Terms of Reference

Expert to support the design and delivery of interrelated training in the framework of Digital Academy of Montenegro designated to the "Management of Open data"

1. Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organization that promotes regional cooperation, facilitates shared learning, and supports the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. Its members include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, while Kosovo*[1] as a beneficiary. ReSPA's mission is to assist regional governments in improving public administration, public services, and governance systems, and to prepare them for European Union membership.

ReSPA collaborates closely with ministers, senior public officials, and heads of units in member countries. It also partners with the European Union, specifically the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), as well as regional organizations like OECD/SIGMA and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), along with various agencies and civil society organizations. Since its establishment, ReSPA has played a significant role in public administration reform by supporting capacity-building, networking, and producing regional research through on-demand support mechanisms and peer learning.

The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funding to support ReSPA's activities, including research, training, and networking programs, in alignment with the EU accession process. ReSPA is currently implementing its fifth EC Grant Contract titled "Support to the Regional School of Public Administration for implementing PAR Agenda and facilitating EU accession process in the WBs," effective from January 1, 2023.

ReSPA operates mainly through regional networks at three levels: Ministerial, Senior Officials, and networks/working groups of experts and senior practitioners. It includes a Programme Committee with senior civil servants from ministries responsible for Public Administration, Finance, and European Integration, and four regional thematic groups focusing on: (1) Policy planning, better regulation, and Centre of Government coordination; (2) European integration and accession negotiations; (3) Human Resources Management and Professional Development; and (4) Service Delivery, including digitalization and quality management.

2. Problem statement and description of the assignment

The Digital Transformation Strategy of Montenegro identifies several pressing challenges that

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[1] *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on **Kosovo** Declaration of Independence.

hinder the country's progress in digital development. These challenges include a significant lack of digital skills across various sectors, an outdated educational system, and an overall shortage of trained ICT professionals.

One of the most significant barriers to Montenegro's digital development is the widespread lack of digital skills. This deficiency is particularly evident in the formal education system, which suffers from outdated content and a rigid structure that fails to adapt to the rapid advancements in computer science and digital technologies. As a result, the educational system is not adequately preparing future professionals for the digital landscape.

The formal education system's inadequacy in addressing digital skills needs a comprehensive overhaul. The current programs do not sufficiently equip students with the necessary skills for future technological advancements. Despite a substantial number of ICT graduates each year, the sector faces a critical shortage of trained professionals, exacerbated by a brain drain. This shortage hampers the growth and development of the ICT sector.

Certain demographic groups face significant challenges due to a lack of digital skills, which affects their labor market positioning and their ability to use and benefit from existing e-services. This skills gap contributes to slower digital development in specific sectors. To address this, there is a need for specialized and lifelong learning programs tailored to these groups.

Access to digital technologies is another pressing issue. Many households lack digital devices, limiting their ability to access information and develop digital skills. Similarly, institutions and sectors also face challenges with inadequate equipment, such as the low student-to-computer ratio in the education system.

For successful modernization and digitalization of the public sector, public administration employees must possess both basic and specialized digital skills. The Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022-2026 emphasizes the creation of training programs to address these needs. These programs aim to provide fundamental knowledge in various digital competencies, including computer usage, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, internet use, and safe technology practices.

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Public Administration has established the Digital Academy. This online platform is designed to facilitate education and networking among stakeholders involved in digital and leadership skills development. The Digital Academy focuses on enhancing competencies for digital transformation and strengthening digital awareness in Montenegrin society.

The Digital Academy's forthcoming training programs, specifically "Management and Use of Open Data" and "Data Processing and Protection," are critical in addressing the identified challenges. These programs are part of a broader set of 14 priority topics identified through a recent Training Needs Assessment. The training will equip officials, businesses, academia, and citizens with the skills needed to navigate and implement digital advancements effectively.

The proposed methodology involves a thorough online needs assessment, curriculum development by senior experts, and interactive learning approaches. This method ensures the delivery of relevant and practical content, addressing digital skills gaps and enhancing public administration practices. The focus on data management and protection is particularly crucial for

improving data security and compliance with privacy regulations.

The Digital Academy's initiatives align with national priorities outlined in the Mid-Term Work Program of the Government of Montenegro for 2022-2024 and the Work Program for 2023. These documents highlight digital transformation as a key priority, emphasizing the need for optimized processes and services. The Digital Transformation Strategy (2022-2026) and the Public Administration Reform Strategy (2022-2026) further support this alignment by focusing on ICT infrastructure, digital skills enhancement, and improved e-services.

The European Commission's 2023 Montenegro Report and the SIGMA monitoring report of 2021 highlight the slow progress in digital service modernization and the need for improved digital services. The proposed training programs aim to address these deficiencies by facilitating better data management practices, enhancing interoperability, and ensuring user-friendly digital services. These efforts align with the 2020 European Data Strategy, which promotes the establishment of data spaces and effective data management.

In conclusion, the Digital Academy's training programs are a crucial step in overcoming Montenegro's digital challenges. By addressing gaps in digital skills and enhancing data management practices, these programs will contribute significantly to the country's digital transformation and public administration modernization.

3. Tasks and responsibilities

Based on the main elements described in the previous section, the Expert shall, indicatively, perform the following tasks:

1. **Development of Training Materials (2 Days)**

   Design training for the Digital Academy platform, select recommended e-literature and prepare a final test::

   - Training Description for Digital Academy Platform:
     - A short description of themes, methodology, and learning outcomes is provided.
     - A brief overview of the trainer's professional experience
   - Video Teasers:
     - Create video teasers (up to 30 seconds) announcing the webinar.
   - Digital Documents - Prepare key documents in Montenegrin (or English if necessary), covering:
     - Key principles and trends in open data.
     - Inspirational practices in the region and worldwide.
     - Professional networks and associations.
     - Events related to the topic (conferences, workshops, webinars).
     - Relevant scientific papers and analytical studies.
     - Final tests.
     - Secured e-learning platform (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams).

2. **Preparation of Training Content (3 Days)**

Develop PowerPoint presentations and interactive exercises for a two-day training focused on open data with topics to cover:

- o Introduction to Open Data - understanding the concept, principles and benefits of open data for transparency, innovation, economy grow and citizen engagement,
- o Exploring the legal and policy considerations related to open data, including data protection regulations, copyright laws and open licensing,
- o Learning best practices for data collection, storage, processing and sharing to ensure data quality, security, and accessibility,
- o Familiarization with open data platforms and tools for publishing, accessing, and analysing open datasets,
- o Understanding the concept of data spaces and their role in facilitating open data sharing and collaboration across sectors and domains,
- o Addressing governance issues related to open data, including privacy protection, data ethics and responsible data use,
- o Techniques for visualizing and analysing open data to extract insights and inform decision-making,
- o Case studies and best practices - examining real case examples of successful open data initiatives and best practices for maximizing the impact of open data.

3. Consultations and Trainee Selection (1,5 Day)

Consult with Digital Academy representatives to assist in trainee selection, Advise on the selection of up to 30 trainees based on performance and suitability. Deliverables/Outputs:

- o Communication and Meetings:
    - ▪ Established communication with Digital Academy representatives.
    - ▪ Conducted several online meetings.
- o Support in Trainee Selection:
    - ▪ Provided guidance in selecting up to 30 trainees.

4. Delivery of Training and Final Testing (2 Days)

Conduct two half-day e-training sessions and perform final testing of trainees. Training Sessions:

- o Two half-day trainings completed at the premises proposed by Ministry of Public Administration
- o Final testing

5. Recommendations and Lessons Learned (1,5 Day)

Design recommendations for improvement based on the training experience, compile lessons learned for future training enhancements**:**

- o Final Report - Detailed report with recommendations and lessons learned.

NOTICE: Expert will also provide suggestions for the webinar content, including topics, examples and exercises and their input may influence the final agenda of the webinar. The materials should be delivered in a digital format.

The abovementioned tasks and responsibilities represent the milestones of the assignment to be delivered within the time framework of 10 (ten) working days but the Expert may propose slight changes/adaptations upon agreement with the ReSPA Programme Officer in charge as well as the MPA.

4. Necessary qualifications of the required expert

The Expert must have diverse but compatible experience working for or with the public sector, preferably in positions/assignments and tasks related to emerging technologies and the development of strategic documents, etc. More specifically, the Expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- At least Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration, Computer Science or other related fields
- Master Degree will be considered an asset.

General professional experience:

- At least 7 years of experience working in or with the public sector and related assignments/positions, as public servant, consultant, expert, advisor, etc.

Specific professional experience:

- At least 5 years of extensive experience in promoting and/or implementing open data initiatives within public administration and services in Montenegro and/or Western Balkans;
- Expertise in leveraging open data to enhance transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in the public sector.

Skills:

- Team work;
- Excellent computer skills (MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint);
- Training and moderation skills;
- High presentation skills;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in Montenegrin and English;
- Ability to write clear and coherent methodological and guidance documents;
- Ability to prepare and deliver well-structured presentations/trainings;
- Ability to analyze complex information and convey clear messages;
- Ability to work with people of different nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds.

5. Timing and Location

The assignment foresees work from the home/office and on-site in MPA (Podgorica, Montenegro). Digital Academy will provide quality assurance and intensive support to logistics. The assignment is expected to be performed tentatively from October to December 2024.

6. Remunerations

The assignment foresees engagement of up to 10 **(ten) expert** days in the amount of up to **3.500 EUR**.

The payment will be done in one instalment upon completion of the assignment. The final outputs will be subject to approval from ReSPA before the execution of the payment.

Note: No other costs will be covered apart from the expert cost per day. The expert cost per day comprises of expert's fee per day and (if needed) a lump sum for covering related costs which include travel, accommodation, local transport, meals and other incidentals.

7. Reporting and Final Documentation

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

Outputs
- *Training Description for Digital Academy Platform ((short description of covered themes, methodology of work, learning outcomes, trainer's professional experience)*
- *Video Teasers*
- *Digital Documents that will cover:*
  o Principles and trends in open data;
  o Examples of open data practices from global and regional initiatives;
  o Resources on associations and networks that support open data professionals;
  o List of conferences, workshops, and webinars relevant to open data;
  o Links to scientific papers and studies on open data trends and challenges;
  o Assessment materials to evaluate trainee knowledge.
- *PowerPoint Presentations & Interactive Exercises*
- *Guidance for Trainee Selection*
- *Final Report*
  o Detailed documentation of the training program, including outcomes, recommendations for improvement, and lessons learned during implementation.

Documents required for payment
- Invoice (signed original);
- Timesheets (signed original);
- Outputs;
- Final brief report on the assignment.