



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

ANNUAL REPORT

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ReSPA

Foreword



The year behind us was fruitful for the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA). In the past year, we strongly positioned our organization as the key regional endeavour in public administration reform in the Western Balkan region.

More than 50 successfully implemented regional events, 10 regional comparative studies and baseline analyses, over 1,500 participants from public administration institutions, and over 200 regional and international experts involved in ReSPA activities, clearly show the importance of our mission.

At the same time, these achievements demonstrate the commitment, enthusiasm and professionalism of the entire ReSPA team that contributed to the ultimate goal of our region: competent, transparent and accountable public administration.

During the reporting period, all ReSPA activities were organized in line with the three main Pillars: European Integration, Public Administration Reform, and Governance for Growth. Through active participation, public servants from the region have shown commitment to and interest in our events, evaluating them as highly relevant and useful.

We also actively cooperated with the relevant international institutions and organisations, civil society organisations, think tanks and academia, business associations, and many others in the region and beyond.

Public administration reform in the Western Balkan region is a very demanding task, that requires significant resources and sincere political commitment. ReSPA Members face a

number of common problems, that can be more efficiently addressed through peer-learning and sharing of good practices. Therefore, ReSPA provides the unique framework for networking and learning in the field of public administration reform in the Western Balkan region. Moreover, ReSPA plays a major role in supporting the implementation of the European Principles of Public Administration.

In the upcoming period, ReSPA will continue with activities of joint interest to all Western Balkan countries, but we will also respond to the specific needs of individual ReSPA Members.

The development of the new ReSPA Strategy for the 2019-2024 period, along with the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, will enable us to better integrate and synergise our efforts to provide the best possible impact in the implementation of PAR Strategies in the region.

I wish to thank to our governance structures, national coordinators, and representatives of ReSPA working groups and networks for their valuable contribution. I also wish to express my gratitude to the European Commission for their continuous support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'R. Sekulovic'.

Ratka Sekulovic, ReSPA Director

Summary

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organisation supporting the regional cooperation of public administrations in the Western Balkans. ReSPA activities are supported by the European Commission (EC) through directly managed funds, and co-funded through annual contributions of the ReSPA Members.

ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while public servants from Kosovo*¹ participate in ReSPA activities funded by the European Commission.

The purpose of ReSPA is to support governments in the Western Balkan region to develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and prepare them for membership in the European Union. ReSPA serves as an innovative regional hub for policy research, knowledge sharing and networking in the field of public administration in Western Balkans.

ReSPA's main objectives in the 2016-2020 period are to:

- Improve co-operation in the field of public administration amongst the ReSPA Members;
- Strengthen the administrative capacity in the public administrations of the ReSPA Members as required by the European Integration process;
- Develop human resources in the public administrations of the ReSPA Members in line with the European Principles of Public Administration².



ReSPA Open Day in Brussels
15 June 2017

1 * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Advisory Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence

2 For more details about the European Principles of Public Administration see OECD/SIGMA website: <http://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/principles-public-administration.htm>

These objectives are being achieved through the three pillars of the ReSPA Programme of Work for 2016-2017:

- (1) **European Integration Pillar:** Increase the capacity of public administration in the ReSPA Members necessary for the successful conducting of the European Integration process;
- (2) **Public Administration Reform Pillar:** Facilitate and enhance cooperation and exchange of experiences in Public Administration Reform and European Integration activities in the ReSPA Members;
- (3) **Governance for Growth Pillar:** Ensure effective coordination of the implementation of Dimension N – Effective Public Services of the Governance for Growth Pillar of the South-East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy³.

ReSPA's main achievements in 2017:

Over 50 networking and capacity building events (seminars, workshops, conferences, study visits, trainings, meetings, mobility schemes), involving over 1,500 public servants from the Western Balkans, and more than 200 international and regional experts, and 10 regional comparative research projects with policy recommendations for Public Administration Reform related solutions. Since the beginning of the current EC Grant Contract implementation period (March 2016), 1.8 million euro was spent for ReSPA activities.

All activities implemented during the reporting period (01 December 2016 – 15 October 2017) were organised in accordance with the ReSPA Programme of Work 2016-2017. Following the overall ReSPA strategic approach, all the activities planned and implemented in the reporting period were directly linked to achievements of at least one of the three results corresponding with the

three ReSPA pillars: European Integration (EUI) Pillar, Public Administration Reform (PAR) Pillar, and Governance for Growth (GfG) Pillar.

Within the PAR Pillar, ReSPA organized its work through established regional working groups in following thematic areas:

- 1) PAR Network
- 2) Better Regulation
- 3) Ethics and Integrity
- 4) Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD)
- 5) Administrative Procedures and Administrative Justice (APAJ)
- 6) eGovernment
- 7) Quality in Public Administration and Services (QPAS)
- 8) Public Procurement
- 9) Public Private Partnership
- 10) Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC)

The working groups are composed of senior and mid-level public servants from central governmental institutions of ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. All working groups were established earlier, and have continued their activities throughout 2016 and 2017, except for the working group on PIFC which was formed in December 2016.

As a novelty in its work during this year, ReSPA has strengthened its visibility through the organization of ReSPA Open Days that promote ReSPA achievements to broader audiences in the Western Balkans and beyond. Three Open Days were organized in 2017: in Belgrade, in Sarajevo, and in Brussels.



³ For more information about the SEE 2020 Strategy and its implementation see the RCC website: <http://www.rcc.int/pages/62/south-east-europe-2020-strategy>

Implementation of the ReSPA Programme of Work 2016–2017

The commitment of ReSPA Secretariat and participants from ReSPA Members' public institutions to the achievement of the objectives has been demonstrated by the participation of the latter in over 50 successfully implemented regional activities during the reporting period.

All the activities are listed below, with short presentations of their purpose and achievements. Some of activities are still in the process of implementation – as the development of analytical documents and regional comparative studies take longer. It is verified that the comparative studies have valuable and important recommendations both for further reform activities in the ReSPA Members, as well as for further regional initiatives organized by ReSPA. All events are interconnected and organised in a way to have synergetic effect for the three ReSPA pillars of work, and especially for working groups established in particular thematic areas. The future activities are also planned in accordance with the need to be harmonized with overall ReSPA strategic objectives.

The main direct beneficiaries of ReSPA activities are senior and mid-level managers working within the ministries and governmental agencies responsible for PAR and European Integration, and in other relevant line ministries in ReSPA Members and Kosovo*, as well as public administrators from local governments depending on the area and type of activities. The citizens of Western Balkan countries, to whom public institutions deliver public services, are the indirect beneficiaries of ReSPA activities.

3.1. Cooperation among ReSPA Members in the area of European Integration

ReSPA provided significant contribution to enhancement of capacities of public administrations in its Members and Kosovo* for continuing the European Integration process.

Within the EUI pillar, special focus was on trainings and strengthening capacities for better programming and utilisation of IPA funds, particularly EU Budget Support, and work of national investment committees, as well as on legal alignment with the EU *acquis*, and support to improvement of the process of translation of *acquis* in ReSPA Members. Above all, ReSPA continued supporting capacities for EU accession negotiations.

Strategic co-ordination of the EUI activities was enabled through implementation of recommendations provided by the Programme Committee on EUI. During the reporting period, two meetings of this body were held. The recommendations of the Programme Committee on EUI highlighted relevant and concrete activities to be implemented with the aim of supporting European Integration processes.



ReSPA Summer School on Accession Negotiations
July 2017, at ReSPA

**ReSPA Summer School on Accession Negotiations
(focused on Chapters 23 and 24), 03 – 07 July
2017, at ReSPA**

With the intention of improving the knowledge and professional skills of public servants working on EU affairs, and in order to offer them a new opportunity to network with colleagues from the Western Balkan region, ReSPA organized the Summer School on Accession Negotiations with the EU. Special focus was given to the Negotiating Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security).

Lecturers at the Summer School were high level professionals and ReSPA experts from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and the EU academic institutions: College of Europe and the European Centre for Judges and Lawyers of the European Institute of Public Administration. More than 30 participants of the Summer School came from all ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. They were senior and mid-level professionals actively taking part in the European Integration processes, from institutions that are coordinating the European Integration processes at the central level, ministries in charge of foreign affairs, justice, internal affairs, public administration, finance, Offices of Prime Ministers, and from the Offices of Chiefs of Accession Negotiation Teams.

*“When you are a civil servant, it is most important that you cultivate your critical mindset. The EU accession does not matter so much. What matters is the way towards accession. It is the effort that you are going to undertake and collective intelligence you are going to put in the process that will make you ready or not. The key for being ready is education, education, and education. It is not just acquiring new techniques, new technologies, new competencies; it is far more than that. It is about making sense of ethics for participating in a collective effort, exchange with others, helping each other, living together despite racial, ethnic, religious and other differences in an open and competitive society” said **Pierre Defraigne, Executive Director of the Madariaga Centre, College of Europe**, in his keynote address to the Summer School participants.*

Regional cooperation being fundamental to the accession bid of the regional EU membership aspirants, the objectives of the ReSPA Summer School on Accession Negotiations with the EU were: to help participants deepen the understanding of the issues covered by Chapters 23 and 24 – background and finer points of the concepts, foreseeable challenges during the Chapters’ negotiations, and possible ways to overcome them; to inform participants of the state of affairs in the region in particular thematic areas of Chapters 23 and 24, and to derive

common lessons from the various experiences; to share good practices in terms of existing regional initiatives in the matters related to Chapters 23 and 24: police cooperation, fight against corruption, border control, migrations/asylum/visas, fight against organized crime and terrorism, judicial cooperation in criminal and civil matters, customs cooperation etc; to increase the understanding of participants (a) of the need to advocate for sustainable implementation of the reforms related to Chapters 23 and 24 – in order to secure the “substantial social change”, which is evaluated at the end of the process; (b) of the need to strategically communicate achievements in the process of implementation of reforms – to counterparts domestically, regionally and in the EU (especially important in view of the political nature of the criteria), as a way to help the achievement of their reform objectives; and finally, to build connections among participants for future regional cooperation.

According to the participants, the Summer School helped in gaining a deeper insight into the processes within the EU, and implications for the enlargement policy, as well as a better understanding of the Chapters 23 and 24 based on the experience of Croatia.

The participants also learned about the current state of affairs regarding judiciary and fundamental rights, justice, freedom and security, in each of the EU Aspirants across the Western Balkans. Through discussions on common problems, they broadened their outlook of similar situations and challenges faced by their peers.



Participants of the ReSPA Summer School, July 2017



Speakers at the ReSPA Summer School, July 2017

Vesna Jevtic from the Ministry of Finance of Republic of Serbia stressed her fascination with lecturers engaged in the Summer School. *“The knowledge of the lecturers and their familiarity with the themes really impressed me. They informed the participants in a very adequate manner, therefore their views and experiences related to Chapters 23 and 24 were precious. I would like to emphasize the importance of ReSPA’s role in relation to the topics presented to us during the Summer School. The second dimension I would like to point out about ReSPA is the contacts that we as participants are making among each other, that we continue to nourish by sharing the experiences and socializing even privately.”*

“This Summer School was remarkable, because of the participation of civil servants from the region who do similar jobs and have similar problems and challenges. We socialized and shared experiences, and we got reminded of the values of the European Union, the EU accession process and related special recommendations. We talked about the techniques that will enable us to do our job better and make the process of the EU accession easier. We learned about general theoretical perspective to the EU and its institutions, how they function and what is their expected future, as well as about the challenges that the EU faces and the specifics related to Chapters 23 and 24. I wish to thank ReSPA for the great organization.”

Mitar Sladoje from the Directorate for European Integration, Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina

ReSPA supported development of administrative capacities for successful IPA programming and utilization of the EU funds through organisation of the regional conference on EU Budget Support, specific country workshops on EU Budget Support, and a study visit to the European Investment Bank.

3rd Regional Conference on EU Budget Support, 21 September 2017, Tirana, Albania – In the area of IPA programming and utilization of the EU funds, ReSPA organized, in co-operation with the GIZ – Open Regional Fund, the 3rd Regional Conference on the EU Budget Support. The Conference enabled exchange of experiences among the Members of ReSPA, on the one part, and with the representative of the EC's DG NEAR in charge of the EU Budget Support coordination, on the other part, regarding preparation and implementation of budget support operations. The lessons learned from the design and implementation of Sector Reform Contracts (SRC) were presented and commented by participants.

During the reporting period, ReSPA organised four workshops on the EU Budget Support, tailored to the needs of each concrete administration. The following workshops were held:

- **Workshop on EU Budget Support for civil servants of Albania**, 13 – 15 December 2016, at ReSPA
- **Workshop on EU Budget Support for civil servants of Montenegro**, 23 – 25 January 2017, at ReSPA
- **Workshop on EU Budget Support for civil servants of Serbia**, 22 – 24 March 2017, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Workshop on EU Budget Support for civil servants of Kosovo***, 3 – 5 May 2017, at ReSPA

The workshops were designed to reflect particular needs of each administration, depending on the phase of the budget support operations that is important for the given administration, as well as the area covered by the sector reform contracts. Consequently, the workshops were focused either at the design and preparation phases, or at the implementation phase and reporting on the reform achievements.

Working Paper on Budget Support Intervention Logic and Indicators, March – October 2017 – In close coordination with the EC's DG NEAR, ReSPA contracted two experts to jointly develop a paper with practical guidance on designing a robust intervention logic for budget support. This document, that should complement the

Budget Support Guidelines developed in 2012 and launched by the EC's DG DEVCO, and Enlargement Budget Support Guidelines developed in 2014, shall lead the reader through the process of preparing the Results Table and the related narrative elaborating on the intervention logic for a Budget Support Financing Agreement.

Study Visit to the European Investment Bank (EIB), 19-21 June 2017, Luxembourg – This study visit was organised for representatives of the technical secretariats of national investment committees (NICs) and ReSPA's Public Private Partnership working group. The objective was to familiarize the participants with organization, structures, financial and legal instruments, and procedures existing within the EIB in relation to the WBIF. During the study visit, a number of speakers on behalf of the EIB delivered presentations on relevant topics and were involved into discussion with the participants. The output of the activity is the strengthening of the capacities for Public Finance Management, on the one hand, and the increase of capacities for utilization of IPA funds, by involving the representatives of NIC secretariats, on the other hand.

Training on Legal Alignment (Chapters 11 and 12) – 19 – 21 April 2017, at ReSPA – This training was attended by civil servants involved in different stages of legal alignment, particularly dealing with the negotiating Chapters 11 (Agriculture and Rural Development) and 12 (Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary).



Training on Legal Alignment at ReSPA

The training was focused on a number of examples of legal transposition and preparation of negotiating process for given chapters. The main legal concepts and principles covered by the two referred chapters were explained and elaborated. The training was interactive and based on real or simulated examples of the use of transposition techniques and methods.

Meeting on Procurement of Translation Services, 12 May 2017, Belgrade, Serbia – ReSPA and German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) jointly organized a meeting of representatives of translation coordination units of institutions in charge of coordination of the European Integration process and members of the ReSPA working group on Public Procurement. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: to present the regional benchmark study/analysis in the field of public procurement of translation services that was prepared by an expert hired by GIZ, and to facilitate discussion among representatives of institutions in charge of public procurement policy and representatives of European Integration coordinating institutions which procure the translation services. In addition, the meeting enabled exchange of experience among representatives of different ReSPA Members.

Direct exchange of experiences among civil servants was supported through the **Mobility Scheme Programme** that offered the selected participants from the central European Integration coordinating institutions the opportunity to visit their counterparts from the region and gain hands-on experience, as well as to establish valuable contacts for future co-operation. The peer-visits organised in late 2016, included 12 participants and covered topics related to the preparation and conduct of the accession negotiations, legal harmonisation, translation in the process of the European Integration, and utilisation of IPA funds.

In-country Support for Urgent Needs: Support to the Ministry of Economy and to the Administration for Inspection Affairs of Montenegro, 6 – 9 June 2017 – The assignment was directed towards providing assistance to the Ministry of Economy and the Administration for Inspection Affairs to review the existing Montenegrin Law on General Product Safety and make recommendations for amendments in order to meet fully the requirements of the Directive 2001/95/EC and, in consequence, achieve full compliance with the relevant EU *acquis*. This activity will directly support Montenegro to meet benchmarks for the negotiating Chapter 1.

3.2.

ReSPA's Contribution to Public Administration Reforms in Western Balkans

Public Administration Reform (PAR), together with the Rule of Law and Economic Governance, remains a key priority in the EU Enlargement process. PAR is a cross-cutting issue of fundamental importance for success in political and economic reforms, and is building a basis for implementation of the EU rules and standards. The quality of administration directly impacts governments' ability to provide public services, to prevent and fight against corruption, and to foster competitiveness and growth.

ReSPA's strategic priorities are directly related to the developments in the area of Public Administration Reform (PAR) in the Western Balkan region. ReSPA contributed to the improvement of regional cooperation in PAR in a number of areas, and through its activities it supported implementation of the European Principles of Public Administration.

ReSPA activities within the PAR Pillar are cross-cutting, but are structured according to the chapters of the European Principles of Public Administration (PPA), as follows:

1. Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform (PAR)
2. Policy Development and Coordination
3. Public Service and Human Resources Management (HRM)
4. Accountability
5. Service Delivery
6. Public Financial Management (PFM)

Within each Chapter of PPA, the concrete and specific objectives guided the activities of ReSPA working groups. These regional working groups are composed of senior and mid-level professionals and public servants representing central level public administration institutions (ministries, public agencies, governmental offices and other institutions). Each regional working group usually has three representatives per ReSPA Member and Kosovo*. Some working groups also include representatives of civil society organisations, think tanks and academic community from the Western Balkan region.

3.2.1.

Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform

Since 2014, ReSPA's main coordinating structure for PAR in Western Balkans is the PAR Network. Members of this Network are high level officials who are in charge for PAR in ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. The PAR Network is regularly monitoring and evaluating the work of all ReSPA working groups, and is providing strategic directions for future activities. This Network is usually meeting twice per year, and in addition to its monitoring and advisory role, it has some specific activities.

During the reporting period, a number of ReSPA Members developed and adopted new PAR strategies. Some countries adopted specific Action Plans for implementation of these strategies. Almost all Western Balkan countries have defined their strategic visions of future reform activities in area of Public Administration by 2020. This target year is connected with priorities defined in the framework of IPA II and SEE 2020 Strategy.

Conference: Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies, 13 December 2016, at ReSPA – This Conference was organized as an open session of the Annual Meeting of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial Level. The Conference was focused on a specific topic in context of the overall optimization process: analysis of the existing coordination models of the PAR structures in governments of ReSPA Members, and their capacity to effectively manage implementation of the PAR strategies. The main objectives of this Conference were exchange of experiences and practices, and facilitation of the PAR strategies' implementation process. The participants discussed and compared various models of managing implementation of the PAR strategies in ReSPA Members, and defined a potential role for ReSPA in supporting these processes.

In order to facilitate a discussion at this Conference, ReSPA's experts prepared an **Analytical Paper on Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies in the Western Balkans**⁴. Based on the comparative data, analysis, and recommendations elaborated in this Analytical Paper, the participants of the Conference have discussed the ways for further

improvement of developed mechanisms for managing implementation of PAR strategies. Discussion on these issues was important for defining how ReSPA could further contribute to improvement of managing implementation of PAR strategies in the Western Balkans.

6th Meeting of the PAR Network, 27 – 28 February 2017, Belgrade, Serbia – This meeting was devoted to a discussion about ReSPA's Plan of Activities for 2017. Members of PAR Network have been informed about activities planned for 2017, their purpose and timetable. Among others, the PAR Network members have been presented the plans for organization of the 10th ReSPA Annual Conference. Also, ReSPA Secretariat informed the PAR Network about the plan for development of regional comparative studies, analytical papers, and guidelines. It was agreed that ReSPA Secretariat and PAR Network shall share responsibility and accountability for events planned in the upcoming period. At this meeting, participants heard the presentation on experience from Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding development of methodology for estimation of costs for implementation of PAR strategies, and experience from Slovenia with utilization of an on-line platform for monitoring the implementation of the PAR strategy.

Following this Meeting of the PAR Network, ReSPA started its work on development of the **Guidelines and Methodology for Costing of PAR Strategies**. The results of this work were presented at the 10th ReSPA Annual Conference, and will be presented at the Meeting of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level. This document will be further discussed at the following PAR Network meeting. According to experiences of the countries in the region, and the research conducted by the ReSPA expert, PAR strategies, as well as many other strategies, are severely hampered as a result of their inadequate financial framework, that often results in their financial unsustainability. One of the main causes of this problem is lack of formal methodologies and guidelines for costing of strategies, resulting in unreliable cost estimates and subsequent implementation failures. In order to support more efficient implementation of strategies through strengthening their financial frameworks, ReSPA is working on development of standardized methodology for costing of PAR strategies.

* * *

4 The Analytical Paper on Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies is available at ReSPA website on: <http://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2016-7>



10th ReSPA Annual Conference

10th ReSPA Annual Conference: Innovation in Public Administration - Navigating in Times of Change – 12–13 October 2017, Budva, Montenegro – The emphasis of the 10th ReSPA Annual Conference, that was attended by 150 participants, was on innovation, service delivery, and quality management in public administration.

The first day of the Conference set the stage for discussions about innovations in public administration. The views of young people and special client groups were presented, the value of innovation in practice was examined, various dimensions of innovation (social, technological, organisational) were discussed, and systems such as hackathon, were taken into consideration for creative problem solving. The participants shared their views on the major innovation challenges in public administration. During the second day of the Conference, within the ReSPA Café, an open discussion on the structure, culture and personal change needed for promotion of innovation in public administration was organised, and this discussion was followed by a session dedicated to culture. Recognising, measuring and awarding innovation outcomes was also explored. The exchange of regional and international experiences in an open debate was beneficial for all participants.

Given the complexity of the optimization of public administration processes in the Western Balkan countries, the regional cooperation through the exchange of experiences and joint efforts, can substantially contribute to overcoming some of the national challenges. ReSPA, as the regional hub for PAR, will consider supporting follow-up activities and implementation of various innovative projects in the area of public service delivery and quality of public administration.

3.2.2. Policy Development and Coordination

Within the European Principles of Public Administration Chapter on Policy Development and Coordination, ReSPA efforts were focused on improving cooperation among Centre of Government (CoG) institutions, and Better Regulation efforts, in particular regarding improving public participation in the legislative and policy processes in the Western Balkans.

Regional Conference on Functioning of Centre of Government Institutions, 22 – 23 June 2017, at ReSPA – The Conference on Functioning of Centre of Government institutions, organised by OECD/SIGMA, ReSPA and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), gathered officials of the Centre of Government (CoG) institutions of the Western Balkans, to share good practices and initiatives, as well as to discuss key challenges and common ways of enhancement of the functioning of the CoG institutions. Beside senior officials of the key CoG institutions of all Western Balkan governments, the Conference brought together representatives of the European Commission (EC), OECD/SIGMA, ReSPA, RCC, as well as OECD experts and international practitioners. The event provided an opportunity to learn from the EC representative about the Commission's focus on this important aspect of public administration, and to hear about the results of the work of the OECD with CoGs around the world. The OECD/SIGMA Comparative Analysis on Functioning of the Centres of Government in the Western Balkans was presented and discussed at the Conference. The participants also discussed the work initiated by ReSPA and RCC on the enhancement of public participation practices in policy and legislation development. Moreover, ReSPA provided a forum for discussion on possible further cooperation of Western Balkans CoG institutions.

Following this Regional Conference, ReSPA Secretariat, in cooperation with an expert, undertook needs-analysis and defined a topic to be discussed at the next meeting of the representatives of the CoG institutions that is planned for 2018. The topic is related to linking strategic planning system with the European integration process. This topic, and further steps in ReSPA's engagement with CoGs institutions were approved by the ReSPA Governing Board at the Senior Official level at the meeting held on 2 October 2017. In this effort, ReSPA Secretariat will closely cooperate with OECD/SIGMA.

Seminar on Better Regulation for Public Administration Reform Legislators, 05 – 08 June 2017, Belgrade, Serbia – The objective of the Seminar on Better Regulation for PAR Legislators was to provide an opportunity for knowledge and experience sharing regarding Better Regulation instruments (such as Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), public consultations, financial impact assessment (FIA), corruption-proofing of legislation, etc.) for drafters of regulations in the field of PAR. The aim was to strengthen capacities of the drafters for using these instruments, so that the quality of laws that they are drafting is improved and that the entire process becomes more transparent and participatory. Topics which were discussed at the Seminar include: European perspective and challenges in the field of Better Regulation in the Western Balkan region; Better Regulation trends in the context of PAR; Improving public consultations in the legislative process; Anti-corruption assessment of draft laws, and corruption proofing of legislation; usage of RIA for General Administrative Procedure Acts (GAPAs); Fiscal Impact Assessment (FIA) in the context of PAR strategies and legislation; Better Regulation efforts in reforming inspections and other areas of importance for PAR, and other relevant topics. Also, ReSPA's recent research on Better Regulation in Western Balkans was presented and discussed at this Seminar. This Seminar was organised in cooperation between ReSPA and RCC, with participation of OECD/SIGMA, ReSPA and RCC experts.

Meeting on Better Regulation in Western Balkans: Improving Public Participation, 21-22 September 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina – The regional meeting on Better Regulation in the Western Balkans was convened in close cooperation between ReSPA and RCC. The meeting was focused on improving public participation in legislative and policy processes.

The participants had an opportunity to learn about the findings of the ReSPA comparative research on Better Regulation in the Western Balkans with an emphasis on public consultations, as well as about Western Balkans' recommendations on public participation. ReSPA also presented its Roadmaps on eParticipation that are developed by experts and ReSPA's eGovernment working group.

The meeting gathered regional experts and public servants dealing with Better Regulation efforts.

They contributed to a constructive discussion, particularly during the panel sessions on public-private dialogue and involvement of the private sector in policy making, and the session on participation of civil society in monitoring of public participation. Speakers from OECD/SIGMA and the Council of Europe presented on the topic of public participation, and contributed to the discussion and recommendations. The most important outcome of this meeting is the endorsement of the document **Western Balkan Recommendation on Public Participation**, that ReSPA and RCC will jointly promote in the coming period.



Meeting on
Better Regulation

„My sincere gratitude to the ReSPA team for organisation of the regional meeting on Better Regulation in the Western Balkans, especially for the discussions on relevant topics and the recommendations developed by the RCC and ReSPA. This gathering was very successful and well needed to improve my knowledge on legislative and policy processes, Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and on-line public consultations.”

**Enrriko Kapiti, Specialist,
Monitoring Unit at Department of Legislation,
Monitoring Programme and Anticorruption,
Prime Minister's Office, Tirana, Albania**

3.2.3. Public Service and Human Resource Management

Within the European Principles of Public Administration Chapter on Public Service and Human Resource Management, ReSPA efforts were focused on prevention and fight against corruption in public administration, and on improving Human Resource Management within public administration in Western Balkan countries.

A) *Contribution to the Process of Prevention of Corruption*

Following recommendations of the ReSPA **Regional Comparative Study on Abuse of IT for Corruption**⁵, ReSPA developed a **Checklist for Assessment of Risks for Abuse of IT for Corruption** (Checklist) which is a self-assessment tool than can be used as a preventive anti-corruption measure, and it symbolizes innovativeness of the region with a potential for application worldwide. The Checklist was voluntarily piloted several times by a number of public institutions in the region. In Serbia, the software was made enabling current implementation of the Checklist by 4,500 public institutions. After successful institutionalisation of this methodology in Serbia, it is expected that other ReSPA Members will follow this positive example.

11th Meeting of the Working Group on Ethics and Integrity – Challenges and Follow up, 16 June 2017, Brussels, Belgium – This meeting was focused on development of the methodology for detection of hidden conflict of interest, and review of the extent of application of the Checklist on IT-corruption in ReSPA Members and Kosovo* and possibilities for its enhancement. In addition, ReSPA Secretariat presented its cooperation with the Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector (CIDS) from Oslo, Norway, and the Institute of Comparative Law from Belgrade, Serbia, and the joint research that has been undertaken. The research is dealing with integrity in the public sector with focus on HRM, free access to information, conflict of interest, internal financial control, administrative procedures and public procurement.

⁵ This Study is available in English and in all official languages of ReSPA Members at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#abuse-of-it-for-corruption-113>

This research will result with publication of a manual that will be used for training of public servants on integrity. ReSPA will support development of training modules and education of the trainers through organising training of trainers in respective thematic areas.

In cooperation with experts, ReSPA has produced the **draft Methodology for Detecting Conflict of Interest**. This Methodology is a continuation of the ReSPA's *Comparative Study on Conflict of Interest in Practice*⁶ (2015), and of the ReSPA's **Western Balkan Recommendation on Disclosure of Finances and Interests by Public Officials**⁷ (2014).

The aim of the development of this Methodology is to give the full picture on what could be done in order to detect conflicts of interest proactively. Conflicts of interest leave traces, and various stakeholders may be in a position to use these traces for uncovering hidden conflicts of interest. This draft Methodology describes: patterns of hiding conflicts of interest, stakeholders who could play a role in detecting hidden conflicts of interest, and strategies for tracing private interests. By using this Methodology, policymakers might see their own legislation in a new light, and consider to which extent additional efforts might be needed for an effective oversight of conflicts of interest.

In-country Support for Urgent Needs: Support for the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia – Based on the request from the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia, ReSPA provided experts' assistance in development of the analysis of the existing legal framework that regulates conflict of interest of civil servants. The analysis provides specific recommendations for enhancement of the legal framework, and a proposal for an efficient monitoring mechanism.



⁶ The Comparative Study on Conflict of Interest in Practice is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2015-7>

⁷ The Western Balkan Recommendation on Disclosure of Finances and Interests by Public Officials is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#income-and-asset-declarations-comparative-study-113>

B) *Support to a Dynamic and
Citizen-oriented Human Resource
Capacity in Public Administration*

Significant progress was demonstrated in several countries, and hence effective engagement with the recommendations of the **ReSPA Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans**⁸ has been shown. The Albanian eRecruitment model raised interest of other countries. The video-tutorial which was developed with support of ReSPA will be an added value to the drafting process of the Annual Recruitment Plan for 2017 in Albania. It will provide to the general public a correct and detailed explanation on all aspects of the recruitment procedure for public servants. There is a general agreement that there is no alternative to automation of HRM processes in order to make them cheaper, easier and more transparent.

Human Resource Management and Development working group meeting: Challenges and Follow-up, 30 – 31 May 2017, Tirana, Albania – The meeting contributed to the exchange of information on the state of art in the region, and planning of future activities regarding implementation of the merit based recruitment, implementation of Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS), coaching, and development of a leadership programme. The meeting gathered the heads of national training institutions, senior officials responsible for HRM policies, and officers who are dealing with HRMIS policy, development and monitoring.

Regional Conference on Enhancing Managerial Competences in Civil Service, 4 – 5 April 2017, Becici, Montenegro – This Conference gathered the experts in the field of PAR, HRM and PIFC from Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo*, Slovenia, France and Estonia. This regional conference covered topics of competency requirements of senior managers, accountability, performance management and coaching. The Conference generated recommendations for improvement of PAR and developing high managerial staff through continuous strengthening of their competencies and use of competence framework not only for employment, but also during the performance evaluation.

Study Visit: Leadership Development System – Estonia practice, 9 – 10 February 2017, Tallinn, Estonia – The Study Visit to Estonia facilitated exchange of experience on competency framework, competency based recruitment and selection process, coaching and talent management programmes. The Estonian experience shows that for successful building of the coaching culture it is instrumental to train and engage members of top management who, thereafter, become sponsors of coaching development in their organisations. Senior managers in public administration, particularly those dealing with PAR, need individualised support (e.g. coaching) in order to efficiently implement highly demanding reforms. This workshop made a significant impact, and the majority of the participants expressed intention to learn about coaching in more detail, and to seek ways for its implementation.

Baseline Analysis – Coaching in Public Administrations in the Western Balkans⁹, October 2016 – March 2017 – Strategic HRMD is essential for the good governance and management of public administration. It is necessary to develop public capacities to build professionally compliant public administrations that meet the needs of the citizens and handle the EU integration process in the Western Balkan countries. Coaching has been identified as an advanced instrument for providing support in strengthening the capacities of senior public servants. The research shows that in most of the public administration institutions in the Western Balkan countries, coaching is not used at all, and if it is, those uses are sporadic and unsystematic, and their benefits are not measured. Such sporadic use of coaching has no consistency of methodology, coach or coachee selection, or alignment with the overall strategy for PAR. It is, therefore, impossible to fully understand the impact of those activities on human capital. In addition, the public servants who participated in this research showed great interest for better understanding of coaching. Coaching can help in capacity building, both for individual and organizational development, but the steps towards its implementation in Western Balkans need to be well thought through and strategically planned.

8 ReSPA Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2015-7>

9 ReSPA Baseline Analysis on Coaching in Public Administrations in Western Balkans is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2017-7>

Baseline Analysis – HRMIS in the Western Balkans – ReSPA conducted a survey on the implementation of HRMIS, and analysed relevant data to highlight achievements and best practices, as well as difficulties and IT peculiarities for each country, such as outsourcing vs. in-house developments, source code ownership, maintenance, security, interoperability and models for data exchange. In general, there is a good understanding of the importance that these systems have for the HRM units at central and institutional level. However, most countries continue to struggle with system implementation and use in day-to-day business. Most problems are related to the mobilisation of institutions and stakeholders to regularly update the information and use the system, the mutual interoperability of HRM modules, the interoperability with other IT platforms, and high costs of system maintenance.

* * *

In-country Support for Urgent Needs:

Support to the Human Resource Management Authority (HRMA) of Montenegro

HRMA Montenegro required expert support for development of the Methodology for improvement of methods and procedures regarding psychological testing for the public administration recruitment purposes. The engaged expert prepared an improved methodology for testing, with the set of quality standards and procedures regarding psychological testing. Moreover, this document contains recommendations for improvement of recruiting process, that could be useful across the region.

HRMA Montenegro initiated the organisation of the *Regional Conference on Enhancing Managerial Competences in Civil Service*, that was supported by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, OECD/SIGMA and ReSPA. As a follow up, the publication of the selected papers presented at the Conference was produced. This publication on the state of play regarding the competency framework in public service systems in the region was developed with examples of good practices, both from the region and some EU countries.

Support for the Department of Public Administration (DoPA) of Albania – In order to establish, implement, and develop transparent and impartial procedures for recruitment in the public service of Albania, DoPA, with support of ReSPA, developed the video tutorial pertaining to the on-line application procedure for vacant positions in the public administration in Albania. The video tutorial provides, in a user-friendly manner, step-by-step instructions through the application procedure, from the initial phase of creating a personal account on DoPA's official website, until uploading all required documents. This on-line application contributes to the increased transparency of the application process, as well as to the reduction of workload of the recruitment staff.

Mobility Scheme Programme for Albania, 2-3 February 2017, Pristina (Kosovo*), 23-24 February 2017, Podgorica (Montenegro), 6 March 2017, Belgrade (Serbia) – The main purpose of the Mobility Scheme Programme for Albanian public servants was enhancing regional cooperation in the field of public service and PAR, with a special focus on exchanging experiences and good practices in the following areas: engaging all stakeholders to conduct PAR; empowering civil society to participate in development of public policies; recruitment and HRM; transparency and public consultations; and use of technology and innovation in public services.

3.2.4. Accountability

ReSPA supported further improvement of capacities for implementation of new general administrative procedures, and for effective provision of administrative justice. Starting from June 2016, in cooperation with the RCC and the Council of Europe, ReSPA organised activities for capacity development of judges of administrative courts, and supported enhancement of administrative justice. The aim of the ReSPA working group dealing with administrative justice is to contribute towards implementation of Accountability principles, in particular addressing protection of both human rights and the public interests, enabling fair treatment in administrative disputes, and ensuring that public authorities assume liability in cases of wrongdoing.



Study Visits to the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)

Study Visits to the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), 25 – 28 April 2017, and 12-14 September 2017, Strasbourg, France – ReSPA organised two study visits to the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 2017. These study visits were co-organised with the CoE Human Rights National Implementation Division, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law, and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). During the study visits, a training on protection of Human Rights and Jurisprudence of the ECtHR was held.

The main themes for learning and discussions during the study visit to the ECtHR were: working methods and case management of the ECtHR, right to access to information of public interest, right to free elections, children's rights, pension and labour law cases, and other cases of importance for the implementation of the

European Convention of Human Rights in the field of administrative law. In the CoE, topics discussed included activities of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), execution of judgements of the ECtHR, and the Program for Continuous Human Rights Education of Legal professionals (HELP). Participants of these study visits were presidents and judges of administrative and supreme courts, senior public servants from national institutions responsible for coordination of the EU integration processes, and senior public officers from the ministries of justice in charge for the field of Judiciary and Fundamental Rights (Chapter 23), from Western Balkan countries. There were 30 participants, including experts and members of the ReSPA Secretariat, in each of the two study visits. The participants provided a very positive feedback about these study visits through anonymous evaluation questionnaires, and in a focus group – discussions organised as the final sessions of the events in Strasbourg.

"I want to extend my thanks to ReSPA Secretariat for organising this Study Visit. It is always much more efficient when one directly uses all the senses for gaining or building upon experiences. After this visit, I continue to strongly believe that, when professionals who are contributing to the same goal face each other and interact, this helps a lot in reaching a goal easier, in a shorter time, and with much more efficiency and increased awareness in terms of overcoming obstacles and shortcomings."

**Eralda Çani, Deputy Minister,
Ministry of European Integration of Albania**

"This Study Visit really met my expectations, and the information we received was precious. Of course, I will be able to use the acquired knowledge when discussing issues related to the application of the European Convention on Human Rights and the ECtHR judgements. I think that the possibility of contacting and getting acquainted with institutional experts and Council of Europe representatives was of particular importance."

**Svetlana Budisavljevic, Judge,
Administrative Court of Montenegro**

Study on the Case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) Applicable in Administrative Disputes, May – October 2017 –

This Study is covering the leading cases of the ECtHR related to administrative disputes, which are of direct relevance for the Western Balkan countries. This Study was prepared by four regional authors with significant experience in the field of Human Rights protection. The aim of this Study is to contribute towards improvement of the judicial control of administration in the Western Balkan region, and to the protection of human rights through full implementation of the European Convention of Human Rights. This Study will be published in English by the end of 2017, and it will be translated to the official languages of ReSPA Members in a due course.

In-country Support for Urgent Needs: Support for the Administrative Court of Montenegro, December 2016 – ReSPA provided support to the Administrative Court of Montenegro, and an expert analysed new legislation on general administrative procedures and on administrative disputes. This analysis was considering impact that new legislation will have on the work of the Administrative Court of Montenegro. One of the conclusions of this analysis was that there is a lack of capacity, or more precisely lack of judges in the Administrative Court of Montenegro, that is necessary for implementation of the new legislation. Based on this analysis, the Administrative Court requested from the Ministry of Justice approval for hiring additional judges. The Ministry of Justice approved this request, and in January 2017 the Administrative Court of Montenegro hired two more judges, what is considered to be a very good achievement.

* * *

3.2.5. Service Delivery

Within the European Principles of Public Administration Chapter on Service Delivery, ReSPA efforts were focused on supporting modernisation of general administrative procedures, on transparency in public administration through Open Data and Open Government initiatives, and on contributing to the enhancement of quality in public administration and services in the Western Balkan countries.

A) *Supporting Modernisation of General Administrative Procedures*

Regional Conference on Administrative Legal Framework in Western Balkans, 21 – 22 February 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina – Over the past two years, all countries in the Western Balkans, except for Bosnia and Herzegovina, have enacted new General Administrative Procedure Acts (GAPAs). These laws are essential for public administration reform, and thus for improving the services that the public administration provides to citizens and businesses. The experiences of countries in the region that have carried out reforms in general administrative procedures can greatly help and facilitate Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to such reforms. For this reason, the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina and ReSPA organized this Conference to discuss new GAPAs in the Western Balkans. Participants at the Conference were experts in domain of administrative law and administrative justice from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Western Balkan region and EU countries. The topics covered during the Conference included: principles of administrative law in the EU, experiences of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in preparations for implementation of new regulations on general administrative procedure, new legal institutes in domain of general administrative procedures, as well as situation analysis regarding administrative legal framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the Conference, ReSPA experts presented the regional comparative research on **Legal Remedies in Administrative Procedures in Western Balkans**¹⁰, focusing on recommendations for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Conference had significant media coverage, since the event was opened by Josip Grubesa, Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and member of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level. Among recommendations from the Conference is the initiative to prepare an analysis that will facilitate decision making related to modernising general administrative procedures, and provide feasible options for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its entities.

10 ReSPA Comparative Study on Legal Remedies in Administrative Procedures in Western Balkans is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2016-7>

B) Supporting Transparency through Open Data and Open Government

ReSPA's working group on eGovernment is active since 2011. During the reporting period, this working group enhanced implementation of recommendations from the ReSPA **Comparative Study From E- to Open Government** (2015)¹¹, focusing on open data and cloud computing. Within the eGovernment working group, a subgroup for Open Data – OGP was formed, and their activities are focused on Open Data and Open Government Partnership (OGP).

Open Data – OGP Subgroup Meeting within the Open Government Partnership Summit, 7-9 December 2016, Paris, France – The OGP summit in Paris was an excellent opportunity for senior professionals dealing with Open Data and OGP in Western Balkans to meet peers and exchange experiences with wider community of practitioners. At the Meeting, it was concluded that ReSPA should continue its efforts in supporting cooperation between Open Data and OGP practitioners, and should consider supporting participation of Western Balkans' professionals in the field in future OGP conferences and summits.

eGovernment Working Group Meeting, 14 – 15 December 2016, Belgrade, Serbia – At this Meeting, members of the ReSPA eGovernment working group discussed preconditions and resources for eParticipation in Western Balkan countries. Also, ReSPA experts presented a draft *Roadmap for eParticipation* that was commented and discussed. This discussion was followed by an interesting panel on Open Data. It was concluded that ReSPA should continue its efforts in supporting digitalization of public administration services in the region.

eGovernment Working Group – Thematic Meeting on eParticipation Roadmaps, 13 June 2017, Brussels, Belgium – ReSPA experts have developed eParticipation roadmaps for each Western Balkans' country and these documents were discussed during this thematic meeting. Also, within the same topic, future ReSPA activities were discussed.

Open Data, Open Government and OGP – High Level Conference, 14 June 2017, Brussels, Belgium – The high-level conference on Open Data, Open Government and Open Government Partnership was organised by ReSPA in cooperation with the Danube Strategy Point in Brussels. The event attracted more than 120 participants.

“This Conference is a testimony of the importance of ReSPA. It represents the manifestation of its relevance and shows how strong ReSPA has become in the Western Balkans.”

Bernard Brunet,
European Commission's DG NEAR



Open Data, Open Government and OGP
– High Level Conference, 14 June 2017, Brussels

Milena Harito, Minister of Innovation and Public Administration of the Republic of Albania and Chairperson of the ReSPA Board, pointed out that everyone who comes from the Western Balkan region knows that the region needs modernisation and more progress. *“The EU accession path is an excellent mean for that. Open Data and Open Government Data are the instruments for our modernisation, not as a technical part, but as the heart of all our efforts.”*

High-level participants of the Conference made a joint effort in order to identify, formulate and understand challenges and opportunities of and for Open Data, Open Government Data and Open Government Partnership, and agree on common plans and actions towards creating true digital societies.

Jean-Francois Junger of the EC DG CONNECT explained that the EU Action Plan 2016-2020 recognized that eGovernment should not be looked at as the way of using ICT to transfer data, but it should be taken further so that „the next level is to consider ICT as an instrument showing how the administration is working.”

¹¹ ReSPA Comparative Study entitled “From E- to Open Government” is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2016-7>

ReSPA at 24th INFOFEST: Future Path of Digitalization and Connectivity, 25-26 September 2017, Budva, Montenegro – The ReSPA eGovernment working group has for the second time participated at the Festival of Information Technology Achievements (INFOFEST). This is one of the most important events of the kind in South-East Europe that gathers global and regional ICT leaders and experts, businesses working in the IT sector, academics and representatives from public administration institutions. The main themes were related to the development of eGovernment and information society.

Jointly with the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro, ReSPA organised an Open Panel at the 24th INFOFEST dedicated to main trends in the world and in the Western Balkans in domain of Open Data and eServices. At the Meeting of the ReSPA eGovernment working group, that was organised on the margins of the conference, it was concluded that the Western Balkan region is ready to work, in collaboration with ReSPA, on improving eParticipation and on developing more efficient and effective public services.



ReSPA Open Panel
at 24th INFOFEST September 2017, Montenegro

In-country Support for Urgent Needs: Support for the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications of Montenegro, May – June 2017 – ReSPA supported efforts of the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications and Human Recourse Management Authority (HRMA) to organise trainings on eGovernment for public servants from various ministries of Montenegro. The expert, supported by ReSPA, developed the training materials and delivered a five-day training of trainers in eGovernment.

C) *Contributing to the Enhancement of Quality in Public Administration and Services*

ReSPA Working Group on Quality in Public Administration and Services (QPAS), established in July 2015, has put the topic of quality in public administration on the agenda of governments across Western Balkan countries. During the reporting period, the QPAS working group actively participated in several ReSPA events.

Quality in Public Administration and Services (QPAS) within the framework of Danube Governance Forum: Tools for Better Public Governance in the Western Balkans, 6 – 7 December 2016, Vienna, Austria – This meeting was jointly organized between ReSPA, Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Vienna, and the Council of Europe (CoE) representatives. Participants of the meeting were members of the ReSPA's QPAS working group, experts from KDZ and CoE, as well as ReSPA Governing Board members and staff. Presentations and discussions at the meeting were focused on good governance (CoE's Good Governance principles applicable for local self-governments and ELoGE award), and on quality management tools for public administration (CAF). This meeting provided a good forum for experience exchange and learning in the field of quality management in public administration.

9th European Quality Conference, 15 – 16 May 2017, Malta – ReSPA delegation participated at the 9th European Public-Sector Quality Conference in Malta. During the 20 parallel sessions, 300 participants from all over Europe, and speakers from 20 countries, discussed and shared ideas on an overarching theme “*Joining Forces and Breaking Silos towards a Better Performing and Inclusive Public Administration*”. In addition to participation at the Conference, ReSPA delegation had an official meeting in the Office of the Prime Minister of Malta, where potential for cooperation between Malta and Western Balkans' countries was discussed.

Regional Conference on Public Service Delivery across the Western Balkans: “Initiatives and Innovations towards the EU”, 18 – 19 May 2017, Tirana, Albania – The objective of ReSPA's ministerial-level Conference on Public Service Delivery was to present the state of play in service delivery across the region. The event was organized in close cooperation between ReSPA and the Government of Albania.

The Conference brought together four ministers in charge for public administration from the Western Balkans countries (from Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), high-level participants from the region and from the EU member states, as well as representatives of international organisations and institutions.



The four ministers at the Conference on Public Service Delivery, May 2017, Tirana

In the opening speech, Milena Harito, Minister for Innovation and Public Administration of Albania, and Chair of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level, pointed out that the Albanian model being currently implemented “sets new standards in public service delivery, such as increased transparency, increased satisfaction of users, shorter time, less corruptive practices and higher efficiency.”

“We simply could not copy another example, since, at the time we were starting the public service reform, no adequate model was applicable in the Western Balkan countries. So, we developed our own system and adjusted it to the needs of our citizens and businesses.”

Milena Harito,
Minister for Innovation and Public
Administration of Albania

The goal of the Conference was to address preconditions for improving performance and quality of services provided to citizens and businesses, which should lead to a more rational, transparent and accountable new systems. *Marta Arsovska Tomovska, Minister of Information Society and Administration of Macedonia, Suzana Pribilovic, Minister of Public Administration of Montenegro,*

and Ana Brnabic, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia, presented the current status of service delivery reforms in their countries. All participating ministers highlighted the importance of interoperable platforms, that enable sharing data and information across different levels of the government and ensure integration of public services. There was a joint agreement that a complimentary part of implementing such complex reform initiatives is to develop and inspire public servants. On the second day of the Conference, participants had an opportunity to visit the One Stop Shops for provision of public services in Albania located in towns Kavaje and Kruje.

During 2017, experts engaged by ReSPA prepared the ***Regional Comparative Study on Quality in Public Administration and Public Services in the Western Balkans***. The Study is currently being edited and will be published shortly. Implementation of recommendations from this Study will be considered by ReSPA beneficiaries.

Also, ReSPA commissioned the ***Feasibility Study on establishing a Quality Management Centre within ReSPA***. The draft of the Feasibility Study was discussed with representatives of the European Commission’s DG NEAR on 7 September 2017. This Feasibility Study is currently being finalised and will be further discussed with various ReSPA stakeholders. Preliminary results of this Study confirm the need for establishment of a Quality Management Centre within ReSPA.

Both studies are strategically important for the continuation of ReSPA’s activities in domain of quality in public administration and services.

3.2.6. Public Financial Management

Among 48 Principles of Public Administration, the Chapter on Public Financial Management (PFM) is covering 16 principles. In the past, PAR and PFM strategies were not integrated properly. Nowadays, it is very important to integrate these two broad areas. Therefore, ReSPA has invested additional efforts in development of regional cooperation of key stakeholders in the areas of PFM that are directly connected to PAR. These areas are: Public Procurement (PP), Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC).

A) Enhancing the Efficiency of Public Procurement

Public Procurement (PP) constitutes a considerable share of public expenditures. In view of limited fiscal income, the challenge to increase efficiency and effectiveness of PP systems becomes evident. The members of the ReSPA working group on Public Procurement identified the problems that public procurement is facing in their respective countries: large number of complaints, slow procurement processes, complex administrative procedures that are not always aligned with the PP rules, etc. They exchange best practices and experiences on development of national public procurement systems, and they learn from one another during ReSPA events and working group meetings.

Meeting of the Public Procurement Working Group on Public Procurement Trends and New Practices, 14 – 15 December 2016, Belgrade, Serbia

– At this meeting, findings and recommendations from the ReSPA supported comparative research on Management of Irregularities in PP and eProcurement have been presented and discussed. During the meeting, the ideas, initiatives and recommendations relevant for the future work in the area of PP both at regional and national level were identified.

Joint Meeting of Public Procurement and eGovernment working groups: eProcurement Perspectives in the Western Balkans, 30 – 31 March 2017, Ljubljana, Slovenia – During this joint meeting, participants had an opportunity to exchange best practices and experiences on development of national eProcurement systems, to learn about work of international organizations dealing with public procurement (with emphasis on eProcurement), to discuss the alignment of national public procurement legislation with the new EU public procurement directives, and to identify possible gaps as well as future activities.

Study Visit of the Public Procurement Working Group: Electronic Catalogues in Public Procurement, 27 – 28 June 2017, Helsinki, Finland – ReSPA organised the study visit to the Hansel company, the central purchasing body and service centre for public procurement in Finland. The participants had an opportunity to learn about using electronic catalogues in the public procurement context, the reasons

why e-catalogues and electronic ordering were introduced, and how electronic ordering system was used in the Finnish central government institutions. The participants were presented with possibilities for using e-catalogues in various stages of procurement: in planning stage for gathering information from the market or for collecting procurement needs and plans in a standardised way; in tendering stage for gathering information on the product, service and price; and in post-award stage for calling-off the contracts and agreements. The biggest issue to tackle in the Western Balkan countries relates to planning and project management approach in public procurement. The key challenges are proper planning of procurement procedures, and conducting of market consultations prior to launching procurement notices. Setting-up of centralised purchasing bodies, or at least facilitating the establishment of joint purchasing activities, and making use of framework agreements, are some of the discussed recommendations for Western Balkan countries.

B) Increasing the Capacities for Public Private Partnerships

Public Private Partnerships (PPP) offer Western Balkan countries the opportunity to multiply the impact of national and local investments in infrastructural and other capital projects. However, the ReSPA comparative analysis on ***Recent Developments in PPP Implementation in the Western Balkan Region***¹² (2015) shows that there are a number of failures in the PPP project management. Some countries of the region have improved their legislation in this field, but have difficulties in implementing this new legislation in practice. Other countries still need to enact a legal framework for PPP. Given the significant number of projects involved, addressing these legislative and administrative problems is a high priority for ReSPA Members.

Study visit to the European Investment Bank (EIB), 19-21 June 2017, Luxembourg – This study visit was organised for representatives of the technical secretariats of national investment committees (NICs) and PPP working group members (for details see above under chapter 3.1).

12 The Analysis on Recent Development on Implementation of PPP Projects in the Western Balkan Region is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2015-7>

C) *Improvement of Public Internal Financial Control*

Although Western Balkan countries have strict EU integration requirements for Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC) development, there is not enough experience, knowledge and cooperation between Central Harmonization Units responsible for PIFC among ReSPA Members. Therefore, in December 2016, ReSPA established the Working Group for PIFC.

1st Meeting of Central Harmonization Units' Representatives, 15-16 December 2016, at ReSPA

– The objective of this meeting was establishment of the ReSPA working group on Public Internal Financial Control, and planning of its future activities. The participants of the meeting were heads and representatives of Central Harmonization Units (CHU) from ministries of finances from all Western Balkan countries. This meeting confirmed the need for enhancement of regional cooperation in development of PIFC, and the need for supporting public administrations in ReSPA Members to fulfil requirements under the Chapter 32 of the Accession Negotiations with the EU, in particular in part related to PIFC.

Workshop on Managerial Accountability and Risk Management, 28 – 29 June 2017, Belgrade, Serbia

– With this Workshop, ReSPA responded to some difficulties recognised by representatives of CHUs which are related to practical implementation of PIFC, despite the fact that legal framework, manuals, guidelines and other documents are in place. This is especially relevant for practical implementation of managerial accountability, which is not embedded in the administrative culture of the countries in the region, and therefore there are difficulties with implementation of PIFC. The workshop gathered representatives of Central Harmonization Units of ministries of finances in ReSPA Members, with an aim to exchange experiences and to learn know-how from the experts from Croatia. The experts presented concrete Croatian examples of development of managerial accountability and risk management on the central and local level, as well as the ways how public institutions practically implement reforms in the area of PIFC.



Seminar on Revised Internal Audit Standards,
September 2017, Skopje

Seminar on Revised Internal Audit Standards, 14-15 September 2017, Skopje, Macedonia – The quality of internal audit work is an important precondition for successful implementation of the PFM principles. Internal audit provides assurance and advice to public sector managers. In this regard, ReSPA organised the Seminar on Revised Internal Audit Standards that gathered 70 officials from Central Harmonization Units (CHUs) of ministries of finances and internal auditors from

ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. Representatives of the CHUs were present because one of their key activities is development of public sector internal audit methodology in line with the internal audit standards, as well as quality control of internal audit activities. Public sector internal auditors were present as they are obliged to apply internal audit methodology in practice. In fact, the role of internal audit in improving internal control and governance systems is fundamental.

The focus of discussions at the Seminar was on the requirements of the revised internal audit (IA) standards in force as of 1 January 2017, in accordance with the International Professional Practice Framework (IPPF), impact of revised IA standards on IA methodology, and quality checking of IA activities performed by the CHUs with practical experiences.

Dragan Tevdovski, Minister of Finance of Macedonia opened the seminar, and keynote speaker *Raymond Hill, representative of the European Commission's DG Budget*, in his presentation underlined the fundamental role of Internal Audit in improving internal control and governance systems. *Representatives of OECD/SIGMA, Lech Marcinkowski and Mirosława Boryczka*, presented the results of

the SIGMA assessment focused on internal audit in the public sector of ReSPA Members and Kosovo*. *Prof. Boris Tušek of the Faculty of Economics and Business in Zagreb*, provided a detailed overview of the revised IPPF. Representatives of the CHU of the Ministry of Finance of Croatia presented the Croatian experience regarding the quality checking of internal audit activities performed by the CHU. Also, the importance of comprehensive application of the audit methodology was presented as a necessary precondition for making the internal audit practically capable of meeting the requirements associated with the systematic approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes, as well as providing measurable impacts of the internal audit.

* * *

3.3. Coordination of ReSPA Members for implementation of the Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy

Almost all ReSPA activities have contributed, in a direct or in an indirect way, to achievements of the SEE 2020 Strategy goals. As the Regional Dimension Coordinator for the Effective Public Services dimension, ReSPA provided inputs and participated in the development of the SEE 2020 Strategy Programming Document 2017-2019. ReSPA defined the model for establishing of a new coordinating structure which will be dealing with the issues of importance for the Governance for Growth Pillar. This structure will be composed from one representative per country of already existing ReSPA working groups that have activities directly connected with the SEE 2020 Strategy implementation (Better Regulation, HRMD, QPAS), as well as one representative of national statistical office per ReSPA Member, since the work of this structure may require collection of relevant statistical data. Through establishment of this new structure, ReSPA will enhance and facilitate data collection process for monitoring the implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy. Also, this will contribute towards the improvement of public sector capacities to develop and implement public policies in accordance with the goals of the SEE 2020 Strategy.

The ReSPA's PAR Network approved composition of this new Coordination Structure, and the first meeting of this group will be organised, in cooperation with the RCC, on 23 November 2017.

ReSPA's PAR Network endorsed ReSPA's plan to support implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy during 2017, through the following aspects: a) Improving the regulatory environment; b) Improving the quality of public services; and c) Professionalization of public services.

Comparative research on Better Regulation and Competitiveness in Western Balkans – ReSPA has commissioned a regional comparative research on Better Regulation efforts. This research was undertaken by two regional experts from Serbia and Albania, with participation of members of the ReSPA working group on Better Regulation. The researchers used OECD's methodology, did a desk research, interviewed a number of key stakeholders across the region, and presented the research results at the Regional Conference on Better Regulation and Competitiveness that was held in Belgrade on 1-2 December 2016, as well as on two other relevant events organised by ReSPA in 2017. The research revealed significant progress compared to the Baseline Analysis performed in 2015, and is providing valuable data that will feed into policy recommendations. The research will be published in a format of a regional comparative study, and ReSPA plans to use policy recommendations from this study, and to engage with decision makers in a policy dialogue.



Regional Conference on Better Regulation and Competitiveness in Western Balkans, 1-2 December 2016, Belgrade, Serbia – In the present post-crisis setting of slow growth, high unemployment and fiscal stringency in most of the countries in the Western Balkan region, the need for improving cost effectiveness and quality of regulation remains critical. Better Regulation, understood as the changes that improve the quality of regulation, provides a real opportunity to stimulate economic activity, unlock productivity and support growth. Therefore, ReSPA, RCC, and relevant projects of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) active in the Western Balkans, organised this regional conference on Better Regulation and Competitiveness, with more than 80 participants and 30 speakers. Participants were experts, senior public servants and practitioners from the Western Balkans and European Union countries, as well as representatives from the business associations from the region.

level, in the European Union and in the Western Balkans. Topics discussed included planning and consultations within governmental institutions, highlighting the best practices in the countries of Western Balkans.



Speaker at the Better Regulation Conference, December 2016, Belgrade



Better Regulation Conference, December 2016, Belgrade

The comparative research on Better Regulation and Competitiveness in Western Balkans, that was commissioned by ReSPA, was presented at the Conference. The research specifically highlighted efforts related to the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in the countries of the region. Topics of the Conference were related to Better Regulation in the context of EU accession, trends in the area of Better Regulation on the global

During 2016, USAID funded preparation of studies on public-private dialogue in Serbia, Macedonia and Albania. Those studies were presented and discussed during the Conference. The conference also presented the results of surveys and studies of the business environment in the region. The representative of the RCC presented the results of the 2016 Balkan Business Barometer research. Also, the USAID's Business Enabling Project (BEP) presented the results of the "BEP Survey of 1,000 Businesses in Serbia", and representative of the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Serbia spoke about the survey "Fourth Lap Time" rich in important data on the business climate in Serbia.

The results of those studies, surveys and research were discussed on a panel with representatives of business associations from the region. The panel sent an important message for the promotion of dialogue between business representatives and policy makers at the national level. One of the key messages of this Conference is that the importance of regional cooperation should be emphasized in the field of Better Regulation and improving competitiveness.

Horizontal Activities

4.1. ReSPA Governance and Operations

4.1.1. ReSPA Governance

ReSPA Governance Structure has two levels:

1. Governing Board at Ministerial Level (GB ML) that at least once per year brings together ministers in charge of public administration from Western Balkan countries, who engage on a strategic level in a policy dialogue; and
2. Governing Board at Senior Officials' Level (GB SL) that is meeting at least four times per year and is guiding and steering ReSPA's

work. The GB SL is composed of state secretaries, deputy or assistant ministers, or directors of institutions who are in charge of public administration reform from Western Balkan countries.

At both levels, each ReSPA Member is represented by one GB member (member or substitute member appointed by the respective government). One representative of the European Commission is *ex officio* participating at the Governing Board meetings. During the reporting period, one representative of Kosovo* was also participating at the GB meetings.

In the period 1 December 2016 – 15 October 2017, the following ReSPA Governing Board meetings were held:



Governing Board at Ministerial level, December 2016

Governing Board at Ministerial level

- 7th GB ML meeting, 12 December 2016, at ReSPA

Governing Board at Senior Officials' level

- a) Regular meetings
 - 29th GB SL meeting, 6 December 2016, Vienna, Austria
 - 30th GB SL meeting, 21 April 2017, at ReSPA
 - 31st GB SL meeting, 21 July 2017, at ReSPA
 - 32nd GB SL meeting, 2 October 2017, at ReSPA
- b) Thematic meetings
 - Thematic session on ReSPA ex-post evaluation of activities and needs assessment, 4 April 2017, Budva, Montenegro
 - Working meeting with the European Commission related to the Results-Oriented-Monitoring (ROM) Report, Financial Audit Report, and Evaluation of Regional Organizations, 16 June 2017, Brussels, Belgium

* * *

ReSPA Governing Board has two subsidiary bodies: the Programme Committee on European Integration (PC EUI), and the Budget Committee (BC).

Programme Committee on European Integration

The Programme Committee on European Integration has a role to ensure that all ReSPA activities contribute to responses of ReSPA Members to challenges and tasks of the European Integration process.

During the reporting period, the PC EUI met twice in Tirana, Albania: on 7 April, and on 22 September 2017. At these meetings, the members of the PC EUI discussed ReSPA's activities – planned and implemented – and provided recommendations for further programme activities in the area of European Integration.

Budget Committee

ReSPA's Budget Committee (BC) is composed of representatives of ministries of finance from ReSPA Members. BC is meeting regularly three times per year, and is reviewing, monitoring and considering all ReSPA financial matters, and advising the Governing Board.

Three meetings of the Budget Committee were held during the reporting period: on 20-21 March 2017 in Belgrade, on 6-7 June 2017 in Sarajevo, and on 13-14 September 2017 in Podgorica and in ReSPA.

Based on the new ReSPA Financial Regulation adopted by the GB in 2017, ReSPA Secretariat submitted a draft proposal of the two-year (2018-2019) budget to the BC for their consideration at the meeting held in September 2017. BC recommended to the ReSPA Governing Board to approve this proposal. BC also recommended to the Governing Board that ReSPA Member contributions shall remain for 2018 at the same level as in previous years, while the issues related to the contribution from Kosovo* shall be solved as soon as possible in order for ReSPA to function according to the adopted organizational structure envisaged for appropriate implementation of the current EC Grant Contract.

4.1.2. ReSPA Operations

In the past year, ReSPA Campus has stabilized its financial performance as a result of implementation of the new operation model which includes outsourcing the food catering services, and covering of majority of utility and maintenance costs from the Core budget of ReSPA.

The revenues of the ReSPA Campus Hotel consist of revenues from services provided for participants of events implemented by ReSPA, revenues from services provided for participants of events that are organised in cooperation between ReSPA and partner institutions and organisations, and revenues from external events.

During 2017, ReSPA operated by a fully staffed Secretariat (15 employees) located at ReSPA Headquarters. In August 2017, all ReSPA employees were trained in applicable EC Grant procurement procedures.

In order to optimise its internal operation and to make a proper segregation of duties within the Secretariat, ReSPA is developing the new internal control model. The Director appointed the Task Force within the Secretariat, responsible to identify specific steps for each process in order to finalize the internal procedures.

This task was completed by the end of September 2017, but the full implementation depends on the allocation of adequate resources and development of the new software solution during 2018.

Complementary with the above-mentioned process, ReSPA will initiate the transition from the current reporting standard, i.e. from the

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) into International Public-Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), that are widely considered to be the best practice for financial and operational reporting of public sector organisations. This impetus is acknowledged by the ReSPA BC and GB, and this transition is envisaged to be implemented in the following two years.

* * *

4.2. Programming and Coordination

In order to prepare detailed Plan of Activities for 2017 and 2018, based on the Programme of Work approved by the Governing Board, ReSPA Secretariat held two internal workshops. The first workshop was held on 26-28 January 2017 in Budva, Montenegro. At this workshop, ReSPA Secretariat developed a detailed Plan of Activities for 2017. This Plan of Activities was harmonized with relevant PAR documents, EC assessment reports, conclusions from PAR Special Groups' meetings, OECD/SIGMA priorities for 2017 and 2018, and most importantly, with priorities identified by ReSPA Members. The Plan of Activities also considered complementarities with goals of the

SEE 2020 Strategy, policy recommendations from various ReSPA regional comparative studies, suggestions from ReSPA working groups, ex-post evaluation report of the ReSPA previous EC grant, past achievements, challenges and lessons learnt, as well as needs assessment performed in December 2016.

The second workshop was held on 28-31 August 2017 in Kolasin, Montenegro. During this internal workshop on strategic planning, ReSPA Secretariat prepared a detailed Plan of Activities for 2018 with related budgets and timetable. This Plan of Activities covers the period until 10 December 2018, which is the extended period of implementation of the current EC Grant Contract. Also, during the workshop, preparatory activities for the development of the new ReSPA Strategic Framework (2019-2024) were undertaken.



ReSPA Secretariat, 2017

ReSPA Secretariat is making significant efforts to coordinate its activities with stakeholders involved in PAR in the Western Balkan region. In particular, ReSPA representatives actively participate at PAR Special Group meetings that are regularly organised by EC DG NEAR and governments from the region. In 2017, ReSPA representatives participated at the following PAR Special Group meetings: in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar, 1 February 2017), in Serbia (Belgrade, 6 April 2017), in Macedonia (Skopje, 20 September 2017), in Albania (Tirana, 27 September 2017), and in Montenegro (Podgorica, 28 September 2017). In preparation for each PAR Special Group meeting, ReSPA is submitting a report about recent activities in the relevant country, and plan of activities for the coming year to the EC DG NEAR PAR Desk, in order to inform them about developments, and to enable better coordination of activities.

In addition to sharing relevant information for each Western Balkan country, ReSPA is regularly consulting with the EC DG NEAR PAR Desk regarding incoming proposals for in-country support (ReSPA Mechanism for Urgent Limited Needs).

In the reporting period, ReSPA has significantly improved its cooperation with EU Delegations in ReSPA Members. Representatives of EU Delegations are very often participating at ReSPA events, such as conferences and thematic meetings, as well as at ReSPA Open Days.

ReSPA's cooperation with OECD/SIGMA has become more frequent and substantial. In addition to bilateral meetings between ReSPA and OECD/SIGMA representatives, it should be noted that OECD/SIGMA experts are frequently participating as speakers on ReSPA events (including meetings of working groups). In some cases, such as with the Regional Conference of Centre of Government Institutions, ReSPA and OECD/SIGMA co-organise events and follow-up activities.

Regarding implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy's Governance for Growth Pillar, ReSPA and RCC have developed good cooperation, and a number of activities have been jointly organised, in particular in the area of Better Regulation.

On the national level, ReSPA is coordinating its efforts with a number of public administration institutions (some are listed as Beneficiaries under Chapter 4.4.). Coordination is done on various levels (Governing Board, PC EUI, ReSPA working groups), but most tangible and frequent cooperation is through ReSPA National Coordinators.

Administrative coordination between the ReSPA Secretariat and ReSPA Members is supported by eight part-time National Coordinators. Their tasks include contacts with stakeholders at national level, support in recruitment of participants for ReSPA events, facilitation of communication with beneficiaries, and provision of inputs for monitoring and evaluation.



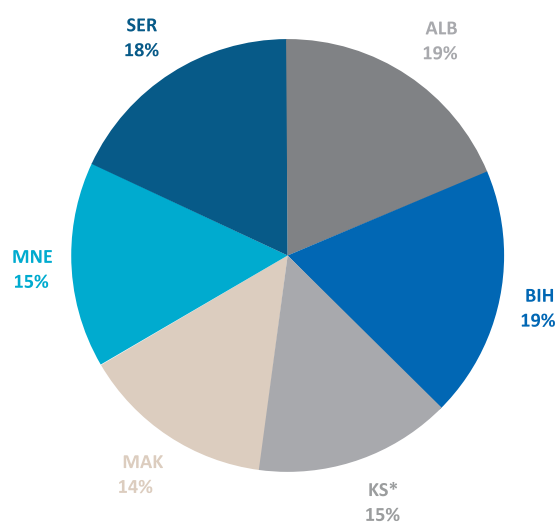
ReSPA Secretariat's Workshop,
September 2017

ReSPA Secretariat is organising regular meetings with National Coordinators twice per year. This year, the first meeting was held on 3 March 2017 in Shkoder, Albania. The main objective of this meeting was to highlight the role of National Coordinators in implementation of activities planned for 2017. In addition to preparation for implementation of ReSPA's regional activities, particular attention was paid to organisation of ReSPA Open Days and in-country support projects through ReSPA's Mechanism for Urgent Limited Needs. National Coordinators suggested that ReSPA should explore possibilities for translation of ReSPA regional comparative studies (or at least summaries, abstracts, conclusions, and recommendations) to official languages of ReSPA Members, in order to enable wider distribution and better dissemination of these valuable research products. It was concluded that breaking the language barrier would contribute to improvement of visibility of ReSPA activities, and may contribute to enhancement of PAR efforts in the region. The next meeting of the National Coordinators will be held in ReSPA on 19-20 October 2017.

4.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

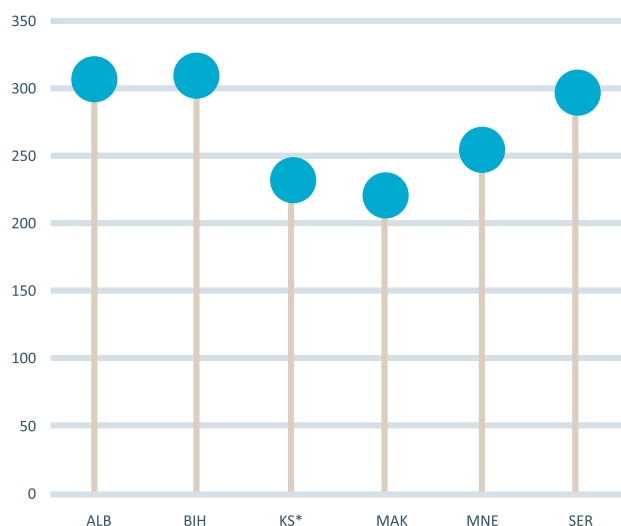
ReSPA Secretariat is closely monitoring implementation of its activities, and is regularly evaluating ReSPA events, engaged experts, and outputs. Regarding participation at ReSPA events, special attention is paid to recruitment of equal numbers of participants for each event from each ReSPA Member and Kosovo*. This is visible in the following graphs:

Distribution of participants at ReSPA events
(December 2016 – October 2017)

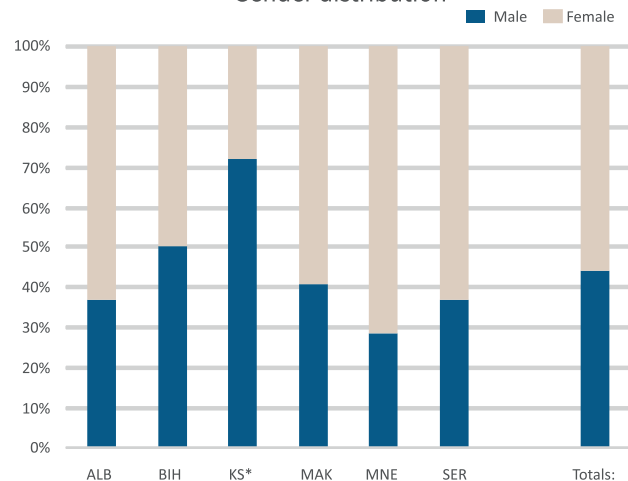


ALB – Albania, BIH – Bosnia and Herzegovina, KS* – Kosovo*, MAK – Macedonia, MNE – Montenegro, SER – Serbia

No. of participants per country
(December 2016 – October 2017)

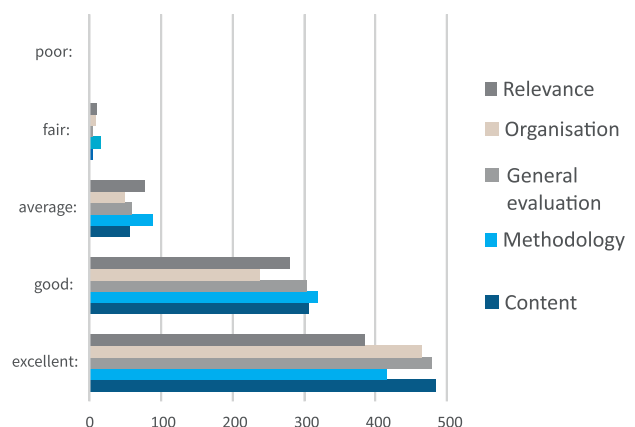


Gender distribution

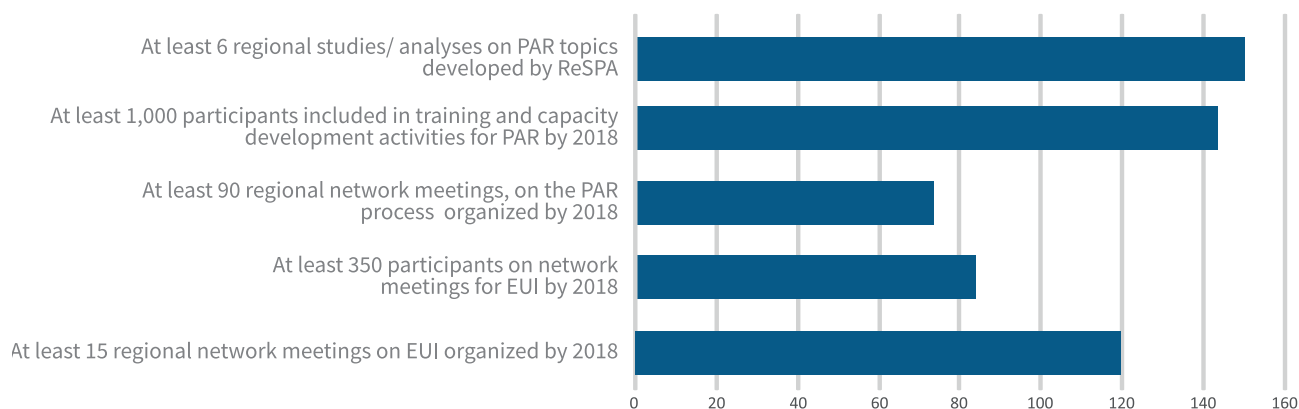


At the end of each ReSPA event, participants are filling out standardised anonymous evaluation forms, and giving grades to various organisational aspects, as well as to the quality of experts, trainers, speakers and presenters. These evaluation questionnaires are being systematised and analysed on a regular basis by the ReSPA Secretariat.

Evaluation of events



In the previous period, ReSPA activities were subject of several evaluations, including Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) initiated by the European Commission. However, the most detailed evaluation was initiated by ReSPA, and performed in December 2016. The carefully selected group of independent evaluators completed the ex-post evaluation of ReSPA activities implemented during the period November 2013 – November 2015 (EC Grant No. CN 2013/331-241). The evaluation was performed in all ReSPA Members and Kosovo* through conducting interviews, focus groups, and filling out questionnaires. The results obtained helped ReSPA Secretariat to upgrade its Programme of Work for 2016-2017, as well as provided directions for development of the new ideas.



This graph is showing ReSPA achievements in the period March 2016 – October 2017. Targets are defined in the ReSPA Action Document for the current EC Grant, and set at 100%.

This ex-post evaluation proved that:

- **ReSPA Interventions have been relevant** as they address important institutional and policy capacity challenges of PAR in the region. Interventions are in line with ReSPA Members' governments' strategies and priorities.
- **ReSPA Interventions have been effective.** ReSPA support to governments in the Western Balkans has contributed to strengthening knowledge, competencies, professionalism and cooperation of public administrations within and among countries. Particularly strong contributions were made in view of strengthening the evidence base for reform initiatives (through studies, exchanges and mobility schemes), strengthening competencies and knowledge (through trainings, networking, Urgent needs mechanisms and mobility schemes), and strengthening the national development strategic frameworks and related sectoral and thematic legal and policy frameworks (e.g. new legislation, mechanisms, approaches).
- **Results achieved are likely to have positive impact prospects,** making a contribution to improved regional cooperation in public administration development, and promotion of public good governance practices in PAR and EU Integration.
- **Results have mixed sustainability prospects.** The current legal and policy framework in partner countries is strong and lays foundations for further development. However, expansion of services and measures for strengthening public administration is susceptible to political and financial factors that are beyond influence of ReSPA.

4.4. Beneficiaries

The main direct beneficiaries of ReSPA activities are senior and mid-level managers working within the ministries and governmental agencies responsible for PAR and European Integration, and in other relevant line ministries in ReSPA Members and Kosovo*, as well as public administrators from local governments depending on the area and type of activities. While these individuals are main direct beneficiaries, they are involved in ReSPA activities as representatives of public administration institutions from Western Balkan countries. It has been verified in a number of occasions that participants of ReSPA events share their experiences and newly acquired knowledge with their colleagues, and contribute to the improvement of work of their respective institutions and public administration in general.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of institutions whose representatives were involved in ReSPA activities, or that were directly supported by ReSPA during the reporting period:

Albania: Administrative Court; Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA); Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; Department of Public Administration (DoPA); Ministry of European Integration; Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade and Entrepreneurship; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Urban Development; Office of the Prime Minister; Public Procurement Commission; Public Procurement Agency; and Supreme Court of Albania.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH): Agency for Identification Documents, Registers and Data Exchange of BiH; Agency for Information Society of the Republic of Srpska (RS); Agency for Prevention of Corruption and Coordination of the Fight Against Corruption of BiH; City Administration of Banja Luka; City Administration of Zvornik; Civil Service Agency of BiH; Civil Service Agency of the Federation of BiH (FBiH); Civil Service Agency of RS; Commission for Concessions; Directorate for European Integration of the Council of Ministers of BiH; General Secretariat of the Government of FBiH; Government of the Una-Sana Canton; Ministry of Administration and Local-Self Government of RS; Ministry of Economic Relations and Regional Cooperation of RS; Ministry of Finance and Treasury of BiH; Ministry of Finance of FBiH; Ministry of Interior of RS; Ministry of Justice of BiH; Ministry of Justice of RS; Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees of FBiH; Ministry of Security of BiH; Ministry of Transport and Communications of FBiH; Office for European Integration of the Government of FBiH; Pension and Disability Insurance Administration of FBiH; Public Administration Reform Coordinators' Office (PARCO); Public Procurement Agency of BiH; and Public Procurement Review Body of BiH.

Kosovo*: Anti-Corruption Agency; Kosovo Institute of Public Administration (KIPA); Central Procurement Agency; Ministry of Economic Development; Ministry of European Integration; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare; Ministry of Public Administration; Public Procurement Regulatory Commission; and Office of the Prime Minister.

Macedonia: Administrative Court; General Secretariat of the Government of Macedonia; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Justice; Public Revenue Office; Public Procurement Bureau; Secretariat for European Affairs; and State Commission for Prevention of Corruption.

Montenegro: Administrative Court; Agency for Prevention of Corruption; Commission for the Control of Public Procurement Procedures; General Secretariat of the Government; Office of the Prime Minister; Health Insurance Fund of Montenegro; Human Resources Management Authority; Ministry of Education; Ministry of European Affairs; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Public Administration; Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs; Municipality of Niksic; Municipality of Pljevlja; Parliament of Montenegro; and Public Procurement Authority.

Serbia: Administrative Court; Anti-Corruption Agency; City of Belgrade; Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection; Human Resource Management Service; Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection; Ministry of European Integration; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government; Public Policy Secretariat; Public Private Partnership Commission; and the Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures.

4.5. Cooperation and Partnerships

As international and regional organisation, ReSPA is maintaining communication with a number of stakeholders in Europe and globally. The communication and cooperation with other organisations and institutions is intended to additionally support mission of ReSPA by implementing joint activities. ReSPA has developed its good cooperation with EU Delegations in Western Balkan countries. This cooperation is also reflected in ReSPA's regular contribution to and participation at PAR Special Group meetings in Western Balkan countries.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of organisations and institutions that ReSPA cooperated with in the reporting period (in alphabetical order):

- Austrian Association of Cities and Towns – supported ReSPA efforts related to cooperation with KDZ (Centre for Public Administration Research) and Danube Strategy – meetings on quality management in public administration, Vienna, December 2016;
- British Council and British Embassy in Montenegro – cooperation in organisation of capacity building seminars for public servants from Western Balkans (including funding from the British Council in 2016);
- Centre for Excellence in Finance, Ljubljana – cooperation regarding Public Finance Management efforts in Western Balkans;
- Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Vienna, Austria and ReSPA are preparing a joint project in the field of quality management for the consideration of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA);

- Council of Europe – several meetings and jointly organised events including hosting the Study Visits of administrative court judges and senior public servants from Western Balkans in April and September 2017;
- Danube Strategy Point (DSP) and ReSPA have been in communication for more than one year, and the outcome of these discussions was a joint event held in Brussels on 14 June 2017 – Open Data Conference;
- DISPA (Directors of Schools and Institutes of Public Administration) meetings – ReSPA Director regularly participates at DISPA meetings (Malta in May 2017);
- EIPA – European Centre for Judges and Lawyers, Luxembourg – participation of EIPA experts / lecturers in ReSPA meetings and conferences related to administrative justice, as well as in the ReSPA Summer School on Accession Negotiations related to Chapters 23 and 24;
- EUPAN (the European Public Administration Network) attendance of the Conference on Quality Management in Malta in May 2017;
- European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), Strasbourg – Hosting two ReSPA Study Visits, in April and September 2017;
- European Investment Bank (EIB), Luxembourg – Hosting ReSPA Study Visit in June 2017;
- European Public Private Partnership Expertise Centre (EPEC) and Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) – cooperation in the field of development of public private partnership projects;
- European School of Administration (ESA) – participation of the ReSPA representative in the training for DISPA members in 2016;
- GIZ – German International Cooperation Agency – Open Regional Fund (ORF) – ReSPA and GIZ ORF are in an open communication for several years. We constantly endeavour to develop joint activities, and in the reporting period we had a joint workshop on translation of the *acquis* that was held in Belgrade in March 2017. ReSPA will continue to enhance cooperation with GIZ.
- HAUS – Institute of Public Management of Finland – ReSPA has established cooperation with HAUS, and in December 2016, ReSPA Secretariat visited HAUS and had its team building in Helsinki;
- Institute Alternativa – a think tank from Montenegro, has several projects related to PAR. Therefore, ReSPA has invited representatives of Institute Alternativa to participate at several events, including ReSPA Annual Conference.
- Ministry of Public Administration of Slovenia and ReSPA have signed an MoU in May 2017, and ReSPA is planning to enhance cooperation with Slovenian public administration;
- NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Self-Governments) – discussions on furthering cooperation held in Skopje in March 2017;
- National School of Public Administration of the Republic of Croatia – ReSPA signed an MoU with the Croatian School of Public Administration in June 2017, in order to create a framework for cooperation in the field of public administration capacity building;
- NISPAcee (Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe) – ReSPA and NISPAcee are cooperating based on an MoU signed in 2016. ReSPA organised a panel to present its achievements at NISPAcee Annual Conference in May 2017 in Kazan, Tatarstan, Russian Federation. NISPAcee representatives are also regularly participating as speakers at ReSPA Annual Conferences.



ReSPA Delegation
at the 25th NISPAcee Annual Conference,
May 2017, Kazan, Tatarstan

The 25th NISPAcee Annual Conference
“Innovation Governance in the Public Sector”,
 18 – 20 May 2017, Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan,
 Russian Federation – The Conference included
 presentations and discussions on most relevant
 issues related to public administration reform
 and public governance. ReSPA had its panel
 entitled “Supporting Public Administration
 Reform (PAR) through Regional Cooperation
 in Western Balkans”. At the panel, ReSPA
 representatives presented conclusions and
 recommendations from most recent ReSPA
 regional comparative studies, including studies
 on Managing Implementation of PAR Strategies,
 Better Regulation, Merit Based Recruitment
 and General Administrative Procedures. ReSPA
 representatives also presented at the Forum of
 Practitioners that was devoted to Innovations
 in Better Regulation Efforts. Presentations at
 this conference contributed towards sharing
 information on PAR in Western Balkans with
 a wider audience, and establishing contacts
 with PAR experts from Eastern European and
 Central Asian countries.

series of joint meetings during 2016. In addition
 to ReSPA hosting some of RACVIAC events,
 we also have some joint activities such as a
 seminar on protection of whistle-blowers held
 in 2016 in Zagreb;

- Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) –
 cooperation on organising several joint events
 and activities lead to the conclusion of the
 Memorandum of Understanding between
 ReSPA and RAI, based on which collaboration
 will be strengthened and enriched;



MoU signing between ReSPA and RAI
 February 2017

- Norwegian Centre for Integrity in Defence (in
 cooperation with the Institute for Comparative
 Law from Belgrade, and in cooperation with
 ReSPA) is developing a manual on Building
 Integrity in Public Administrations in Western
 Balkans;
- OECD/SIGMA – well developed cooperation
 through organisation of joint conferences,
 participation at various events, research and
 consultative meetings;
- Open Government Partnership (OGP) –
 ReSPA has established cooperation with this
 international initiative, and ReSPA delegation
 participated at the OGP Summit in Paris in
 December 2016;
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and
 Development (OECD) – cooperation in several
 fields of importance for economic development
 of the region; ReSPA representatives attended a
 number of relevant meetings in OECD, and hosted
 OECD speakers on several regional conferences;
- RACVIAC – Regional Centre for Security
 Cooperation – ReSPA and RACVIAC are
 cooperating based on an MoU signed after a

- Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) – including
 participation at RCC Board meetings, jointly
 organised conferences, research projects,
 meetings and other events;
- Think for Europe Network (TEN) – ReSPA has
 developed cooperation with network of think
 tanks and civil society organisations from
 Western Balkans who are implementing the
 project of monitoring public administration
 reform efforts in the region (WeBER project);
- United Nations – Cooperation with various
 UN agencies: UNDP – Regional Bureau for
 Eastern Europe, Istanbul – cooperation on
 Open Data; UN Public Service forum, June
 2017; UN – CEPA (Committee of Experts on
 Public Administration) conference in New
 York attended by ReSPA Director in April 2017;
 continuation of cooperation with UNDESA;
 ReSPA representative participated at the UN
 Public Service Forum and Awards ceremony in
 June 2017 in The Hague.

- USAID funded Regional Economic Growth (REG) project, and other USAID funded projects such as the Business Enabling Project (BEP) in Serbia – cooperation is focused on supporting Better Regulation efforts in the Western Balkan region;
- Western Balkans Six Advocacy Group (WB6 Advocacy Group) – ReSPA established cooperation with a network of civil society organisations who are promoting European Integration processes in the Western Balkans;
- World Bank – offices of the World Bank in Vienna and in the Western Balkan countries – representatives of the World Bank dealing with PAR in Western Balkans participated in the ReSPA Annual Conference in 2016, and we have an open communication with these offices; Also, in the field of Better Regulation, ReSPA has established cooperation with IFC / World Bank in Washington and is regularly exchanging information about activities in the region;

In co-operation with the European Parliament and the Parliament of Montenegro, ReSPA organised the **Inter-parliamentary Conference on Independent and Modern Public Administration in the EU and in Enlargement Countries**. The Conference was held in ReSPA on 29 September 2017, and the participants were members of the European Parliament and members of parliaments of enlargement countries. Besides ReSPA staff, the speakers at the conference were officials of EC DG NEAR, OECD/SIGMA, Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative and Transparency International. Topics discussed during the conference were related to the European Principles of Public Administration, depoliticization of civil service, accountability in public administration, anti-corruption strategies, e-governance issues and twinning support to parliaments of enlargement countries.



Inter-parliamentary Conference in ReSPA
September 2017

Cooperation with Academic and Research Institutions in the Western Balkan Region

- Centre of Public Administration of the Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade – cooperation regarding the ReSPA Seminar on Better Regulation for PAR Legislators held in June 2017 in Belgrade;
- Faculty of Administration, Sarajevo University – ReSPA representative participated at the PAR Conference organised in June 2017;
- Institute for Comparative Law from Belgrade, Serbia – cooperation in preparation of the guidebook for ethics and integrity in the public sector, for education of public servants and broader audience;
- Institute of Public Administration from Zagreb, Croatia – cooperation on promotion of the ReSPA comparative study on Legal Remedies in Administrative Procedures on several occasions, and most recently in Sarajevo, in February 2017;
- University of Montenegro, Faculty of Economics – regular annual visits by final year students interested in the field of European Integration (visit in April 2017).

In the coming period, ReSPA Secretariat will continue cooperation with above mentioned institutions and organisations, as well as with civil society organisations and academic community in the Western Balkan region.

4.6. Visibility and Communication

ReSPA Secretariat is regularly publishing announcements for events that ReSPA is organising, and short information about each event upon its completion, on the ReSPA website <http://respaweb.eu/>. Also, following most important events, ReSPA Secretariat is sending press releases to major media agencies and outlets in the Western Balkan region. Furthermore, ReSPA is maintaining the Facebook page, that is used for broader dissemination of information about ReSPA activities.

ReSPA continued to publish the Newsletter on a quarterly basis, as of December 2016. During the reporting period, four editions were published: in December 2016, March 2017, June 2017, and September 2017. In order to present ReSPA's achievements to relevant stakeholders and general public, the Newsletter is broadly disseminated in a printed version, as well as published on the ReSPA website¹³ and Facebook page.

ReSPA produced a new video about ReSPA's achievements¹⁴, which was for the first time presented at the ReSPA Open Day in Brussels in June 2017.

ReSPA has strengthened its visibility through the organization of ReSPA Open Days that promote ReSPA achievements to broader audiences in the Western Balkans and beyond. Three Open Days were organized in 2017: in Belgrade on 25 January 2017, in Sarajevo on 22 February 2017, and in Brussels on 15 June 2017. ReSPA Open Days were an opportunity for stakeholders, public servants from Western Balkans, representatives of civil society, and guests to attend the presentations of the results of ReSPA's regional comparative studies and various other activities.



“Thank you, again, for allowing me to be part of your excellent conference. It was extremely well thought out and the quality was high. I am very pleased by the proactive role ReSPA is assuming, and you can do great things in pushing a progressive agenda forward with the Western Balkan countries.” **David Walker, former Head of the European School of Administration**



10th ReSPA Annual Conference,
October 2017, Budva

¹³ ReSPA Newsletters are available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/65/newsletters>

¹⁴ The video is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/57/videos>

The Way Ahead

Sustainability of ReSPA

By mid-2017, governments of all ReSPA Members – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – agreed on the extension of ReSPA's international agreement¹⁵ for additional 7 years, i.e. until 2024. In essence, this is the main precondition for ReSPA's sustainability. However, it is important that ReSPA Members continue to pay their annual contributions to cover operational costs of the ReSPA Secretariat.

The remaining concern and risk is imposed by an extensive delay of ratification of the ReSPA Agreement by Kosovo*, and consequent payment of the national contribution. This contribution is required for proper functioning of the ReSPA Secretariat and so far, this gap was compensated by the Capital Savings Reserve in 2017 in expectation of the envisaged payment of contribution. This compensation by the Capital Saving Reserve as a short-term measure is proposed also for 2018, after which it will be depleted in full. Capital Savings Reserve was collected from the Core Budget unspent budget appropriations in consecutive period of 5 years, from National Contributions of ReSPA Members, which currently are covering for the missing contribution from Kosovo*. Advanced funds are expected to be returned by the envisaged payment of the contribution from Kosovo* in this or the following year.

From the mid-term and longer-term point of views, sustainability of ReSPA depends of its capability to provide added value to the public governance and PAR agenda of its Members and to their EU association and accession policies. This ensures readiness of the European Commission and the Governments of EU Members to provide funds for ReSPA operations.

The impact of ReSPA products on the PAR agenda of the ReSPA Members is important factor of sustainability as well as an indicator of success of ReSPA operations.

ReSPA will show the ability to overcome or mitigate the effects of the risks, and to carry on its continuing readiness to adapt its way of work to the changeable environment and increasingly demanding needs for capacity development of public administration in its Members. ReSPA is currently considering diversification of funding, and may decide to start with fundraising, business development and partnering efforts in the coming years. In addition, comparative studies and feasibility analysis have been produced, and recommendations of these studies are valuable information for encouraging further work on diversification of activities and funding.

Plans for the Forthcoming Period

ReSPA Secretariat has prepared its preliminary Plan of Activities for 2018, which includes development of the new Strategic Framework for the 2019-2024 period, as well as elaboration of the Action Document for the new EC Grant. ReSPA activities in 2018 will be implemented along the same lines as in the previous year, within the three pillars: European Integration (EUI) Pillar, Public Administration Reform (PAR) Pillar, and Governance for Growth (GfG) Pillar. Coordinated by the ReSPA PAR Network, regional working groups will continue its activities in support of implementation of the European Principles of Public Administration. Consequently, ReSPA's activities under the PAR Pillar will focus on: Strategic Framework for PAR, Policy Development and Coordination, Public Service and HRM, Accountability, Service Delivery, and Public Financial Management.

15 Agreement Establishing ReSPA is available at the ReSPA website on: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#legal-documents-18>

List of Acronyms

ADA – Austrian Development Agency	EC – European Commission
ALB – Albania / Republic of Albania	ECtHR – European Court of Human Rights
AmCham – American Chamber of Commerce	EIB – European Investment Bank
APAJ – Administrative Procedures and Administrative Justice	EIPA – European Institute for Public Administration
ASPA – Albanian School of Public Administration	ELoGE – European Label of Governance Excellence of the Council of Europe
BC – Budget Committee	EPEC – European Public Private Partnership Expertise Centre
BEP – Business Enabling Project in Serbia	ESA – European School of Administration
BiH or BIH – Bosnia and Herzegovina	EU – European Union
CAF – Common Assessment Framework	EUI – European Integration
CEPEJ – European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice	EUPAN – European Public Administration Network
CHU – Central Harmonization Unit	FBiH or FBIH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
CIDS – Centre for Integrity in Defence Sector, Norway	FIA – Fiscal Impact Assessment
CoE – Council of Europe	GAPA – General Administrative Procedure Act
CoG – Centre of Government	GB – Governing Board
CSO – Civil Society Organizations	GB ML – Governing Board at Ministerial Level
DG – Directorate General	GB SL – Governing Board at Senior Officials Level
DG BUDGET – Directorate-General for Budget of the European Commission	GfG – Governance for Growth
DG CONNECT – Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology of the European Commission	GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit / German International Development Agency
DG DEVCO – Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission	GIZ – ORF – GIZ Open Regional Fund
DG NEAR – Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission	HAUS – Institute of Public Management of Finland
DISPA – Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration	HELP – Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals of the Council of Europe
DoPA – Department of Public Administration, Albania	HRM – Human Resources Management
DSP – Danube Strategy Point	HRMA – Human Resources Management Authority of Montenegro
	HRMD – Human Resources Management and Development

HRMIS – Human Resources Management Information System	PARCO – Public Administration Reform Coordinator’s Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina
IA – Internal Audit	
ICL – Institute of Comparative Law, Belgrade, Serbia	PC EUI – Programme Committee on European Integration
ICT – Information and Communication Technology	PFM – Public Financial Management
IFC – International Financial Corporation	PIFC – Public Internal Financial Control
IFRS – International Financial Reporting Standards	PP – Public Procurement
INFOFEST – Festival of Information Technology Achievements, Montenegro	PPA – Principles of Public Administration (OECD/SIGMA)
IoT – Internet of Things	PPP – Public Private Partnership
IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance	QPAS – Quality of Public Administration and Services
IPPF – International Professional Practice Framework	RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation
IPSAS – International Public-Sector Accounting Standards	RAI – Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative
IT – Information Technology	RCC – Regional Cooperation Council
KDZ – Centre for Public Administration Research, Vienna, Austria	ReSPA – Regional School of Public Administration
KIPA – Kosovo Institute of Public Administration	RIA – Regulatory Impact Assessment
KOS* – Kosovo*	ROM – Results Oriented Monitoring
MAK – Macedonia / Republic of Macedonia	RS – Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
MNE – Montenegro	SEE – South-East Europe
MoU – Memorandum of Understanding	SER – Serbia / Republic of Serbia
NALAS – Network of Associations of Local Self-Governments	SIGMA – Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
NEAR – Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	SL – Senior Official level
NIC – National Investment Commissions	SRC – Sector Reform Contract
NIPAC – National IPA Coordinator	TEN – Think for Europe Network
NISPAcee – Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe	UN – United Nations
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	UN-CEPA – United Nations’ Committee of Experts on Public Administration
OECD/SIGMA – OECD’s Support for Improvement in Governance and Management	UNDESA – United Nations’ Department for Economic and Social Affairs
OG – Open Government	UNDP – United Nations’ Development Programme
OGD – Open Government Data	USAID – United States Agency for International Development
OGP – Open Government Partnership	REG – Regional Economic Growth Project (funded by USAID)
PAR – Public Administration Reform	WB6AG – Western Balkans Six Advocacy Group
	WBIF – Western Balkan Investment Framework
	WeBER – Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform

ReSPA

ReSPA Secretariat, 16 October 2017

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