

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

Lead Expert in Human Resources Management and Professional Development for Supporting the Implementation of the Seasonal School on Talent Management

1. Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an 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, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, while Kosovo* 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 membership in the European Union.

ReSPA establishes close cooperation with Ministers, senior public servants and heads of units in Member countries. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, specifically Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional actors such as OECD/SIGMA and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as well as agencies and civil society organizations. Since its inception, ReSPA, as an international organization and a key regional endeavour in Public Administration Reform, has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through on-demand support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research materials.

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. Currently, ReSPA is implementing its fifth EC Grant Contract "Support to the Regional School of Public Administration for implementing PAR Agenda and facilitating EU accession process in the WBs", which is active as of 1 January 2023.

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 senior civil servants representing the ministries responsible for the Public Administration, ministries of Finance, and institutions in charge of the European Integration process coordination of the ReSPA Members and four regional thematic groups: (1) Policy planning, better regulation and coordination of Centre of Government, (2) European integration and accession negotiations; (3) Human Resources Management and Professional Development; (4) Service Delivery (digitalization and quality

* 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.

2. Description of the Assignment

Public administrations in the Western Balkans are navigating a period of profound transition shaped by ongoing EU integration processes, accelerated digital transformation, demographic shifts, and evolving citizen expectations. These dynamics are placing increased pressure on the capacity of public institutions to adapt, innovate, and deliver with resilience.

However, one of the most persistent and systemic challenges across the region remains the absence of institutionalised succession planning mechanisms. In most administrations, leadership transitions occur in a reactive and often politicised manner, lacking clear alignment with strategic organisational needs, long-term workforce planning, or structured talent development pipelines. While most Western Balkan countries have introduced competency frameworks and performance appraisals, few have embedded these tools into long-term workforce strategies or leadership continuity models.

As a result, public administrations are increasingly exposed to a range of interrelated risks and vulnerabilities, including:

- **Leadership Gaps and Discontinuity:** The absence of structured succession planning results in periods of leadership vacuum, undermining continuity of vision, policy implementation, and institutional stability.
- **Loss of Institutional Memory:** Without mechanisms for knowledge transfer and mentoring, leadership transitions often lead to the erosion of accumulated expertise, tacit knowledge, and organisational learning.
- **Talent Drain and Low Youth Engagement:** Public administrations struggle to attract and retain young, high-potential professionals who frequently perceive the sector as rigid, uncompetitive, or lacking meaningful career development opportunities. This generational disconnect exacerbates ageing workforce trends and threatens the long-term vitality of public leadership.
- **Overdependence on Informal Networks:** In the absence of transparent talent identification and development systems, promotions and leadership appointments often rely on informal or politicised channels, undermining meritocracy and employee motivation.
- **Fragmentation and Inconsistency across Institutions:** Decentralised structures and uneven HRM capacities across ministries and agencies lead to fragmented succession planning practices, making it difficult to establish common standards or long-term leadership pipelines.
- **Inadequate Anticipation of Future Skills:** Rapid changes in technology, governance complexity, and policy environments (especially EU-related reforms) demand a new generation of leaders equipped with cross-cutting competencies. Yet many administrations lack the predictive analytics or workforce foresight tools to anticipate and plan for these needs.

Against this backdrop, the need for structured, data-informed, and future-oriented succession planning is more urgent than ever. Institutional resilience, leadership continuity, and the ability to inspire and engage the next generation of public servants depend on a strategic shift toward professionalised talent management systems that go beyond reactive staffing and cultivate leadership as a long-term public asset.

The seasonal school targets senior and mid-level public administration professionals from Civil Service Agencies or equivalent, Training institutions/schools or Departments, and Ministries of Public Administration.

The two-day seasonal school will help participants to:

- Understand the methodology and tools behind strategic succession planning for leadership continuity.
- Explore how EU member states (France and Estonia) apply institutional models to ensure a continuous leadership pipeline.
- Practice applying the methodology in realistic public administration scenarios.
- Draft elements of a tailored Succession Planning Toolkit for the Western Balkans.

By means of these Terms of Reference (ToR), ReSPA is seeking a Lead Expert in **Human Resource Management and Professional Development (HRMPD)**, who would, in cooperation with a Local Expert, support ReSPA in organising the Seasonal School on Succession planning.

3. Tasks and responsibilities

The Lead Expert will perform the following indicative tasks:

- Review and propose comments on the draft Agenda for the two-day workshop, in close cooperation with a Local Expert and ReSPA. Prepare content and training materials for assigned sessions to be delivered on the first day, based on international best practices. (3 days)
- Deliver four sessions on day 1 in line with the agreed Agenda and ensure active involvement of participants. (2 days)
- Provide comments on the exercises prepared by the Local Expert for day 2. Moderate two exercises as well as a group presentation on day 2. Provide comments and advice during all exercises as needed.
- Provide advice to participants during exercises and discussions throughout the event.

The abovementioned tasks and responsibilities represent the milestones of the assignment, but the expert and ReSPA Programme Manager in charge can propose changes/adaptations upon mutual agreement.

4. Timing and Location

The assignment foresees working from home/office and participation in the two-day seasonal school, which will be held in Montenegro (place tbc.) **on 10 and 11 June 2025**.

5. Remunerations

The assignment foresees up to **3.600EUR**.

The payment will be made in one instalment following the submission of the report on the implementation, which is subject to the approval of the relevant ReSPA PM.

Note: No other costs will be covered besides the expert cost per day. The expert cost per day comprises the expert's daily fee and expenses for travel, accommodation, local transport, meals, and other incidentals.

6. Necessary Qualifications, Experience and Skills

The Lead Expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- PhD in Public Policy and Management, Public Administration, or other related fields.

General professional experience:

- At least ten years of professional experience working in or with the public sector and related assignments/positions.

Specific professional experience:

- At least five years of specific experience in work related to Human Resources Management and Professional Development (HRMPD).
- Proven experience related to the development/design/delivery of capacity-building programmes in the area of HRMPD.
- International experience in HRMPD through consultancy/advising to national and international organisations.

Skills:

- Strong presentation and moderation skills.
- 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.

7. Reporting and Final Documentation

The Lead Expert will be requested to deliver the following documents in the English language before the payment is conducted:

Outputs (indicatively)

- PowerPoint presentations prepared for each session.

Documents required for payment

- Invoice (original and signed);
- Timesheet (original and signed);
- Final report in English on the performed tasks.