, even if they expect their employers to sign a contract with ReSPA. In such a case, the applicant shall notify ReSPA in the application which institution is his/her employer.

Section 2. Preparation of CVs and supporting documentation

2.1 Language of application:

The CVs (maximum 3 pages, Ariel 11) and supporting documentation shall be prepared in English.

2.2 The CVs should provide information on the qualifications and competencies of the applicant, her/his general track record and previous specific experience in similar assignments, as required by the Terms of Reference. The applicants should particularly state in their CVs:

- General professional experience;
- Specific professional experience, in line with ToR.

2.3 The required qualifications and skills: as per Terms of Reference

Section 3. Submission of CVs and supporting documentation

3.1 The interested candidates are invited to submit a proposal consisting of the following documentation:

- Proposal: explaining their experience related to the subject and how they intend to respond to the assignment;
- Personal CV including past experience in similar activities and particularly issues referred to under point 2.2 of this Procurement Notice;
- At least three contacts for references (name and position of referee, email address and phone number) which may be contacted by ReSPA. (NOTE: There is no need to submit reference letters; ReSPA will directly contact the referees).

3.2 The required documentation should be submitted in electronic format by e-mail to the following address: procurement@respaweb.eu by **30 October 2020** before 2 PM CET. Late submissions will not be considered for evaluation. **The application should contain in the e-mail the Reference Number 19100.**

Public servants from ReSPA Members and Kosovo* are not eligible to apply.

Selection 4. Evaluation of offers

4.1 The offer will be evaluated against the required qualifications, experience, skills and competencies as defined in the Terms of Reference.

4.2 The applicant securing the highest final ranking will be invited to submit a financial proposal (the financial proposal shall specify a total sum amount in EURO for expert's daily fee) and negotiate the contract. If negotiations are successful, the selected candidate will be awarded the contract. Should the negotiations fail; the next ranked candidate will be invited to negotiations.

Section 5. Final Considerations

5.1 The payment will be done in installment, as explained in the Terms of Reference, following the submission and approval of the deliverables.

5.2 The following document is attached to this Procurement Notice: Terms of Reference

5.3 ReSPA reserves the right to cancel this procurement procedure at any moment without any compensation to the applicants. The cost of preparing a proposal and negotiating a contract, including any related travel, cannot be reimbursed by ReSPA under any circumstances nor can ReSPA be held liable for it, regardless the outcome of the procurement procedure.

5.4 Should you need any further clarifications with respect to this procurement notice, please contact: Ms. Ranka Bartula-Musikic, Programme Manager via e-mail: r.bartula@respaweb.eu, by **27 October 2020** (midnight), the latest. ReSPA will post the response, including an explanation of the query without identifying the source of inquiry, at its website (www.respaweb.eu) by **28 October 2020**.

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

International Expert in Competency Based Recruitment

Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is the inter-governmental organisation for enhancing regional co-operation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while Kosovo*² is a beneficiary. 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 for the membership of the European Union.

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The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funds for the support of the ReSPA activities (research, training and networking programmes) in line with the EU accession process. So far, three EC Grant Contracts (GCs) have been implemented by ReSPA during the period 2010-2015. The current EC grant CN 2019/ 405 139 supports the implementation of the activities required for contribution to the achievement of the three strategic objectives during the period 2019-2021.

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 representatives of institutions in charge of PAR, Public Financial Management (PFM) and government policy planning and the European Integration (EI) coordination process and five Working groups: (1) Centre-of-Government Institutions; 2) Better Regulation; 3) Human Resource Management and Development; 4) E-Governance; and 5) Quality Management.

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ReSPA supports its members through its mechanisms of support and one of them is the in-country support mechanism. This mechanism addresses the specific needs of ReSPA Members, supporting public administration reforms in the areas covered by the ReSPA Programme of Work.

This Terms of Reference (ToR) refers to the request submitted to ReSPA by the Department of Public Administration of Albania for providing support in improving recruitment process in the Albanian civil service with a focus on interview phase.

Description of the assignment

The recruitment process of civil servants in the public administration is a dynamic and systematic process that must be adaptable to changes posed by rapid development, digitalization, as well as other factors to ensure a professional, impartial and innovative civil service. In this perspective filling the vacancies with the right and successful employees is what is intended today in the field of recruiting civil servants.

For this purpose, the recruitment procedures in the civil service in Albania have been reformed, adapted, unified, and standardized aiming a fair competition process, objective and transparent evaluation of candidates, and moreover ensuring transparency at all stages of recruitment. The Department of Public Administration as the responsible unit that manages the civil service recruitment in the state administration institutions has continuously aimed to improve the process of selection and evaluation of candidates that compete to become part of the state administration. The recruitment process functions on the basis of well-defined procedures and consists of the following stages: notification of the vacancy, acceptance of documents, evaluation of the candidate files (documents, education, CV, experience, trainings etc.), testing/e-testing, interview, the right to appeal for each stage and announcement of the winner. Thus, the methodology and the bank of questions for the structured interview have been further improved and enriched. In addition, DoPA has also worked intensively to improve the quality of job descriptions, which serve to determine the unified criteria/competencies for similar group positions and help in hiring the right candidate according to knowledge, skill, ability, and other personal characteristics specification therefore increasing the quality of the recruitment process.

Following the latest changes, the recruitment process is now fully digital at all stages, from applications, evaluation of applicants' files, and automatic generation of written tests, electronic proofreading of written tests, and finally electronic e-testing and interviews online. These changes have not only allowed effective recruitment in the current condition but have also made the process more efficient, transparent, and professional.

During this year, as in many countries, Albania faced the challenges to continue the recruitment process during the state of emergency COVID-19, where it became imperative for DoPA to improve and adapt the recruitment process in the civil service in all its stages. In particular, due to the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the recruitment procedures in the public administration were suspended, thus cancelling all vacancies for admission to the civil service. In order to address the situation, the Department of Public Administration assessed the possibility of developing fully online recruitment procedures, considering the opportunities to use online testing through the use of the platform Administrata.al. On April 22, 2020, DoPA conducted the first full

online recruitment procedure, enabling the continuation of recruitment in state institutions part of the civil service in compliance with social distancing measures, thus marking a further step in the digitalization of the recruitment process.



Figure 1. Recruiting phases in Civil Service for entry category

As illustrated in figure 1, the content of the questions during the interview relates to the knowledge, skills, competencies needed for the job position, experience, motivation, aspirations and career expectations. Behavioural questions are prepared according to the STAR method where situations, tasks, actions and results are described.

The interview process is a challenging phase due to the fact that the candidates are difficult to be evaluated mostly in the work environment. Many candidates get the maximum score in testing and give enthusiastic answers during the interview but sometimes, their performance after appointment may not coincide with the results from the recruitment stages. Sometimes it's needed to investigate more deeply on the demonstrable behaviour of candidates providing thus sufficient information upon which to determine whether the candidates can do the job for which they are being interviewed. For this reason, candidates should be better evaluated by asking them questions based on the competencies/job description, soft skills and by evaluating answers on hypothetical situations.

Given the challenges encountered in conducting the interview phase, more specifically in the way the Evaluation Commission formulates questions during the interview and in particular the need to include as many questions as possible that assess core competencies (soft skills) of candidates, it is necessary to create mechanisms that improve this stage of the recruitment process. Improving the interviewing technique comes as a necessity to minimize issues that may come during the interview by avoiding wrongful employment, minimizing the extra time needed for training the employee, as well as the extra time that would be required to fill the job position in case of dismissal of the employee. For this reason, it is necessary to further strengthen the capacity of DoPA employees and the role of the representatives of state administration institutions and experts of evaluation commissions, as well as to improve the interviewing skills and methods

in order to have a more efficient and successful system of recruitment focusing in the interview. Also ensure that the DoPA staff involved in the important process of recruitment are at the maximum of their productivity and efficiency considering the current circumstances.

In addition to the technical skills on which candidates are tested and questioned, it is imperative to improve the interview commission's ability to screen for general or specific knowledge required to perform specific tasks and functions, based on candidate competencies and abilities to interact and handle specific situations. To make this system more functional the commission members are required to combine the questions of the interview based on competencies/knowledge, skills and behavior. There are too many specific work positions ranging from Top Level Management Corp to more delicate positions which requires a different approach and specific interviewing/questioning techniques.

The interview technique based on the assessment of behavioral characteristics puts the candidate in a position to respond to past experiences and based on the answers the interviewer develops a projection of how the candidate will behave in the future. This technique provides spontaneity as the candidate cannot prepare in advance.

To improve the interviewing technique based on the analysis of behavior and based on competencies, training of the evaluation commission is required, an activity which will serve to improve the commissioning capacities and to make the interviewing process more inclusive and Competency and Behavior-Based (CBB).

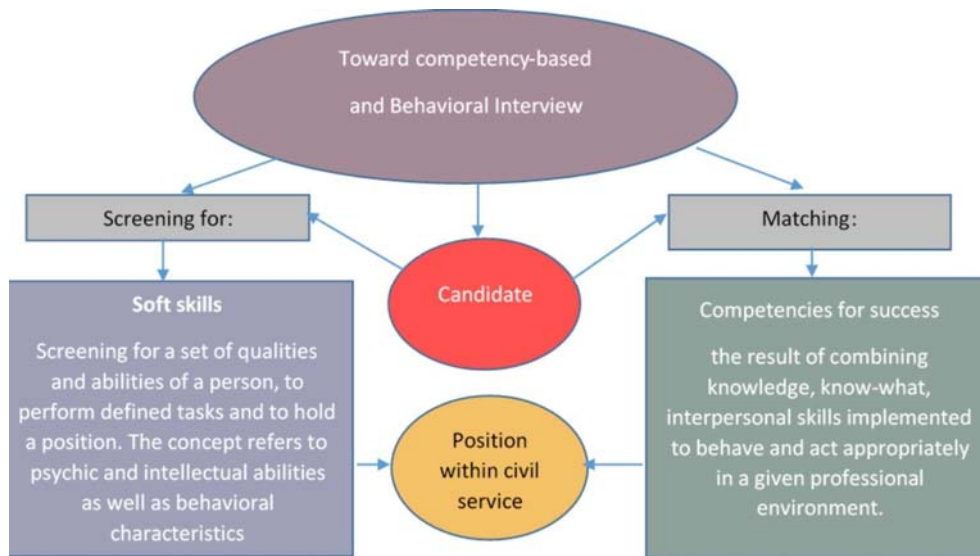


Figure 2. Illustration of what is aimed: Moving toward competency-based and behavioral interview

The trainings that are proposed to be developed for this purpose should introduce models for conducting interviews that identify the qualities and abilities of a candidate to perform in a given professional environment. The trainings will aim to improve the capacities of the members of the Evaluation Commissions in assessing a potential candidate not only in terms of technical capacities and skills, but also in terms of behavior, personality, motivation and cognitive ability.

This way the quality of recruitment procedures will be increased to better match the requirements of a certain job vacancy with the best possible candidate.

Also during these trainings, standardized psychometric cognitive tests related with the recruitment can be presented and discussed which will help to evaluate the personality dimensions' major areas of candidates such as interpersonal orientation; self-management and ways in which the candidate relates to the dominant values and normative systems; motivations and cognitive style and work-related measures - behavioral tendencies regarding working style and preferences regarding working environment etc.

This activity will be implemented through engagement of an international expert who will bring a different and wider approach of conducting interviews in the recruitment procedures in the Albanian Civil Service and a regional expert who is familiar with Albanian legal framework and background who can ensure a smoother interaction between the international expert and the Albanian counterpart.

The implementation of this activity will result in the improvement of the procedures in the recruitment process and will increase the quality of the recruitment of the best and most suitable candidates for announced positions and will strengthen the role of the Evaluation Commission.

With this document ReSPA is seeking for an international expert.

Tasks and responsibilities

The international expert shall perform the tasks which will include following phases:

1) Preparation of interview models (8 days)

STEP 1: Desk review of current methods and questions used during the interview process in relation to best practices. (1 day)

STEP 2: Prepare the model/s to be followed for conducting interview on behavioral competencies in the recruitment process in public administration and present it to DoPA management. (2 days)

STEP 3: Create a guideline to conduct a behavioral interview during the recruitment process and create sets with ready to use interview questions targeting soft skills, attitude and the main competencies of potential candidates. Present and discuss it with DoPA's management. (5 days)

2. Preparation of training sessions (3 days)

STEP 4: Preparation of all necessary materials (presentation, other reading materials etc) to conduct training sessions to strengthen competency-based interview process for members of evaluation commissions (based on the prepared method), including sharing best practice from the EU experience (i.e EPSO methods used in evaluating candidates during interviews. (1 day)

STEP 5: Conduct training sessions to strengthen competency-based interview process for members of evaluation commissions (based on prepared method), including sharing best practice from the EU experience (i.e EPSO methods used in evaluating candidates during interviews). (2 days)

5. Reporting (1day)

- Preparation of the report for ReSPA with recommendations for future regional activities. (1 day)

The engaged international expert will liaise directly with the regional expert and the Department of Public Administration of Albania. DoPA will provide the international expert with all necessary information. The engaged expert shall also liaise with the ReSPA Programme Manager in charge of the assignment and will take into consideration the instructions received beforehand.

Necessary Qualifications

The international expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- At least MSC degree in Organisation/occupational psychology or related areas. PHD shall be considered as an advancement.

General professional experience:

- At least 8 (eight) years of experience in the areas related to civil servant selection and recruitment.

Specific professional experience:

- Previous experience in competency based recruitment in the public administration;
- Previous experience in tailored simulations and competency-based interviews;
- Experience in delivering training of assessors for behavioral assessment techniques;
- Experience as an assessor during selection procedure;
- Experience with EPSO testing.

Skills:

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

Timing and Location

The assignment foresees work from home and on the site. Meetings/training in person should be delivered in small groups respecting all restriction measures imposed by pandemic.

The assignment will be performed from mid December 2020 to April 2021.

Remunerations

The assignment foresees up to **12 (twelve) working days** for the international expert.

No	Activity	Maximum No of working days
1.	Preparation of interview models	8
2.	Preparation of training sessions	3
3.	Reporting	1
	TOTAL:	12

The payment will be done in one instalment on completion of the activities.

Note: No other costs will be covered apart from the expert cost per day.

Reporting and Final Documentation

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

Outputs

- Revised method on conducting competency-based interviews;
- Guidelines for preparing and conducting the interviews for assessing behavioral competencies with a set of questions.

Documents required for payment

- Invoice (signed original);
- Timesheets (signed original);
- Report on the assignment with recommendations.