

Procurement Notice

Assignment name: Expert for preparation of the Feasibility study on conducting qualifying exams online.

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.

Ministry of Public Administration and Local-Self Government of Serbia (MPALSG) requested ReSPA in-country support mechanism in order to strength their capacity building activities. Human Resources Management is an area that has remained central in the new strategic framework where improvements and application of modernisation principles have continued. A specific goal has been set in this area - Developed and implemented functional and innovative system of professional development and state qualifying exams in public administration based on the needs analysis for improving the competences, i.e. knowledge, skills and abilities of public administration employees and the relevant Measure: Introduction of single criteria, benchmarks and standards in the field of qualifying exams in the public administration system. This means that the reform process extends to qualifying exams in the public administration system. Having in mind the above said it would be of particular importance to engage an expert who would provide support in the development of the required feasibility study.

1.2 ReSPA now seeks to engage an expert who would prepare a Feasibility study on conducting qualifying exams online.

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 April to June 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 **06 April 2021 by 2 PM CET, at latest**. Late submissions will not be considered for evaluation. **The application should contain in the e-mail the Reference Number 19600.**

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 **01 April 2021** (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 **02 April 2021**.

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

Expert for preparation of the Feasibility study on conducting qualifying exams online

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.

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 endeavour 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.

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.

² * 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

ReSPA supports its members through its support mechanisms, 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 Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) of the Republic of Serbia to prepare the feasibility study on conducting qualifying exams online.

Description of the assignment

The reform processes in the Republic of Serbia, initiated with the strategic document from 2014, have continued with the drafting of the new Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021-2025 with the Action Plan.

Human Resources Management is an area that has remained central in the new strategic framework where improvements and application of modernisation principles have continued. A specific goal has been set in this area - *Developed and implemented functional and innovative system of professional development and state qualifying exams in public administration based on the needs analysis for improving the competences, i.e. knowledge, skills and abilities of public administration employees* and the relevant Measure: *Introduction of single criteria, benchmarks and standards in the field of qualifying exams in the public administration system*. This means that the reform process extends to qualifying exams in the public administration system. So far this field has been unjustifiably outside of the development processes and improvements that can contribute to the desirable competencies of public administration employees. Qualifying exams are one of the requirements for work in state and other bodies and organisations, i.e. for public office holders, which all first-time employees are obliged to pass to be able to work in this system (state qualifying exam), i.e. for employees in jobs with special duties and powers (special qualifying exams).

Namely, although the qualifying examination field has a long tradition in the legal system of the Republic of Serbia, it has stayed outside of the strategic reforms for many years. In the meantime, the unplanned and segmental approach to solving individual needs in a specific administrative area has led to the expansion of regulations that govern the same issues important for the whole field of the qualifying examination on different bases.

Therefore, the adoption of a normative framework that governs the field of qualifying examination in the state administration system of the Republic of Serbia on a unique basis creates preconditions for essential transformation into a model needed by the whole legal system, and special activities have been planned in the said strategic documents.

After this initial step, optimisation, standardisation and unification of business processes in the qualifying examination field are further planned in the manner and to the extent that takes into account the specificities of each of these exams, as well as their reorganisation for improvement and modernisation through more extensive application of ICT resources, i.e. development of ICT services and introduction of e-government services in this segment of state administration.

This is of particular importance if we consider that more than 3,000 people annually take the state qualifying exam. In addition to the qualifying exams, there are about one hundred special qualifying exams and license exams. The modernisation of work in the field of qualifying exams would lead to financial savings for all parties in this process - the authorities and the candidates, and make services more transparent and efficient, as the execution of certain phases of this process would no longer take days, but rather hours

In 2020, a software solution with modules to support administrative decision-making, organising and conducting qualifying exams and keeping records of passed exams was introduced in accordance with the highest standards of e-government as the first G2G (government to government) system at the level of public administration, which, through the one-stop-shop established on the portal of the Ministry, enables state and other bodies and organisations to apply online for taking the state qualifying exam and a special qualifying exam for registrars. The system ensures the Ministry's work and its users in the new digital environment in real-time, with the application of all standards of information security and personal data protection. All procedures are entirely digitised, and electronic communication with system users is enabled by integration with a single electronic mailbox established by the Office for IT and eGovernment.

Phase 2 of the improvement of this system is underway by designing a new service that will enable online applications and digitisation of the processes in the exam for inspectors. This phase of development will also provide access to the Service Bus of the Ministry, which will enable the transfer of data from the passed qualifying exams records to the competent authorities for the needs of performing tasks within their competence. Integration of this software solution with the software solution introduced by the Human Resources Management Service, in co-operation with the MPALSG (some of the data entered in the Central Personnel Register are the data on the passed state qualifying exam, i.e. special qualifying exam, and the certificate of passed state qualifying exam/ special qualifying exam is one of the pieces of evidence in the selection procedure for employment in state and other bodies).

In terms of its components and characteristics, this software solution for qualifying exams will most probably be transformed into a prototype information system for supporting all other qualifying exams in the system of state (public) administration in the Republic of Serbia, which is a course of action to be taken upon adoption of the new Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia.

However, a segment that is still underresearched and does not have practical parity examples in other related areas, e.g. in the (higher) education system, is conducting qualifying exams online, with live sessions that mimic the whole process of the traditional way of conducting qualifying exams, and application of all measures that ensure the legality and regularity of the entire process of candidate examination and assessment.

In that sense, the development of a feasibility study on conducting qualifying exams online would enable: systematizing all known modalities of this method of work in the practice of comparative systems and relevant international organisations (regardless of the field in which they are applied - educational process, selection process for the purpose of employment, etc.);

Definition of the technical, material and other resources needed to conduct exams online; and proposing a model, with impact analysis, applicable in the process of online examination. After

that, one can approach the normative regulation of this issue and build a system that can support the whole process.

Having in mind the above said it would be of particular importance to engage an expert who would provide support in the development of the required feasibility study.

With this document, ReSPA is seeking for an expert who would prepare a *Feasibility study on conducting qualifying exams online*.

Tasks and responsibilities

The preparation of the feasibility study refers only to the segment which includes the technical part of the exam implementation process (examination of candidates / knowledge testing) at a distance. The feasibility study should:

- define technical and related aspects that would enable conducting of the exam in direct interaction between the examiner and the candidate (face to face) at a distance.
- provide a clear definition of what is needed in technical terms to ensure that conducting of the exam in this way would be regular (in the part of checking the knowledge of candidates).
- propose solutions applicable to all professional exams, and not only to professional exams within the scope of the MPALSG.

Upon the development of the feasibility study, normative regulation of all issues of importance for the introduction of online exams is the first expected output, followed by their implementation in the system of qualifying exams in the state administration of the Republic of Serbia.

The Expert shall perform the tasks listed below:

1. Preparation phase (1 day)

- Hold an initial meeting with the representatives of the Professional Development Sector.
- Receive documents and information necessary for the work;
- Confirm understanding of the goals, conditions, outputs;
- Agree on the document's structure.

2. Development of the feasibility study (6 days)

- Collect, systematise and present regulations and practices in the application of ICT in the organisation and conducting of exams (or other forms of knowledge testing) in countries, constituting the good practices in Europe and relevant international institutions. (2 days);
- Analyse and compare good practices and modern trends (tools and instruments) in conducting exams or other forms of knowledge testing (testing and assessment process) (2 days);

- Provide recommendations for introducing e-exams in the public administration of the Republic of Serbia (1 day);
- Development of the feasibility study (1 day).

3. Presentation, finalisation of the document and reporting (5 days)

- Submit a draft feasibility study to the MPALSG - Professional Development Sector, as well as prepare a power point presentation and present the study. (1 day)
- Align the draft feasibility study with the recommendations for improvement of the MPALSG - Professional Development Sector (2 days)
- Conduct final correction of the study according to the instructions and recommendations received and submit the improved version; (1 day)
- Present and deliver the final version of the feasibility study to the Professional Development Sector. (1 day)

4. Reporting

- Prepare a report for ReSPA with recommendations for possible future regional initiatives. (1 day)

The engaged Expert will liaise directly with the Professional Development Sector team that will cooperate with the Expert on the assignment and will provide all necessary information. MPALSG (Professional Development Sector) shall also offer a room, technical equipment and assistance for the Expert's work in the field. The Expert shall also take into consideration the inputs/comments received during the assignment from the representative of Delegation of European Union in Belgrade and the ReSPA Programme Manager in charge of the project. The Expert shall also take into consideration the instructions received beforehand.

Necessary Qualifications

The Expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- At least a Bachelor's degree in Natural, Organisational or Social Sciences.

General professional experience:

- Previous experience in feasibility study development;
- Previous experience in implementing projects funded by the international community.

Specific professional experience:

- At least 7 (seven) years of experience in designing or implementing software solutions in the field of public administration;

Skills:

- Teamwork;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English and BCMS;
- 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 location. Due to the pandemic situation face to face meetings could be held online. The work will be performed from **April to June 2021**.

Remunerations

The assignment foresees up to **13 (thirteen)** working days for the Expert.

No	Activity	Maximum No of working days
1.	Preparation phase	1
2.	<i>Development of the feasibility study</i>	6
3.	<i>Presentation, finalisation of the document</i>	5
4.	Reporting	1
	TOTAL:	13

The payment will be conducted in one (1) instalment on completion of the assignment.

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

Reporting and Final Documentation

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

Outputs

- Feasibility study
- Report on the assignment with recommendations for regional initiatives

Documents required for payment

- Invoice (signed original);
- Timesheets (signed original).