



# ReSPA

Regional School  
of Public Administration

**BUILDING TOGETHER  
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE**

# Annual Report

16 October 2020 - 15 October 2021



ReSPA activities are funded  
by the European Union

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*ReSPA team drives changes in public administration in the region*

# About ReSPA



Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is a regional organization established in 2010 as a joint initiative financed by European Commission and WB administrations. It is managed and governed by five ReSPA Members: Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Republic of Serbia, while Kosovo\* is beneficiary.

As a regional hub aiming to help governments finding an effective and sustainable way to resolve the historical burden of less efficient institutions in public administration, and to take forward Western Balkans (WB) in the area of Public Administration Reform (PAR) and European Integration (EI) we in ReSPA special emphasis devote to Quality Management, e-Governance, Human Resources Management and Development, Centre of Government and Better Regulation.

**Our mission is to support creation of transparent, accountable and professional public administration institutions which provide efficient services to the benefit of citizens and businesses.**

We put forward our resources, our expertise, and vast skillset to provide the WB governments with an access to global best practices and to enjoy comprehensive research documents with strong recommendations to strengthen the quality of public administration institutions.

As a people-oriented international organization, we are aware that European integration gives citizens in the WB region a chance to build the institutions that will gradually become more transparent and trustworthy, that will last and create a culture of self-regulation in the Western Balkan societies.

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

## Foreword by the ReSPA Director

In the last two years, we have exceeded our limits to cope with the challenges and become flexible in a crisis personally and professionally.

The pandemic has forced the Western Balkans governments and public administrations to digitalize faster, accelerate the processes, and transform more citizen-centred services. At the same time, the work of public administrations has become more transparent and efficient. This trend will undoubtedly continue in the coming period. Also, great work is being done on harmonizing public policies and processes.

In parallel, the Revised Enlargement Methodology of the European Commission is being rolled out into the accession process, which reflects on the increased prominence of the WBs public administrations and rising demands and expectations to reorganize and deliver services for the citizens.

Being aware of urgent improvements in public services, ReSPA focuses on strengthening public administrations' capacities to implement Quality Management Tools and systems to upgrade their quality management as a prerequisite for better work performance and public services. That is why ReSPA established the **Regional Quality Management Centre (RQMC)**, which will primarily focus on Common Assessment Framework (CAF) implementation as the most relevant QM tool in public administration. Therefore, RQMC also acts as the CAF Resource Centre by providing capacity-building activities aimed at CAF institutionalization in the Western Balkans. RQMC aims to become the entity that undertakes certification of the "Effective CAF User" Label for the public administration institutions and eventually to raise quality management standards that lead to better services in the Western Balkans public administrations.

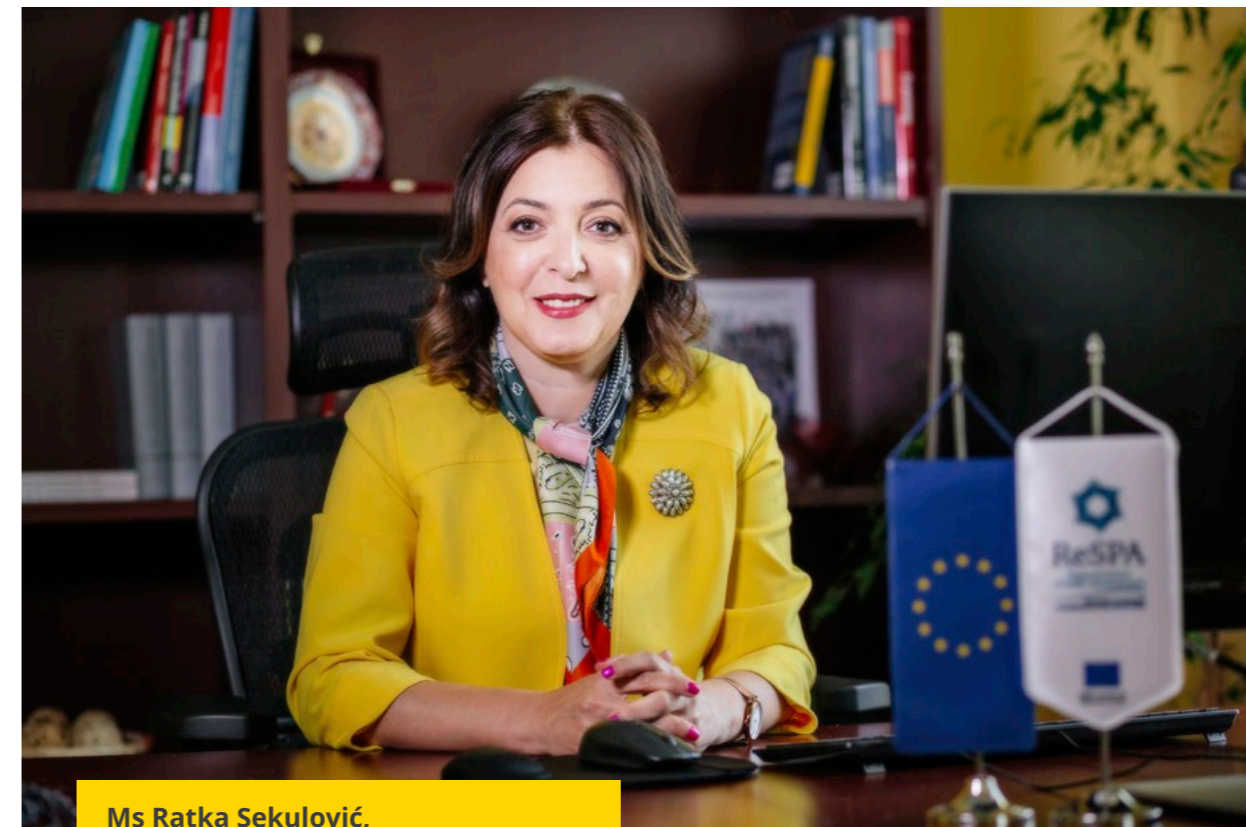
Building trust, institutional cooperation and constructive exchange of experiences during our first ten years of existence should continue in the years to come.

These changes involve constant learning and improvement of the civil servants, where ReSPA takes a leading role in the Region.

I would also like to point out the progress in the coordination of public policies within the countries in the Region, which is the result of establishing the **Regional Network on Policy Coordination**.

**Piloting of survey on civil servants satisfaction** is also one of the novelties in ReSPA, which aims to explore possibilities for further improvements in the public administrations in the Western Balkans based on detected issues, needs, and expectations of civil servants working in public administration in the Region. The ultimate goal is to support further public personnel management development in the Region. Jointly with OECD/SIGMA, we will pilot this survey in two ReSPA Members before conducting the comprehensive regional survey on civil servants' satisfaction.

Core values we follow are tolerance, respect, transparency, and innovative approach to our assignments



Ms Ratka Sekulović,  
ReSPA Director

ReSPA has conducted its first **Annual Monitoring exercise** covering the period 2019-2020, according to the Monitoring Toolkit approved by the GB in December 2020. It is the first time that ReSPA has carried out systematic monitoring of its activities through the application of the methodology entirely developed within the institution. The survey addresses both individual and institutional improvements in each ReSPA Members through three different questionnaires that have been developed (questionnaire on general activities, questionnaire on the level of implementation of policy recommendations from ReSPA Studies and the questionnaire on in-country support provided to respective ReSPA members). The first Monitoring report has been produced with the key findings, lessons learned and the main recommendations for the future.

ReSPA continues to build strong bonds with our partner institutions. The pandemic hasn't stopped us from meeting and collaborating - Network of Schools of Government (organized by OECD), Meeting of DISPA Network, The Digital Leap. How COVID-19 Transformed the Digital Future for the WBs (hosted by the Center for SEE Studies at the University of Graz), Seminar Modern and Efficient Parliament (in the organization of the European Parliament),

the 20th session of CEPA (UN DESA), ASPA 2021 Annual Conference, DIGITALL Public Conference (EC, Directorate-General for informatics) were just some of the events where ReSPA took an active role.

In ReSPA, we remain devoted to supporting policy development, depoliticization and professionalization of public administration, and improving the quality of public services. With the clear support of the European Commission and joint efforts with the governments of the Western Balkans, we will continue to support the building of transparent, accountable, and professional public administration institutions in the Region.

Building trust, institutional cooperation and constructive exchange of experiences during our first ten years of existence should continue in the years to come.

Ms Ratka Sekulović, ReSPA Director

## Chair of the Governing Board in 2021

**Ms Marija Obradović**

**Minister of Public Administration and Local Self Government, Republic of Serbia**

Striving for EU membership as its strategic priority, the Republic of Serbia is continuously making significant efforts to reform its public administration and harmonize it with the EU standards, and, above all, **to make it more efficient, transparent, accountable and "tailored to its citizens"**.

As a continuation of the PAR Strategy from 2014, in April 2021, the Government of the RS adopted the **Public Administration Reform Strategy for the period from 2021 to 2030**, with the Action Plan for the period from 2021 to 2025.

Its structure is fully adapted to the SIGMA/OECD Principles of Public Administration and covers thematic areas such as: policy coordination, service delivery, human resource management, accountability and transparency and public financial management, with the additional area of local government reform. I am convinced that its full implementation will lead to significant results and the completion of the already started process of **shifting the focus from administration as a "regulator" to service/customer oriented administration**.

During the previous years, the most significant progress has been made in the sphere of providing services to citizens and the economy. I am really proud of the fact that, in 2020, public administration institutions used eZUP 10 million times, that is, exchanged data from official records, which means that citizens did not have to go from counter to counter the same number of times. One stop shops have been opened in 14 local self-government units, the Central Population Register was established, and a Data center was opened in Kragujevac.

The focus of Serbia's presidency in 2021 was on improvement of the process of digitalization with the support to quality management and crisis management, and improvement of quality of services. Achieved results, especially those in the field of digitalization and development of e-government contributed to an adequate response to the circumstances and challenges related to the pandemic of COVID-19, faster adjustment to the work from home, education without going to schools, as well as business without going to the counters.

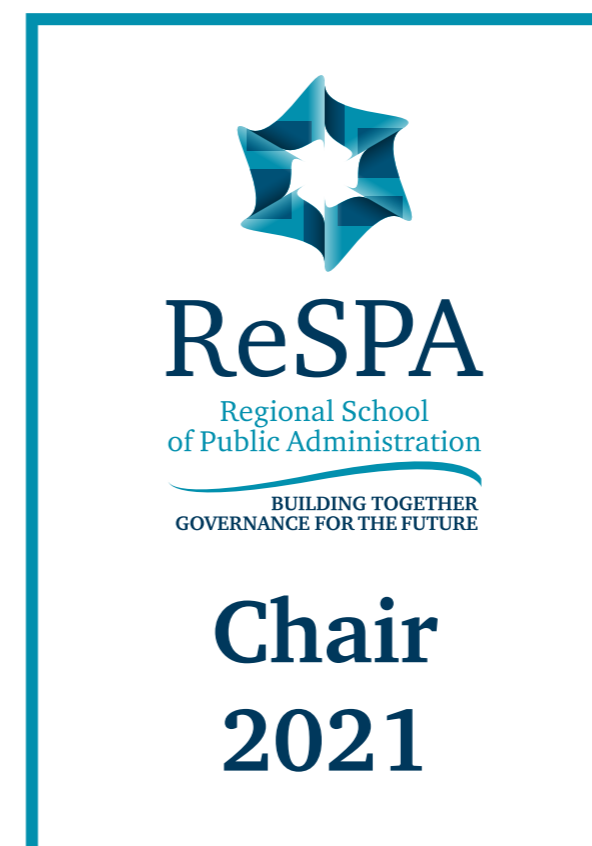


In other words, through the implementation of public administration reform, the state has prepared and developed the necessary capacities that have enabled a quick and efficient response to the pandemic. I am pleased that I can say that everything that we have achieved during the previous years through the process of public administration reform has come to the fore and shown its full purpose in the conditions of a pandemic, facilitating the daily life activities of citizens and the economy in these specific circumstances.

Internally, Serbia together with ReSPA and Austrian KDZ is working on introducing the quality management approach in the public administration sphere. European CAF has been implemented in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government of the Republic of Serbia and the plan was made to continue the implementation in 10 more institutions in the next two years. We truly believe that ReSPA becoming the regional center for CAF is important for the region because of the capacity building, sharing skills and knowledge, raising awareness on importance of quality management and service oriented organizational culture and we will use that regional center for further enhancement of our capacities.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank ReSPA and all ReSPA members for fruitful cooperation. ReSPA has proven to be a useful mechanism for the public administrations response to COVID crisis, and a constructive partner in creating the quality management. I am sure that in the forthcoming period, further regional cooperation in all areas of public administration reform will be of great importance to us, primarily through the mutual exchange of experiences and knowledge.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia, and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government remain fully open and continue to support all efforts that ReSPA makes to support us in our reform activities.





# 1. Executive Summary

Throughout the reporting period from **16 October 2020 until 15 October 2021**, ReSPA continued to provide vital support to our administrations and to stay a reliable partner to them, international organizations and European Commission. Although the year 2020 was one of the most challenging ones for ReSPA team due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ReSPA has organized 40 networking and capacity building actions with 1468 participant days<sup>1</sup>, 85 international and regional experts, and implemented four regional comparative research projects with PAR policy recommendations. Over 85% of participants evaluated content, methodology and relevance of ReSPA actions as excellent/good.

The representatives of 101 institutions in the region participated in regional networking events: 24 from Albania, 22 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 11 from North Macedonia, 18 from Montenegro, 25 from Serbia and 1 from Kosovo\*<sup>2</sup>.

Over the 90% of participants who filled the evaluation forms evaluated the content of ReSPA actions as excellent/good, 90% of them evaluated the applied methodology as excellent/good, while 74% evaluated the relevance of the ReSPA actions excellent/good.

Along with the activities we traditionally conduct, this year, we focus on establishing the Regional Quality Management Centre, Regional Network of Policy Coordination and In-Country support mechanism. Also, we continue to provide innovative initiatives such as the e-GOV pilots' projects that aim to improve the practices related to digitalising public services.

ReSPA successfully completed its first Annual Monitoring exercise covering the period 2019-2020, according to the Monitoring Framework approved in December 2020. It is the first time that ReSPA has systematically monitored its activities to apply a methodology entirely developed within the institution.



<sup>1</sup> The number of participant days is calculated by multiplying the number of registered participants by the number of event days

<sup>2</sup> Although Kosovo\* is not a member of ReSPA public servants from Kosovo\* participate in ReSPA activities funded by the European Commission

## ReSPA's main achievements in 2021

### Establishment of the Regional Quality Management Centre



More than five years of ReSPA's work and accomplishments in the domain of Quality Management (QM) have resulted in recognition of Western Balkans administrations and the decision to place their trust in ReSPA to continue and expand its work in this area within a "mutually beneficial relationship", by establishing Regional Quality Management Centre (Centre). The Centre was formally endorsed in February 2021 by the Memorandum of Establishment and Operation signed and adopted by Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

While its overall role is to be the point of expertise in QM for the WB public administrations, the main objective is to enhance QM networking and improve cooperation in the field of QM amongst the participants coming from WB public administrations. The Centre is established within ReSPA structure and operates, inter alia, as a Regional CAF Resource Centre for the institutions and organizations in the Western Balkans that intend to introduce CAF and/or at a later stage undergo the PEF external evaluation of the success in implementing CAF. The Centre hosts two regional networks, CAF and PEF network, consisting of experienced QM officials from all countries.

As Western Balkans countries have a different approach and different levels of importance is being assigned to Quality management in their strategic and policy documents, through activities of RQMC the position of QM in the reforming processes in WB public administrations is analyzed and monitored to address the needs at policy and practice level.

### In-Country support mechanism



"In-country support mechanism" targets the specific demand driven topics defined by ReSPA Members who face different challenges and needs on their paths towards reforming their public administrations. This mechanism assists each ReSPA Member in terms of engagement of necessary expertise for addressing the identified specific needs in the field of PAR. It may address, among others, operational conclusions from the PAR Special Group meetings or the deficiencies identified in the action documents for the implementation of PAR strategies and recommendations from ReSPA's policy documents.

Since the last Annual Report (October 2020), 12 new projects under the in-country support mechanism have started to be implemented in the main thematic areas of ReSPA, such as Policy Coordination, Quality Management, Better Regulation, Human Resource Management and Development and E-Government.

### Establishment of the Regional Network of Policy Coordination



We assist the Western Balkans governments in identifying the areas for improvement in the overall evidence-based policy development cycle through the Regional Network of Policy Coordinators' activities.

These aim to support improvements in the quality of policy planning processes, according to the needs of the governments of the Western Balkans.

### Seasonal School on EU Accession Negotiation related to Chapter 29 (Customs Union)

ReSPA hosted a virtual Seasonal School on EU Accession Negotiation which was focused on the challenges that WBs administrations face in dealing with Chapter 29 of the acquis: Customs Union. The Seasonal School was organized in cooperation with European Commission DG TAXUD "Taxations & Customs" and CEFTA Secretariat, thus providing to the participants from the administrations in the Region a direct interaction with the responsible officials in the EC who deal with this Chapter.



The overall conclusion of this year's Seasonal School on EU accession negotiation is that the accession countries when negotiating Chapter 29 would not face many difficulties with the screening process, neither with the transposition of legislation into their internal legal framework, but the main challenge to be expected is related to the implementation of the customs IT infrastructure to align them with the EU standards. **More than 40 participants enhanced their knowledge on the particular topic in the accession negotiation process, and negotiation technics, as well as were equipped with concrete experience from Montenegro and Serbia with lessons learned on dealing with opening and closing benchmarks related to Chapter 29.**

### E-GOV Pilots projects



ReSPA has launched a new initiative through an Open call for E GOV pilot projects which aim to introduce the model for improving the practices related to the design of digitalization of public services, which will serve as the applicable standardized model in Western Balkans public administrations (WB AP). Upon completing the e-GOV pilots, the experiences and lessons learned in pilot projects will be evaluated and summarized. This will inform the development of a standardized model (Principles of Design) which will be offered to public administrations as the option for improving the design and delivery of digitized public services (e.g. principles for designing digitized public services). The core theme is enhancing the quality of digitized public services by piloting the design or redesign of e-services, work processes or policies.

The services can be related to data opening, using the cloud in public administration, as well as to all general public services (G2G, G2B, G2C) that are digitized or institutions are planning the digitization.

Public Administration Award 2020

PA Awards 2020 | ReSPA | SIGMA



The joint initiative of ReSPA and SIGMA-OECD to recognize and award the most successful and innovative practices coming from all public administrations from the WB, regardless of its complexity and longevity, has been successfully developed and implemented. Being aware of the unprecedented time of COVID 19 pandemic as well as of the great effort shown by the WB governments in overcoming the crisis caused by the pandemic, eleven project champions belonging to areas of Digital government, e-Economy, e-Learning and e-Health and Social Innovation, were awarded. The final PA Award ceremony was organized in November on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference. As the specific recognition and honour, three winners from the contest of PA Awards had an opportunity to present their unique approach in delivering public services at the “Think fast - act faster”, the OPSI (Observatory for Public Sector Innovation) OECD online event. The Follow up of PA Award was the action that included the winners and comprised of several capacity building events tailor-made to meet the specific short term needs of awarded teams.

The Public Award competition will be bi-annual activity, and the next one will be held in 2022.

ReSPA has developed five policy papers and one methodological package



**The EU support to Public Administration Reform through the IPA II: an overview and lessons learned** which focuses on the IPA II support to the PAR process in the Region through different implementation models and critical characteristics of selected IPA II programmes per administrations and their lessons learned. The study also covers chapter oriented towards the further EU support to PAR through IPA III (in the current EU Financial Framework 2021-2027).



**Policy co-ordination in the Western Balkans**

The goal of this analytical paper is to identify key ways to strengthen policy co-ordination as a tool for more efficient implementation of public administration reform in the region. The evolving debate on policymaking has identified the potential of policy co-ordination to facilitate improvements in the management of the complexities of governance and to deliver on government-as-a-whole agendas amidst all the interlinked problems faced by governments.



**National studies on the policy co-ordination in each of Western Balkan administration**

These analytical papers are part of ReSPA's efforts to strengthen the quality of policy co-ordination in each of the administrations within the Western Balkans. They are the result of researches and analyses of the legal and institutional frameworks, systems, structures and processes of policy co-ordination and contain valuable sets of policy recommendations for further improvement of policy co-ordination.



**The Analysis on Human Resources Management Information Systems in the Western Balkans Region**

which aims to assess the progress made since 2017 when ReSPA conducted a “Baseline Analysis on HRMIS in the WB region” to assess the development of human resources IT management systems, to share information and different solutions implemented by ReSPA members, prepare new recommendations to foster the digital transformation of HR processes and facilitate regional cooperation.



**Towards Effective Performance Appraisal in the Western Balkans: How to develop performance?**

The objective of these Guidelines is to review practices, provide practical examples and to present new trends, which can enhance implementation of individual staff performance appraisal (ISPA) in the public administrations of the Western Balkan countries.

**Practical Regulatory Impact Assessment package.** The “Practical RIA package” is composed of a set of updated, improved and standardized templates for RIA, Standard Cost Model (SCM) and other analytical tools/methods for conduction of RIA, such as cost-benefit analysis (CBA), cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) and multi-criteria analysis (MCA) - including brief explanations and practical tips on filling the templates.



## 2. Introduction

This Report covers the actions<sup>3</sup> implemented from 16 October 2019 to 15 October 2020.

Five ReSPA's working groups (WG of Centre-of-Government Institutions, WG on Better Regulation, WG on Human Resource Management and Development, WG on E-Governance and WG on Quality Management) have met regularly and have performed most of the planned activities within the above mentioned strategic areas.

ReSPA, in consultation with the members of the respective Working Groups, adopted the Programme of Work by the end of 2020 and finalized the bi-annual Programme of Work 2021-2022 accordingly.



Ms Suzana Pribilović, Minister of Public Administration, Montenegro and Ms Ratka Sekulović, ReSPA Director

<sup>3</sup> We shall use the term action instead of activity throughout the report for the following reason. Although activity and action look alike an activity is when our doing does not produce an outcome by itself while an action produces specific tangible results.

ReSPA continued to strengthen its cooperation with the governing structures, Working group Members and other actors relevant for the implementation of the actions that have been organized following the ReSPA 2020-2021 Programme of Work and the ReSPA Strategy for 2019-2024. The Strategy focuses on the improvement of the ReSPA Members' performance in key horizontal governance and public administration reform fields identified in the respective national PAR strategies of the ReSPA members, national PAR Action Plans, mainly through in-country support. It presents the collective endeavour by ReSPA staff, Governing Board and Working groups' members, the Advisory Board and the European Commission.

### 11<sup>th</sup> ReSPA Governing Board meeting at the Ministerial level held virtually on 6 November 2020

The virtual Meeting was attended by the ministers responsible for public administration and high officials from ReSPA Members, representatives of the European Union, ReSPA Director and ReSPA Secretariat.

The main emphasis of the Meeting reflects the recognition of the job done by ReSPA in these challenging times, but also during its ten years of existence. The ministers from ReSPA Members unanimously adopted the Annual Report as well as the Budget 2021-2022 and Envelope 2021.

Ms Suzana Pribilović, the Minister of Public Administration of the Government of Montenegro, handed over the ReSPA chairmanship to Ms Marija Obradović, the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Republic of Serbia, by which Serbia has taken over the chairmanship of ReSPA in the year 2021.

*“The Republic of Serbia has made a full contribution to the work of ReSPA so far, and we will continue to do so in the future, especially since we are charing this respected institution as of today”* said Minister Obradović during taking over the chairmanship of ReSPA.



Ms Marija Obradović, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Republic of Serbia, took over the ReSPA flag

# 3. Implementation of the ReSPA Strategy 2019 - 2024

Implementation of the ReSPA Strategy 2019-2024 started in May 2019, coinciding with the beginning of the EC Grant Contract implementation and continued for this year's reporting period.

At the beginning of this year's reporting period, *the first Programme Committee meeting* was held aimed to familiarise its members and other participants with goals, objectives and purposes of establishment of Programme Committee, the ReSPA Programme of Work 2019-2020, the current challenges and achievements in PAR in ReSPA Members, as well as the role of public administration in the process of EU accession negotiation.

During the first half of 2021, ReSPA organised all events online, while from June gradually changed the model of operation utilising more face to face mode. Despite the pandemic situation, ReSPA successfully implemented planned activities defined in its biannual programme of work 2021-2022.



During the reporting period, ten (10) initiatives under the “In-Country support mechanism” have been conducted:

## Two In-Country initiatives within the Better Regulation area:

*Strengthening the managerial accountability in general government units in Albania and raise awareness on the delegation of managerial tasks* – ReSPA supported the Albanian Ministry of Finance and Economy to train the relevant staff of the targeted institutions in Albania on the importance of the use of the delegation instrument and how to use and understand the new Ministerial Instruction on the delegation of duties. In addition, a Training of Trainers was organized by mid-September 2021 for a small group of civil servants, including Financial Management Control staff as well as managers part of the structure of finance and human resources of some selected general government units. Finally, this action assisted selected institutions (hands-on-support) on implementing the Ministerial Instruction of delegation of duties and the reporting line in accordance with delegated authorization. The action reached a number of around 30 public officials of various ranks.

*Organization and deliver of a Training of Trainers Programme for Regulatory Impact Assessment and Impact Assessment Methodology in Albania* – This action (the RIA ToT program) enabled the establishment of the network of local trainers on RIA and existing Impact Assessment Methodology in Albania, which is of crucial importance for further development of RIA and its advanced application among the Albanian public administration. This action also served to address a clear need of the Albanian administration which has been identified in the recent EC Country report as well as in ReSPA Study on Better Regulation (2018). ReSPA selected a team of two international experts that delivered the assistance to the Albanian administration, while the training programme was delivered during 13-24 September in Albania to 6 high ranking officials in the Albanian Prime Minister Office (PMO), who received the ReSPA certification by end of September 2021.

## Three In-Country initiatives within E-Government area:

*Assistance in the development of the Digital Transformation Strategy of Montenegro* ReSPA has provided technical support to the Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and media of the Government of Montenegro to coordinate the process of development of the Digital Transformation Strategy (anticipated period 2022-2026). The expertise was provided to the inter-ministerial Working Group for defining strategic objectives and horizontal principles based on which the draft of the Strategy can be made by the inter-ministerial Working Group. The support is also provided to ensure the presentation of the draft of the Strategy at the bodies at high political level.

*Service Catalogue - for the General Secretariat of the Government of Federation BiH (BiH)* - The expert was engaged with the task to provide assistance related to the production of ITIL service catalogue, which would help the IT department of the General Secretariat to list all the IT services that the IT department provides for end-users. Technical assistance provided had ensured a high level of coordination within the institution so that the institution fully owned the results of the action.

*Best practice and knowledge transfer for key service delivery enablers, for PARCO in BiH.* Two experts were contracted to assist PARCO – Public Administration Reform Coordination Office of the BiH- in defining the Key enablers for digitalizing services in BiH in a coherent manner. Three main documents are the result of this assistance: Situation Analysis, Comparative analysis and Roadmap. Several workshops and consultations were held aiming at collecting information and comments from a variety of stakeholders across all administrative levels of BiH. Understanding the importance of this project ReSPA has offered assistance to PARCO to organize the final high-level event where the results of the project will be presented.

**One In-country initiative was supported within the Quality management area:**

*Finalizing of the CAF implementation* - ReSPA supported Civil Service agency of Republika Srpska (BiH) to work alongside the officials from RS Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Governance to finalize CAF implementation-evaluation of the Questionnaire and workshop for the consensus about drafting the Improvement Action plan.

**Four In-country initiatives were supported within the HRMD area:**

*Creating a comparative analysis of good practices (EU and Western Balkans) on the role of HR Units in strategic management within State administration* - ReSPA supported the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government of Serbia in conducting the above-mentioned comparative analysis and preparation of the analytical document on the role of HR units within State administration in the Strategic Management. The concept of modern HRM, among other things, implies a strategic approach in managing human resources in PA bodies (strategic partner role) instead of the current predominantly technical approach in performing this function. This requires a planned approach and well-trained HR personnel to apply modern methods and techniques in HRM, shifting the focus from administrative to strategically oriented HR units. This document explains the role of HR unit as an agent of change and methods used to encourage the changes. The document should assist in creating a partnership relation with decision-makers in state administration bodies through proposing policy, practices, strategies to ensure that structure of employees of the organization will provide optimized quality services to the citizens.

*Creating a comparative analysis of good practices (EU and Western Balkans) on the implementation of the modern selection process of the HRM, E-recruitment* - ReSPA supported the Human Resources Management Service of Serbia in conducting this comparative analysis. The analysis provides an overview of good practices which can assist Serbia in its further regulation of the use of online tools during recruitment. The analysis provides: an overview of key online tools and recruitment stages, and key dilemmas associated with the use of online tools; legal foundation for eRecruitment; key challenges faced in practising eRecruitment, focusing on issues of potential technical obstacles, verification of identity challenges of data security and privacy and keeping the integrity of the entire procedure; as well as key recommendations which could enhance the use of online tools in the recruitment procedures in Serbia.

*Feasibility study on conducting qualifying exams online* - ReSPA provided the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government of Serbia analysis of the possibility to conduct the qualifying exams online. The study offers examples of good practice in the EU as well as provides possible solutions for conducting professional exams at a distance. It also provides information on the technical, material and other resources required for conducting online exams.

*Increase the usage and awareness on the importance and benefits of the HR information Systems in the Albanian Public Administration, with a special focus on the local level (preparation of video tutorials)* - The Online Public Administration Platform administrata.al launched in April 2019 provides the public administration employees not only with the legal bases and detailed steps for each human resources' management process but also with templates and ready to use documents. In this way, the unification of practices is ensured and number of errors during the management of these processes has been minimized. This project supported DoPA in the development of a set of video tutorials for mainly civil servants at the local level (users) that were aimed at increasing the usage and awareness on the importance and benefits of the HR Information System in the Albanian Public Administration, with a special focus on the local level. In a user-friendly way, the videos provide step by step instructions on the usage of the platform and explain the benefits of the platform usage. The videos should contribute to improved communication with actual and future users and increased publicity of the platform among local government units. By increasing the use of a platform in a correct way, the margin of errors during utilization will be decreased, especially for the local level.

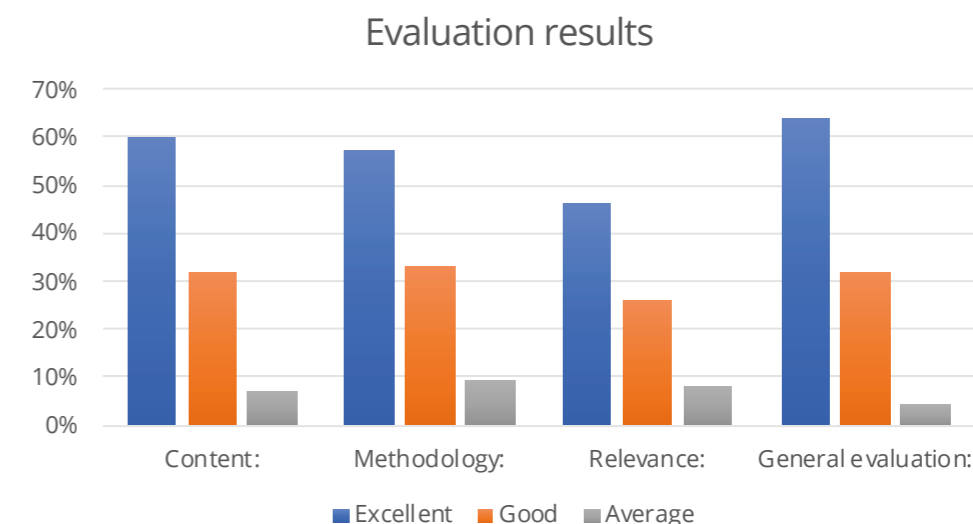
By implementing its actions, ReSPA stays devoted to the contribution to the effective response of the WB public administrations to the needs of citizens and businesses, focusing on strengthened regional cooperation in the fields of PAR and EUI and contributing to the achievement the following specific objectives:

- Improved implementation of PAR and PFM strategies in the Western Balkans;
- Improved professionalisation (and depoliticisation) of the public service;
- Improved service delivery;
- Establishment of ReSPA as a Regional Quality Management Centre.

This Report presents the **Direct Output Indicators (DOIs)**<sup>4</sup> which provide a direct view of the quantity of ReSPA's work and its quality as perceived by the immediate beneficiaries. A more in-depth assessment of the quality of this work will be attained through assessments based on the induced outputs' indicators and their link with the outcomes in the Intervention Logic.

**Strengthening PA Capacity within ReSPA's Purview**

*% of persons who have enhanced their skills, knowledge, awareness of the following thematic areas*



92%

*of all the participants who filled the evaluation forms evaluated the content of ReSPA actions as excellent/good*

90%

*of all the participants evaluated the applied methodology as excellent/good*

74%

*of all the participants evaluated the relevance of the ReSPA actions as excellent/good*

<sup>4</sup> Direct Output Indicators (DOIs) measure the coverage (in terms of staff, themes, countries, etc.) of the networks, exchanges, lessons, skills, policy recommendations, etc. produced by ReSPA and their quality as perceived by the direct users/participants/beneficiaries

### Identification of Good Practices and Policy Recommendations within ReSPA's Purview

The following policy documents with recommendations were produced:

- The EU support to Public Administration Reform through the IPA II: an overview and lessons learned
- Policy co-ordination in the Western Balkans
- National study on the policy co-ordination processes in Montenegro
- The Analysis on Human Resources Management Information Systems in the Western Balkans Region
- Towards Effective Performance Appraisal in the Western Balkans: How to develop performance?
- Practical Regulatory Impact Assessment package

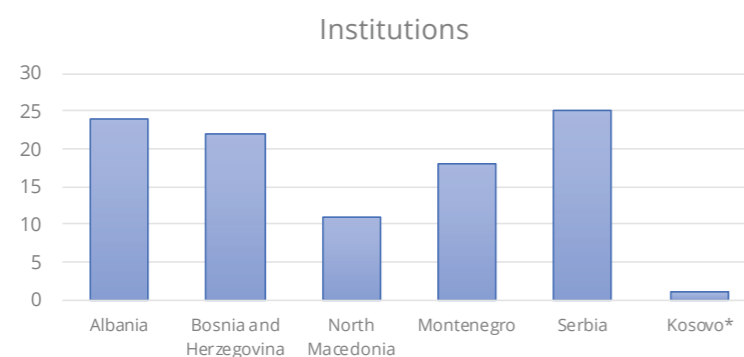
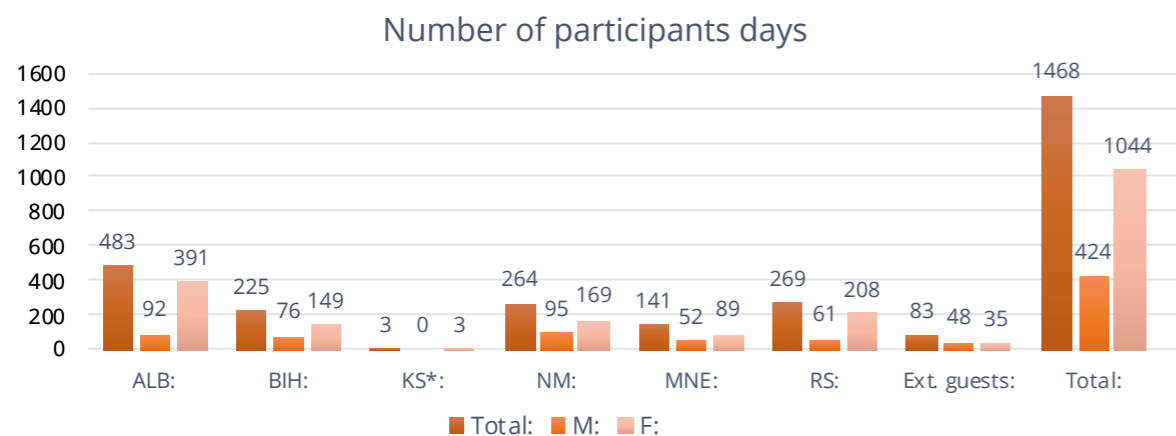
These documents serve as the basis for ReSPA's further actions.

#### No of institutions in the region represented at regional networking events

During the reporting period, representatives of 101 institutions in the region participated in the regional networking events: 24 from Albania, 22 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 11 from North Macedonia, 18 from Montenegro, 25 from Serbia and 1 from Kosovo\*.

#### No of exchanges and cooperation activities

ReSPA organized 40 networking and capacity building actions (High-Level Policy Dialogue, Seasonal Schools, Workshops, Conferences, Trainings, Working group meetings), with 1468 participant days and involving 85 international and regional experts, and implemented 4 regional comparative research projects with PAR policy recommendations.



## 3.1. Improved Implementation of PAR and PFM Strategies

### Coordination of PAR and PFM policies

#### 3rd High-level Policy Dialogue, online, 13 September 2021



High-level Policy Dialogue brought together virtually ministers responsible for PAR, the highest EC representatives accountable for the Western Balkans and PAR, and OECD/SIGMA, representatives of EU Delegations from the Region and numerous experts, to discuss the state of play in PAR, common issues and challenges as well as an efficient strategic direction for improvements in the upcoming year.

Ministers in charge of Public Administration discussed various issues and explored modalities for further cooperation with their counterparts and institutions in the Region and broader.

"ReSPA remains committed to supporting the development of public policies, depoliticization and professionalization of public administration, and improving the quality of public services. With the explicit support of the European Commission and joint efforts with the governments of the Western Balkans, we will continue to support the construction of transparent, responsible and professional public administration institutions in the Region," emphasized Ms Ratka Sekulović, ReSPA Director in her welcoming address.

ReSPA's expert introduced the study "The EU support to Public Administration Reform through the IPA II: an overview and lessons learned"<sup>5</sup> which focuses on the IPA II support to the PAR process in the Region through different implementation models and critical characteristics of selected IPA II programmes per administrations and their lessons learned. Specific focus is given to the direct budget support for PAR activities since it has been a catalyst for institutional changes in most selected programmes and will also be important in the next IPA generation. The critical steps towards the IPA III programming framework were also presented in which readiness of the IPA beneficiaries on PAR remains one of the key performance indicators for further support.

Based on the presented lessons learned, ReSPA intends to support public administration in the Region to better prepare their structures for efficient absorption of the IPA III support, focusing on PAR.

<sup>5</sup> The study can be seen on ReSPA website: <https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/The+EU+support+to+PAR+through+the+IPA+II+an+overview+and+lessons+learned.pdf/e3a0352e25a8f2ad4d25a102bf0ceedd.pdf>

ReSPA implemented two regional seminars devoted to monitoring and reporting of public policies (19-20 October 2020) and to the evaluation of public policies (11-12 March 2021).

These seminars enhanced the knowledge of participants on the main aspects of policy monitoring and evaluation and offered a platform for the facilitation of discussion amongst civil servants on recent developments in policy monitoring and evaluation, as well as on key challenges and how to overcome them. Also, it provided an opportunity for detecting the topics and ideas for further ReSPA actions in this area of work. Organization of the capacity development activities that will provide common lessons in the Region on the public policy development cycle are recognized as one of the important potentials for future progress in this field.

## Quality of policy planning in the Centre of Government institutions

### ReSPA organized important activities devoted to the improvement of the quality of policy planning in the Centre of Government institutions and coordination of public policies

ReSPA has paid specific attention to policy coordination during 2021, where a regional Analytical Paper on Policy Coordination in Western Balkans was developed and published. The Paper provides a set of regional/horizontal recommendations on improving policy coordination in the Region, as well as country-targeted recommendations. The Paper suggests that specific mechanisms and capacities related to the Center of Government (CoG) need to be built in order for the reform of public administration to take effect, such as: CoGs must take an active part in leading the government agenda; CoG reforms takes time, requiring clear decisions, planning, legislative change, resources and upskilling; CoG capacities for policy coordination must be mirrored by increased ministerial capacities for policymaking.

The Regional Paper led the way for 6 specific Analysis on policy coordination, one per each administration in the WBs. These papers, which provide clear and direct recommendations for improving the policy coordination mechanism and tools, have been introduced to each of the administrations in the Region during June-October 2021, while their final version shall be published within November 2021.

These actions were preconditions for establishing the network of policy coordinators in Western Balkans. This network connects the most important public servants and officials responsible for implementing the government role in policy coordination and its various aspects

- coordination of PAR and PFM, coordination of European integration tasks, EU acquis alignment, IPA III assistance etc. The inaugural meeting of the Network of Policy coordinators in Western Balkan will be organized on 19 October 2021.

As regards Better Regulation, the respective Working Group has been regularly met and exchanged ideas and practices in the domain of Regulatory Impact Assessment implementation. Due to the shortcomings identified in the EC 2020 Country Reports as regards impact assessment, ReSPA has continued to pay attention to RIA implementation. The first meeting of the WG for 2021 held in February 2021 was focused on regulatory impact assessment (RIA) and EU transposition in the Western Balkans and served as a good forum to identify bottlenecks in this regard and come up with some brief recommendations.

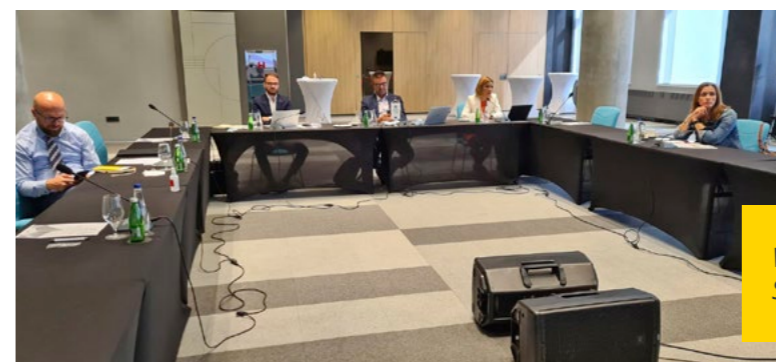
In addition, during May-September, ReSPA has developed the "Practical RIA package", which is composed of a set of updated, improved and standardized templates for RIA, Standard Cost Model (SCM) and other analytical tools/methods for conduction of RIA, such as cost-benefit analysis (CBA), cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) and multi-criteria analysis (MCA) - including brief explanations and practical tips on filling the templates. The "Practical Package" was presented, explained and discussed among 20 public officials from the WB, during the Regional Workshop held on 30 September - 1 October.



*Workshop on policy co-ordination in Albania, Vlore, 16 July 2021.*



*Workshop on policy co-ordination in Montenegro, Kolašin, 10 June 2021.*



*Workshop on policy co-ordination in Serbia, Belgrade, 16 September 2021.*

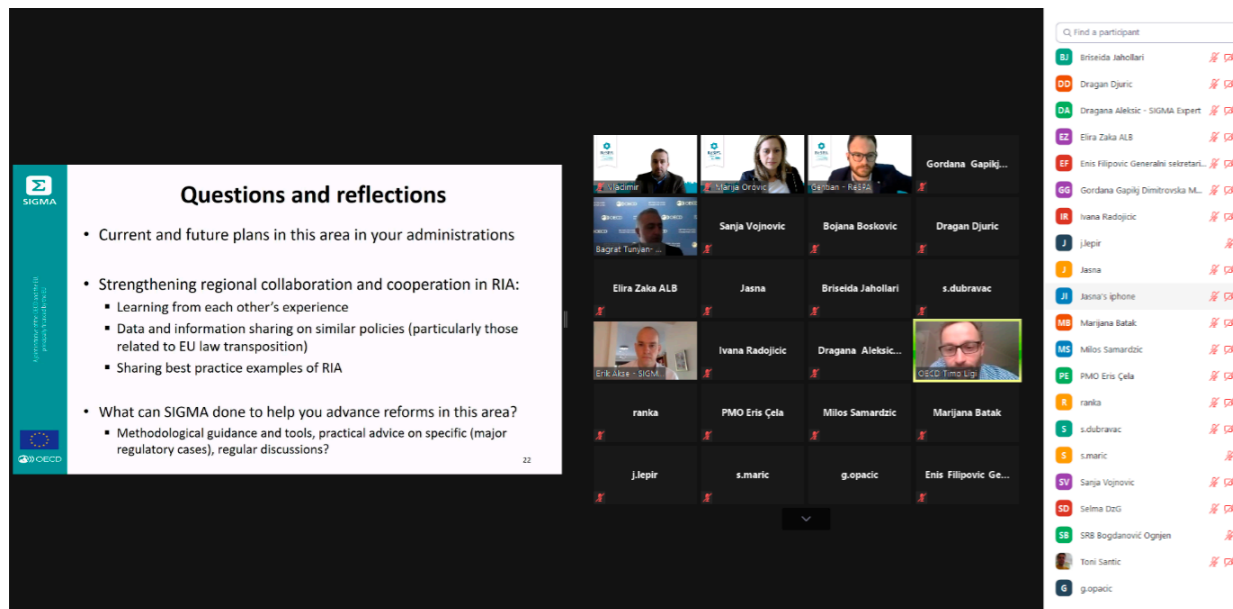


*Workshop on policy co-ordination in BiH, Mostar, 28 September 2021.*



*Workshop on policy co-ordination in North Macedonia, Ohrid, 29 September 2021.*

## Alignment of policy making and legal drafting with the EU Better Regulation Agenda



**The first meeting for 2021 of ReSPA Working Group on Better Regulation (BR)** was organized remotely on 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2021. The meeting was focused on regulatory impact assessment (RIA) and EU transposition in the Western Balkans and served as a good forum to identify bottlenecks in this regard and come up with some brief recommendations. Due to the specificity of the main topic, the meeting made together not only Members of the WG, but also RIA contact points in the Region. During the meeting, ReSPA introduced the planned activities for 2021 and 2022 in the domain of better regulation as well as the monitoring toolkit which will serve to conduct the first monitoring exercise of ReSPA actions. Representatives from OECD/SIGMA also attended the meeting as well as introduced the SIGMA Paper on “RIA and EU Law transposition in the WBs”. Overall, the meeting made together 30 participants. During the meeting, participants effectively exchanged the state of play in their administrations as regards RIA implementation, targeted goals, challenges but also good examples of success in the domain of BR.

**Preparation of a “Practical RIA package” for improving implementation of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in Western Balkans** – During May-September 2021 ReSPA, with the support of an external expert, worked on the preparation of a so-called “Practical RIA

Package”, an initiative which came as a result of consultations and expressed interest of the ReSPA Members, and based on the findings and recommendations of various available analysis and papers in the domain of Better Regulation in the Region. The package is composed of a set of updated, improved and standardized templates for RIA, Standard cost model (SCM) and other analytical tools/methods for conduction of RIA, such as cost benefit analysis, cost effectiveness analysis and multi-criteria analysis (including brief explanations and practical tips on filling the templates). The administrations from the WBs may rely on these documents and embed all or some of them, into their internal RIA frameworks, in line with their respective needs.

These templates – related to the overall RIA document as well as Cost-Benefit Analysis, Cost Effectiveness Analysis, Multi-Criteria Analysis and application of the Standard Cost Model – are essential elements for a RIA system to function well and deliver on its potential. Yet, the effective use of these templates is generally limited. Improvements in their regular application can be expected to result in increases in assessment results by OECD/SIGMA under the Principles of Public Administration in the areas “Policy Development and Coordination” and “Service Delivery”.



**Regional Workshop on presentation, explanation and debating the “Practical RIA Package”**, was organized on a hybrid manner (in-person in Tirana, Albania as well as online) and made together around 20 public officials from the WB administrations who deal with preparation and/or oversight of RIA processes within their administrations. After the finalization of the “Practical RIA package” (see above), it was deemed necessary to present and explain it to the relevant public officials who shall make use of the package.

During the workshop was made a thorough presentation, explanation and discussion on the “Practical RIA package” and the way how to utilize it. In addition, during the workshop was provided a presentation on the usage of these kind of templates (or similar) in EU countries, state of art of RIA frameworks in EU Member states, best examples, potential recommendations, etc.

During the workshop, the external expert and ReSPA presented the following components of the package:

- Standardized, updated and all-inclusive RIA Template;
- Standardized, updated and all-inclusive Standard Cost Model (SCM) template,
- Standardized, updated and all-inclusive templates for cost-benefit analysis (CBA); cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) and multi-criteria analysis (MCA)



## 3.2. Improved Professionalisation and Depoliticisation of the Senior Civil Service

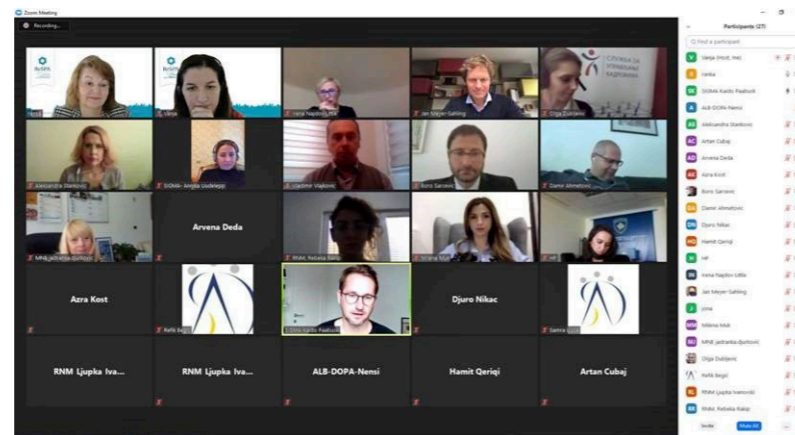
Most of the HRMD practices have been affected by the ongoing pandemic. The study on HRMIS produced at the beginning of 2021 analyses the progress made as of 2017 when the first HRMIS study was produced. Besides the recommendations for improvement, the study also identifies the changes that have occurred in the central HR units in the ReSPA members, their responses to the crisis and the possible digital tools that could alleviate the negative effects of COVID-19. During this reporting period ReSPA continued to support the exchange of experience and examples of good practice among its members, as well as strengthening their capacities in merit-based recruitment, performance appraisal, HRMIS, and agile management and leadership.

### Workshop on merit-based recruitment and competency-based interviews, 02-03 November 2020

In 2020 ReSPA produced the study *'Making Merit Recruitment Work: Lessons from and for the Western Balkans'* which was accompanied with the merit-recruitment self-assessment framework. Each ReSPA member filled out the framework and identified the progress made as well as the areas for improvement. The workshop provided the floor for the presentation of the self-assessment results, sharing good practices related to merit-based recruitment as well competency-based interviews. The workshop gathered the representatives of the HRMD WG, as well as several SIGMA representatives.

The participants from Serbia presented their experience with competency-based examinations and interviews. In particular, the new competency-based examinations in Serbia might provide a relevant model for other ReSPA members. The participants from Montenegro and Kosovo\* presented their innovative approaches to including external experts on selection panels, while Albania added their experience through the discussion. Training of the selection commissions members in raising their level of professional competence was presented by Serbia in detail. Montenegro, Albania and BiH also shared their experience with the training of commission members.

On the second day of the workshop, the WG members from Albania presented their experience in increasing the reach of public advertisements and enhancing the user-friendliness of the recruitment and application process. The participants from Montenegro shared their experience with electronic recruitment methodologies. The participants from North Macedonia presented the new Law on Senior Managers, which is under preparation and expected to pass Parliament in 2021. The WG members from Montenegro presented their new approach to recruiting and appointing temporary staff to civil service positions. The regulation of both – senior management and temporary staff appointments – remains incomplete in many Western Balkan countries. The presentations provided relevant new evidence for future initiatives. Furthermore, the participants from Albania provided a comprehensive presentation on enhancing the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. The discussion concentrated on the benefits of audio-recording personal interviews and conditions for making such an approach work. The participants from Kosovo\* presented an alternative approach to improving transparency which focuses on the role of oversight institutions in the recruitment and selection process.



### Analysis on Human Resources Management Systems in the Western Balkans Region

More than three years after the initial *Baseline Analysis on HRMIS in the Western Balkan region*, the ReSPA HRMD Working Group commissioned an update to this study. The aim of the study was (a) to assess the progress made since 2017 and assess the development of human resources IT management systems, (b) to share information and different solutions implemented by ReSPA members, (c) prepare new recommendations to foster the digital transformation of HR processes and (d) facilitate regional cooperation.

The areas for analysis include scope and comprehensiveness of data collected, data accuracy, reporting, interoperability and data exchange with other relevant systems, ICT infrastructure, use of digital enablers, maintenance, source code ownership, security, as well as the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on human resources management and development in various public administration departments.

The ongoing pandemic has dramatically accelerated digital transformation in all aspects of life and has shown that technology can assist governments in ensuring uninterrupted work, communication, and the provision of public services. HR processes were not an exception and their digitalization has remained a key focus of public administration reforms across the region.

The systems developed differ across the ReSPA members, be that in scope, complexity or software used. North Macedonia and Albania remain the only ReSPA members in the region to keep data on all public employees in their HR system (having over 100,000 records), encompassing the education and health sector. All ReSPA members have improved their HR register since 2017, in particular, they have expanded the data they collect on employees, improved data quality, and started using the data collected to improve day-to-day processes and statistical reporting.

In parallel, work has continued on developing and improving the auxiliary IT systems which support the various HR processes, such as training and development and recruitment.

IT tools to support performance management are also being used in most of the ReSPA members, however, interoperability in HR register, training and development, and e-learning to enable data to be fed into performance management modules is still a work in progress in most of the ReSPA members.

In addition, new systems are being deployed in the region, for example, in Serbia and Montenegro, internal labour market software is being used to improve the effectiveness of recruitment to better address the staffing needs of state bodies. This also facilitates the internal mobility and career development of employees, as well as protecting the employment status of unassigned civil servants.

Digital transformation toward paperless and innovation-based HRMD is clearly the way forward and the resulting changes in the business environment and legal framework, therefore, need to be closely coupled with the improvements in supporting IT systems. The necessary groundwork for creating accurate registers and automating various HR processes in all ReSPA members has been completed, and we should expect further developments to realize the full benefits of paperless HRMD.

The study recommends that in the near future, ReSPA members need to focus on interoperability and to connect the various HR systems into one networked whole. The same applies to digital government-wide enablers such as generic eIDs and shared digital building blocks, such as single-sign-on and GSBs, that should be reused and integrated with the current IT systems. The focus should also be on improving the sophistication of HRMD services provided to staff and citizens, toward fully transactional services, keeping user experience and centrality high on the agenda

Last but not least, the general sense is that most of the HRMD practices have been affected by the ongoing pandemic and that HR processes. The study also attempts to identify the changes that have occurred in the central HR units in the ReSPA members, their responses to the crisis and the possible digital tools that could be added to the HRMD digital toolbox of each of the ReSPA members to alleviate the negative effects of COVID-19 and, in general, contribute to more accessible and transparent HRMD processes.

### Workshop on Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), 10-11 December 2020, Online

This online workshop brought together the representatives of the HRMD and eGovernment working groups. During the workshop, an overview of digital transformation in HRMD across the Western Balkan was presented, regional and EU inspiring practice examples, as well as the preliminary results of the survey conducted in 2020. The workshop also provided a floor for learning, sharing and exchanging experiences on HRMIS implementation, trends and ideas among the HRMD and eGovernment WG representatives. One of the conclusions from the workshop is that digital transformation is not only about technicalities but it is also about mindset, organizational culture, about new skills and last but not least, it is about humans.

### Meeting of the HRMD WG, 16 March 2021, Online

This online meeting gathered the members of the HRMD working group and provided a floor for the presentation of the National Academy for Public Administration of the Republic of Serbia (NAPA) from its establishment (legal framework and organizational structure) to programme preparation and implementation, learning management system, international cooperation and projects, visibility and communication, to innovative training approaches.

During the meeting, participants had the opportunity to get familiar with the establishment of NAPA, with the organizational structure as well as accreditation process.

The representatives of NAPA presented and explained in more details process of the programme preparation and implementation which includes needs assessment, programme implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. In addition, procedure for selection and accreditation of lecturers and programme implementers was presented.

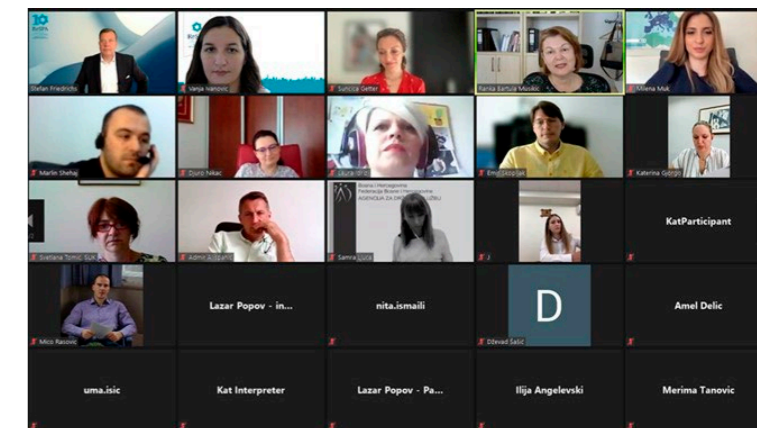


### Training on agile governance and leadership, 7, 12, 15, 16, and 22 April 2021, Online

This online training contributed to introducing the concept of agile leadership and its possible application in public administration. Agile leadership is the craft of creating the right context for self-organization. The participants learned that an agile environment is an environment where teams collaborate, learn from each other, get quick feedback from users and are focused on quality and continuous learning. Developing and maintaining this right environment is often hard work with a focus on culture, ownership, mind-set, feedback and long-term goals. Agile leadership is an entirely new approach to leading people. True Agile Leaders are reengaging their teams, revitalizing their organizations and changing the way work gets done. True Agile Leaders are inclusive, democratic leaders who exhibit a greater openness to ideas and innovations. Agile leaders focus on the needs of others. They acknowledge other people's perspectives, give them the care they need to meet their work and personal goals, involve them in decisions where appropriate and build a sense of community within their teams. This leads to higher engagement, more trust, and stronger relationships with team members and other stakeholders. The training was provided basic information and more in-depth training of teams would be required in the future.

### Training on Performance Appraisal, 10-11 June 2021, Online.

It was based on the Guidelines "Towards effective performance appraisal in the Western Balkans: How to develop performance?". The training enabled peer learning, exchange of information on new developments in the area of performance appraisal and enhancing participants' skills in areas that pose a particular challenge to more effective implementation of performance appraisal: development of objectives, providing ongoing feedback and coaching, agile management and link of performance appraisal to other HRM functions.



### Training on Agile Leadership for ReSPA staff, 07-08 July 2021, Trebinje, BiH

In order to promote agile concept, it was important for the ReSPA staff to learn more about agile concept and its benefits. The training contributed to the increased knowledge of ReSPA staff about Scrum, an agile development methodology used for software development to satisfy the customer's need through an environment of transparency in communication, collective responsibility and continuous progress. The participants also learned about Kanban, a lean method used to manage and improve work across human systems. This approach aims to manage work by balancing demands with available capacity, and by improving the handling of system-level bottlenecks. The training also addressed possible application of Scrum and Kanban in practice and the possible use of the agile framework in ReSPA daily processes and in the public sector.



### Partnering, fundraising and business development

In regard to new partnering opportunities, diversifying the work as well as the new funding opportunities, the ReSPA Policy on Partnering and Development has been developed. The Policy contains: mapping of funding opportunities and donors, products and services that ReSPA may offer to its members, observers, participants and other partners; proposal of new project initiatives and potential project partners as well as other fundraising opportunities.



### 3.3. Improved Quality of Public Services

The focus of ReSPA work in the area of Service Delivery was on increasing the level of ownership and volume of the work regarding **Quality Management (QM)** as well as on widening the scope of activities in the **E-Government area**. The newly established Regional Quality Management Centre enabled more diversity in programmatic activities in QM area. PA Award competition for the first time conducted by ReSPA and SIGMA-OECD has shown that the awarding of good practices in Western Blaknas is a big incentive and motivation for innovative teams and institutions. In addition to E-GOV Seasonal School with its updated, innovative concept and

a new initiative of E GOV pilots will address the issues of digitizing and optimizing public services directly at the institutional level. The expanded theme of “data opening” is more strictly linked to traditional support ReSPA is providing in relation to Open Government Partnership while at the same time it is tackling the issue of data opening policies as it is placed in the strategic documents across the Region.

In both areas, Working groups meetings had been held to inform the members of planned activities for the 2021-2022 period to get feedback from the members on the suggested activities and the concepts of analytical papers.

#### Quality Management

##### Regional Quality Management Centre

- the cornerstone for improved quality management and better, citizen-oriented service delivery

The systematic efforts of ReSPA in the Quality Management (QM) area have resulted in the establishment of the Regional Quality Management Centre (RQMC). Over the last six years, numerous activities such as conferences, practitioners meetings, study visits have been conducted. From 2018 until 2021 ReSPA has been engaged in implementing several CAF pilot projects within BACID II. ReSPA itself was granted with the CAF Effective User Label in 2020 and this was an incentive for the additional role of ReSPA in “leading by example”.

The Centre was formally endorsed in February 2021 by the Memorandum of Establishment and Operation (Memorandum) signed and adopted by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

At the meeting of ReSPA Working group on QM the provisions of Memorandum and the plans with defined programmatic activities for the following year were presented in April 2021.

Based on the mandate and objectives embedded in the Memorandum, ReSPA developed the draft of “Rules and Procedures governing the organization and operation of the RQMC”. This document will be proposed for the adoption at the Annual meeting of RQMC in December, complemented with the PEF Guidelines, which will formalize all steps needed to be undertaken by the RQMC and institutions from the public administrations to undergo the process of external CAF evaluation.

In each group of activities from the yearly Workplan, there was progress in the implementation and activities are being intensively implemented.

**CAF institutionalization - CAF Projects in BiH, North Macedonia**- CAF project is being implemented in the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AGE BiH) according to the Project Assignment document signed in May. In the reporting period compulsory components of CAF project model have been completed together with the beneficiary: Communication Plan, adjusted Questionnaire for self-assessment. Detailed timelines have been agreed with the beneficiary on the meeting in August 23rd. The CAF training was held in September and will be followed by two other training-Consensus Workshop and Action Plan workshop are scheduled for November and January.

The official interest for introducing CAF using the services of RQMC was expressed from Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Secretariat for Legislation, and Ministry for Agriculture – all from North Macedonia. The planning process of CAF project implementation with these institutions is underway.



CAF implementation in the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, Sarajevo, 29 September 2021.

**Regional Periodical Analysis of the application of the QM** - As stipulated by the Memorandum every two year the periodical regional analysis of application of QM tools in the Region and respective needs for further upgrading will be done. The analysis will be done to find out the information about:

- Usage of concrete QM model (CAF) or standard (ISO) in the institutions in each national administration
- Existing needs in the Region for introduction of QM instruments
- New initiatives and options identified for improvements in the QM related to establishment of the units/institutions for developing policies in QM and respective needs or possible support that would underpin the realization of these plans
- Position of QM in the current country PAR strategy documents, including Action Plans of strategies and other policy papers as well as to the needs and support for meeting the planned outcomes, including recommending the potential areas of ReSPA intervention/assistance.

This analysis will be used to update the QM baseline study made in 2017. The results will be presented at the first Annual meeting of the Centre in December.

**Regional CAF network and regional PEF network and promotional activities** - Two regional networks will be hosted within RQMC aiming at supporting the further spreading of CAF in the Region (Regional CAF network) and at ensuring the keeping the level of the quality in performance by doing quality external evaluation where CAF has already been put in practice (PEF Regional Network).

**Regional CAF Network has been established.** This network includes one CAF correspondent from each country and one public official with experience in implementing CAF. The role of the members of the network will be to monitor the situation of CAF implementation in the respective administration, to promote CAF through awareness-raising, attend training organized by the Center and ReSPA, and inform the Regional Centre on the implementation of QM activities out of the Action Plan of PAR strategy in the respective country or any other significant change pertaining to QM. The first meeting of CAF Network will be organized within Annual meeting of RQMC.

Regional PEF network is also being under the process of establishment. Already trained external evaluators (BACID II grant, PEF training completed) will be engaged in PEF Regional network within RQMC as the pool of evaluators who will be engaged to undergo external evaluation of the level of quality the CAF implementation in institutions from the Region and award the CAF Effective User Certificate to the qualified institutions and organizations in the Region.



*"We are making considerable efforts to fully operationalize the RQM Centre so that it gradually influences the level of performance in the institutions from the different WB public administrations. Through better performance and consistent quality control and*

*management, public administrations will inevitably provide better services to their citizens and businesses. "The RQMC will support institutions and organizations to implement CAF and consequently raise the level of services they provide other government bodies, civil servants, and taxpayers. At the same time, we shall consistently raise the capacities in the public sector*

*so that the resources for expertise in CAF and quality management become available in their administrations over time."*

**Ms Olivera Damjanović**  
ReSPA Programme Manager



*"ReSPA is our key partner for the implementation of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in the Western Balkans and to improve the quality of public administration.*

*CAF is the driver for the European integration of the Western Balkans region.*

*KDZ and ReSPA together have implemented CAF programs in 15 ministries, agencies and municipalities through the BACID program. Their improvement results with CAF are impressive. We are looking forward to many more CAF initiatives and effective governances with ReSPA."*

**Mr Thomas Prorok**  
Deputy Managing Director of the KDZ,  
Centre for Public Administration Research  
and Head of the Austrian CAF-Center



*"The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) introduced CAF in 2019/2020 as the very first in Serbia at the time.*

*We started as a pilot sector in the Ministry with the professional support of the Austrian KDZ and ReSPA.*

*As the MPALSG is in charge of strategic planning in the area of PAR, or public administration reform, we saw the opportunity and connected CAF with the new 10-year PAR strategy and more specifically we connected it with service delivery reform. We saw that service delivery reform cannot be implemented only by legalistic measures, which means we cannot just adopt the law and implement the law. We need a different*

*kind of approach. In that way CAF can be a useful tool. For us CAF was and is a learning process, it's a self-growing process that can improve a feedback, customer-oriented culture, communications, better performance, and in that way the MPALSG decided to dive into the new CAF cycle in 2021 and, not only that: in parallel we are planning to roll out CAF in 10 new institutions in the period of the next two years."*

**Ms Ljiljana Uzelac**  
Head of Strategic Planning Department Ministry of  
Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia

## Implementation of BACID II project

The BACID II is the second phase of the 3-year ADA-funded programme implemented by the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns and KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research. The Programme had an impact on the overall socio-economic development of Albania, Kosovo\*, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova through effective delivery of public services supported by regional cooperation. Following the EU perspective of the Region, the Programme supported the implementation of the South-East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy and its Dimension Governance for Growth through capacity building of national and local public administration as well as a partnership with other sectors for implementation of the European principles of good governance including gender and other cross-cutting issues.

All implemented activities with ReSPA during the BACID II project, Pillar 2 have followed the Project agreement, and they were as follows:

- Mentoring to ReSPA staff to enable them to promote the use of CAF and QM tools in the Region through the implementation of five CAF pilot projects,
- Cross-sectoral forums on good governance, (CAF Conference, March 2021)
- ReSPA RQC – ReSPA planning workshop also included discussion on the possible revision and the implementation of ReSPA improvement action plan.
- PEF training – extensive three modules training for thirteen officials from WB region who will as holders of PEF Certificate be engaged as the external evaluators of CAF successful implementation at the various institutions (upon their request)
- Promotional activities – CAF video, CAF Leaflet and translations of CAF 2020 manual

CAF pilot projects were implemented in the following institutions:

- Sector for Development of Good Governance, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia;
- Directorate for Good Governance and Non-Governmental Organization Activities, Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro;
- ADISA, Albania,
- Institute for Metrology, Montenegro
- Institute for Statistics, RS, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Civil Service Agency of FBiH and RS

### Public Administration Award with follow up activities

The purpose of this joint initiative taken by ReSPA and SIGMA was to recognize and award initiatives in the WB region's public administration, which have proven to be unique, effective, innovative, and adaptive in service delivery. The outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic shifted the focus towards innovative, good responses in service delivery in a crisis situation. Digitalization of the services has thus inevitably emerged as the central topic of all projects within competition. Eleven innovative practices from five WB countries were awarded. The awards were given to representatives of respective national bodies for projects that fell into the subcategories of:

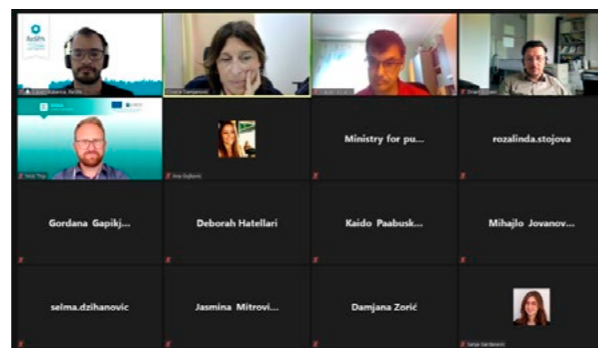
- 1. Digital Government** - projects from: Office for IT and eGovernment Office, Republic of Serbia (two projects); Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of North Macedonia; National Agency of Information Society, Republic of Albania
- 2. e-Economy** - Ministry of Economy, Republic of Montenegro; Office for IT and eGovernment, Republic of Serbia
- 3. e-Health and Social innovation** - Health Insurance Fund of Montenegro, Republic of Montenegro; Office for IT and eGovernment, Republic of Serbia; Municipality of Tuzi, Republic of Montenegro

As the specific recognition and honour immediately after the official ceremony, at the OPSI (Observatory for Public Sector Innovation) OECD online event was organized which hosted ReSPA - SIGMA panel designated to awarded innovative responses of the Western Balkans Governments in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

Wanting to fully justify the recognition of the innovative practices in extraordinary times, ReSPA has implemented Follow up activity that was about building on the awarded accomplishment. Follow up activity concept has envisaged provision of “generic” capacity-building support across the awarded projects and their organizations (in the form of certified training on agile approach and management), adequate for the digitalization feature of all awarded projects as well as provision of specific, tailor-made support to project teams. Two certified training on Agile approach in project management was organized and held for winning teams. Set of webinars designed to fit the needs of winning teams were organized for teams that opted for such training.

## Digitalization of public services

**Meeting with E-GOV Working Group** At the first 2021 e-Government Working Group meeting in May 2021, the members of the group were presented with concept papers related to “e-Gov pilots” and “Methodology for ex ante Impact Assessment for Data Opening”. The opinions, insights and suggestions about these two activities as well as of innovative aspects regarding the e-Gov thematic area are sought from the members and discussed too. SIGMA representative attended the meeting and provided comments on both concept papers.



### E-GOV pilots

ReSPA has launched a new initiative through an Open call for E GOV pilot projects, aiming to support two or three pilots annually. The initial work started with experts engaged in the Follow up of PA Award, who indicated the big existing problem in WB PAs of the design of the digitized public services. The concept of E GOV pilots that will as the central theme cover the “design” of the digitized services was presented at the E GOV Working Group in June and was well perceived by the members of the WG.

The purpose of the e-GOV pilots’ initiative is to introduce the model for improving the practices related to the design of digitalization of public services, which will serve as the applicable standardized model in Western Balkans public administrations (WB AP). Upon the completion of the e-GOV pilots, the experiences and lessons learned in pilot projects will be evaluated and summarized. This will inform the development of a standardized model (Principles of Design) which will be offered to public administrations as the option for improving the design and delivery of digitized public services (e.g. principles for designing digitized public services).

The core theme is enhancing the quality of digitized public services by piloting the design or redesign of e-services, work processes or policies. The services can be related to data opening, using the cloud in public administration, and all general public services (G2G, G2B, G2C) that are digitized or institutions are planning the digitization.

ReSPA support will help ensure the implementation of up to six months three pilot projects by providing technical assistance throughout the project implementation and by providing training or/and peer-to-peer exchange visit in the Region at the inception stage of the pilot project if requested by the applicant.



## Open Government Partnership

### OGP Regional conference including Roundtable on Access to Information

As a continuation of previous activities and in close consultations with the five OGP National points of contact (OGP NCP) from WB countries and OGP Secretariat, online OGP Western Balkan Regional Meeting was held on 15 and 16 October 2020, organized in collaboration with OGP and Politeia/ UNSAM.

The meeting was designed to further strengthen the exchange of experiences on the practical solutions relevant for the OGP action plans implementation. Additionally, the event also outlined future regional perspectives and activities that could be supported both by ReSPA and/or by the OGP Secretariat. Four main areas of support needed were identified: establishing Regional Open Government Repository, developing and sharing common standards in open data, beneficial ownership and open justice.

The initial plan to use ReSPA Moodle platform for the OGP Repository of OGP National plans was abandoned because of different views for the countries on the usefulness of the Repository. The OGP national points are still interested in sharing experiences in the formulation and implementation of OGP National plans, and alternative modalities that would meet all the interests will be explored.

### Methodology for the opening of governmental data

As ReSPA focused on the area of developing and sharing common standards in open data, “Methodology for ex ante Impact Assessment for Data Opening” is being developed. This analytical paper is dedicated to the Methodology for assessing the level and nature of demand for data opening, which can be used by public institutions and governments when making decisions about releasing the data. To a certain extent, the Methodology is the follow up of “Zero Open data Guidelines”. The final concept paper that includes comments from the EGOV WG members and SIGMA was made and the final Methodology should be presented at the Regional OGP Workshop at the beginning of 2022.

## Improvement of expertise

During the Reporting period, ReSPA launched the campaign for updating and refreshing its **internal Database of Experts** aiming to identify experts, trainers and researchers **with a satisfactory experience in one or maximum two of the thematic areas where ReSPA operates. In June 2021 a total of 89** highly qualified, eligible experts were included in the database.

In August 2021, ReSPA organized a consultative workshop with selected group of 12 renowned experts from the Region and beyond. The objective of this workshop was to boost exchange of ideas and vision among selected experts and ReSPA staff on potential ways to diversify the ReSPA portfolio of activities in terms of diversification of ReSPA thematic areas, typology of activities, as well as propose any major breakthrough. A number of valuable, interesting and useful proposals have been provided and ReSPA will assess the possibility to implement some of them in a short-term and mid-term period.

## ReSPA annual monitoring

### Activities related to monitoring

Finalisation and piloting of Monitoring toolkit - ReSPA successfully finalized the Monitoring toolkit which was adopted by the GB in December 2020. The toolkit with relevant questionnaires (general questionnaire, questionnaire for monitoring of implementation of recommendations from ReSPA studies and questionnaire for monitoring of projects implemented with support of the in-country support mechanism) is aimed at monitoring of short-term outcomes/induced outputs. In March 2021 ReSPA Secretariat piloted the questionnaires among the selected group of interviewees (WG members, LOs and other participants of ReSPA events). The results obtained served for improvement of the questionnaire as well as the toolkit. In preparation for the monitoring exercise and preparation of the annual monitoring report ReSPA conducted two training/workshops for its staff.

Training on Monitoring and Evaluation for ReSPA staff, 15-16 February 2021 - This online training provided floor for presentation of the respective questionnaires, discussion and preparation for the monitoring exercise which was launched in May/June 2021.

Workshop on the first annual monitoring report, 6-8 September 2021, Herceg Novi, Montenegro - This workshop was used for identification of the ReSPA key achievements during the monitored period (2019 - 2020), as well as the areas for improvements. The exercise also helped to identify the lessons learned to consolidate and improve such achievements in the future. The objective was achieved through the joint discussion and assessment of the reports presented by the Programme managers and the related synthesis which led to the following results: verification of the analysis of the questionnaires as reflected in the reports; recommendations for the standardization of the reports, including the future ones; identification of the key issues for the synthesis of the main report and the area reports; plan for the dissemination of the monitoring reports and the execution of the next annual monitoring report; next steps toward ReSPA evaluation.



Workshop on the first annual monitoring report, Herceg Novi, Montenegro, 6-8 September 2021

### Annual monitoring of ReSPA activities

Monitoring is essential to any project or program. Monitoring contributes to better transparency and accountability, helps in catching the problems early, ensures resources are used efficiently, helps in decision making, in replicating best projects or activities, and encourages the diversity of thought and opinions.

ReSPA has completed its first Annual Monitoring exercise covering the period 2019-2020, according to the Monitoring Toolkit approved in December 2020 by the GB. It is the first time that ReSPA carries out a systematic monitoring of its activities in application of a methodology entirely developed within the institution.

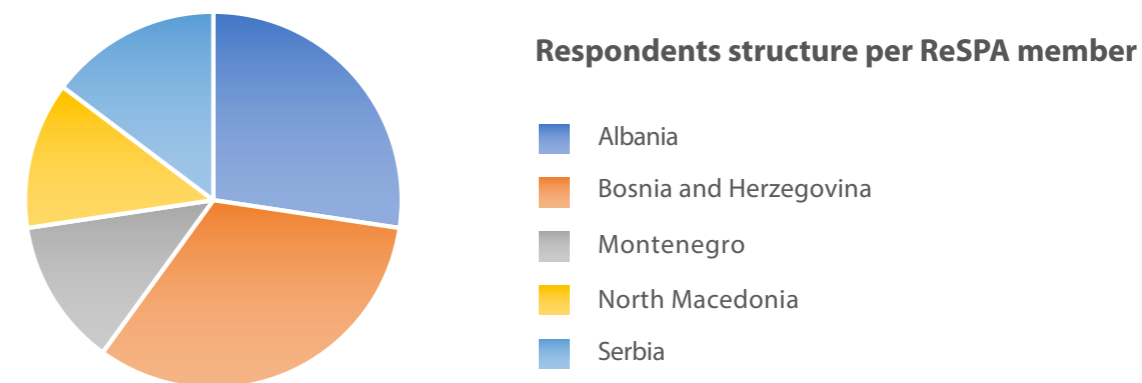
The survey included three different questionnaires split in the 6 main thematic areas envisaged in ReSPA strategy: 1- Policy coordination and development; 2- Monitoring and evaluation; 3- Regulatory reform and RIA implementation; 4- Human resources Management and Development; 5- e-Government; 6- Quality management. The three questionnaires included:

One general and two specific questionnaires were conducted. The general questionnaire (GQ) covered all the training and networking activities carried out in the period surveyed (conferences, workshops, peer-to-peer and working group (WG) meetings, etc.). The first specific questionnaire (SQ1) covered the implementation of country recommendations issued by ReSPA studies, while the second (SQ2) covered in-country support.

The general questionnaire (GQ) was sent to all participants, while the two specific questionnaires were sent to the relevant persons in charge within each ReSPA member country. The GQ included two questions on the ReSPA performance indicators ('individual and institutional improvements'), with each question including two sub-questions. The responses comprised scores from 1 to 5 and a number of qualitative options which the respondents could select and further elaborate on with their own considerations. A third question was included on the consequences of ReSPA activities, with a yes/no option and relevant qualitative integration. SQ1 asked each member to rank the recommendations formulated in ReSPA policy studies according to their level of adoption, preparation and implementation, together with certain qualitative considerations. SQ2 focused on in-country support and included the same questions as the GQ, with the exclusion of the question about individual improvements.

The e-survey was live between 19 May and 4 June 2021. The valid responses to the general questionnaire have been a total of 95, which represent about 20% of the people who received the questionnaire<sup>6</sup> and corresponds to almost the totality of the Working Group members (i.e. those who are involved in the majority of ReSPA activities in each area). Not all the countries have responded at the same rate. The respondents structure per ReSPA administration and per thematic areas are presented below.

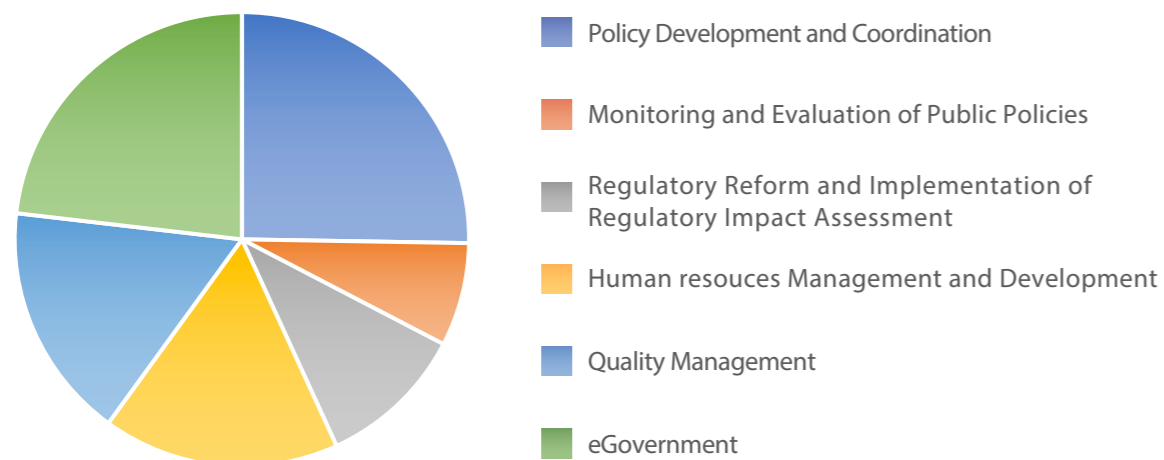
Table 1 Respondents structure per ReSPA member



<sup>6</sup> According to Smart Survey UK typical there can be a stark difference between the survey response for an internal and an external survey. Average employee survey response rates typically run at around 30-40% in contrast to the average response rate for external surveys at 10-15%.

Table 2 Respondents structure per thematic area

**Respondents structure per thematic area**



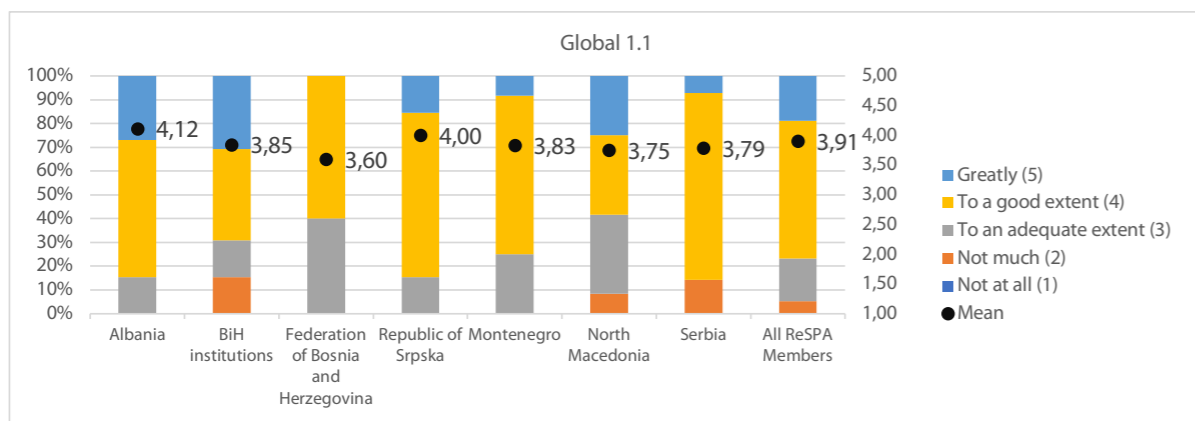
Responses to the two other questionnaires (level of implementation of policy recommendations from ReSPA Studies and in-country support) vary from 90% to 100%.

The monitoring report highlights the key findings and lessons learned and outlines the main recommendations for the future.

**1. Monitoring of contribution of ReSPA activities through general questionnaire**

**1.1. Contribution to individual benefits**

➤ *acquired knowledge and enhanced skills for using improved approaches and methods*



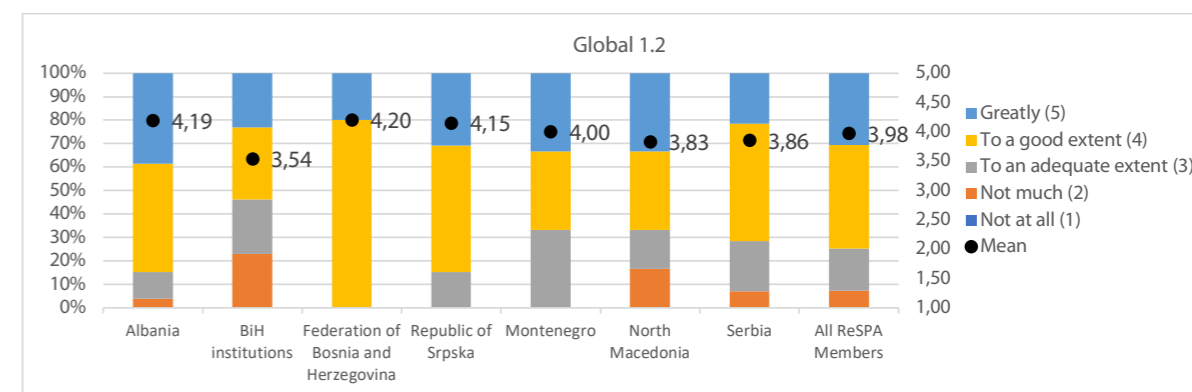
The question about 'individual benefits from ReSPA activities' elicited the strongest and most positive response of all items included in the general questionnaire. The most highly appreciated benefit of ReSPA activities was that of personal improvement both in terms of specific know-how regarding various areas of PAR and in greater ability to work in teams, resulting in stronger interests in networking with colleagues from other country-level, regional and EU institutions.

This result is a positive foundation to build on. Perceived individual benefits are closely linked to ReSPA's short-term outcomes centred on strengthening regional PA capacities for improving the reform process, since building such individual capacities is the requisite first step for building institutional capacities.

The responses to the general questionnaire show that professional capacities and open-mindedness acquired at individual level have enabled the participants to play a critical role within their institutions as promoters of innovation, since they are now able to identify weaknesses that were not evident to them before and to push for changes to address these weaknesses.

The responses show that the participants particularly appreciated the seasonal schools. These schools provide longer periods of at least five days of training and skills development in specific techniques and procedures, enabling participants to acquire the tools with which to propose and implement innovations in their own work and create a conducive environment for peer-to-peer exchanges among colleagues.

➤ *to facilitated communication and exchange of know-how among colleagues and/or leadership*



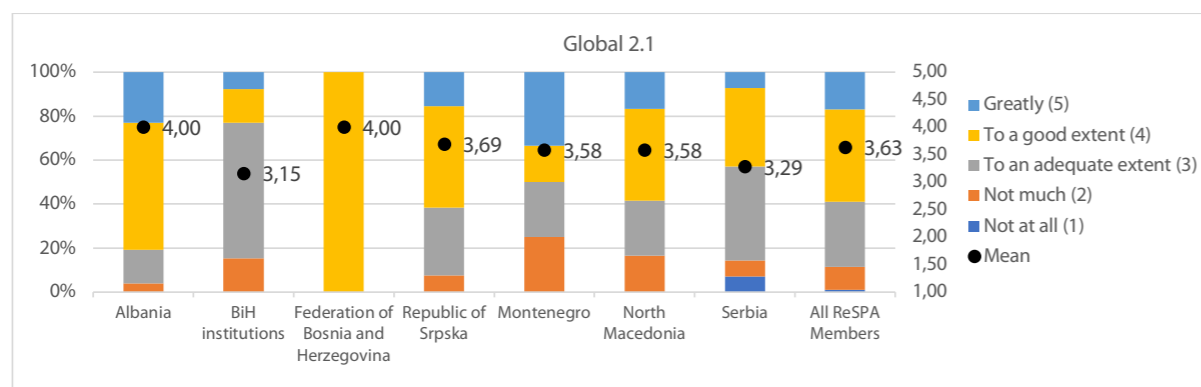
The results show that the participants feel able to respond better to the requests of their institutions, with respondents noting that they are now more involved in the preparation of documents and plans related to their area. In some cases, the respondents are using the know-how they have acquired to train other country staff and colleagues (e.g. Area 3 – on RIA).

Some of the respondents have experienced improvements in their careers as a consequence of the know-how they have acquired, e.g. on Areas 3 (regulatory impact assessment – RIA) and 4 human resources management and development – HRDM). Although the number of these respondents is relatively small, this is a very important finding of the survey.

Almost all of the respondents feel that they have become more able and willing to work with others as a result of their participation in ReSPA activities. In addition, almost all the respondents declared that they had become more interested in dialogue with other institutions and in gaining knowledge of good practices in other countries of the region and the EU.

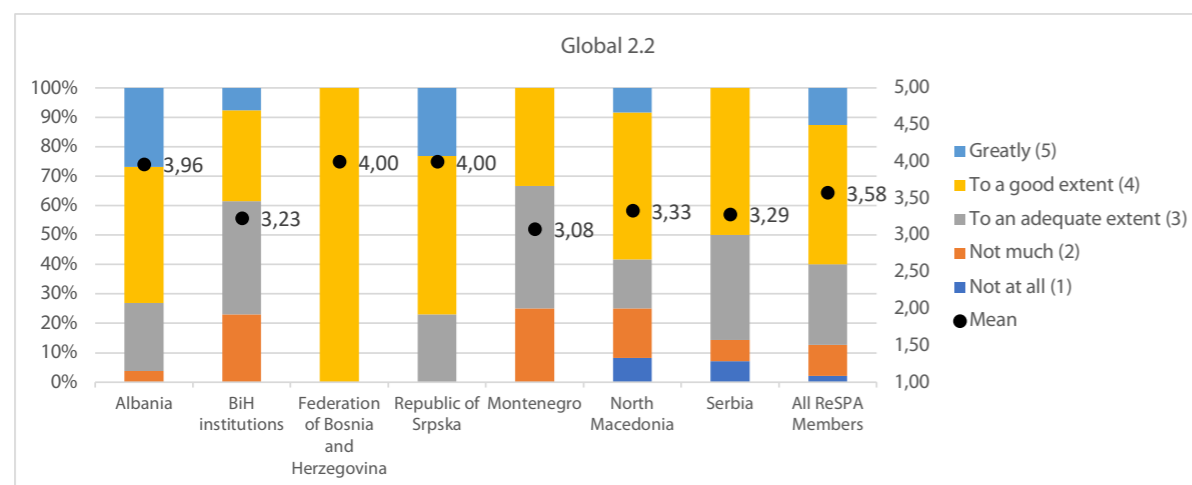
## 1.2. Contribution to institutional benefits

➤ *institutional modalities and practices of sharing knowledge/ lessons learned within the home institution and among partner institutions*



The responses to the question about the institutional benefits of ReSPA activities are less clear than to previous questions, mainly because institutional improvements are more difficult to observe and measure. Although the average scores are medium-to-high, only a few of the anecdotes and examples supporting the responses to the questionnaire include any mention of specific and concrete improvements or changes. Often these responses refer to innovative methods of work introduced by individual members of an institution and changes in the internal climate and dynamics of the institution. These factors relate more to the individual improvements considered above than to direct institutional benefits from ReSPA activities.

➤ *progress towards the introduction/improvement of procedures/methods/tools within the institution*



Most of the institutional benefits highlighted by the respondents regarding methods of work seem to relate to improvements in individual know-how. The improvements noted included better coordination both within and among institutions at central government level, stronger networking with country-level, regional and EU institutions, and a stronger focus on the content of policy.

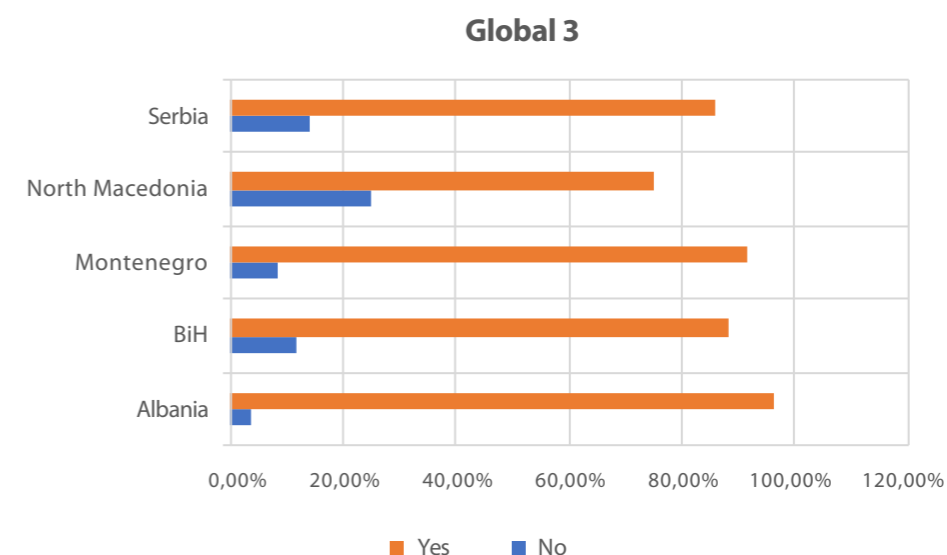
The responses to question 2.2 on new policy procedures, measures and tools were more focused than the responses to more general questions. These responses include numerous references to

specific tools and methods acquired or consolidated through participation in ReSPA activities. This is especially the case in areas where specific approaches and tools are expected to be adopted, including in the areas of quality management (QM), the use of human resources management information systems (HRMIS), and RIA.

## 1.3. Contribution to PAR implementation

➤ *contribution to forwarding the country-level PAR implementation*

The responses to the third question of the general questionnaire shows that almost 90% of respondents are of the opinion that ReSPA actions contributed to forwarding the country-level PAR implementation.



## 2. Monitoring the level of implementation of policy recommendations from ReSPA studies

Implementation of policy recommendations from ReSPA studies was monitored through Specific questionnaire 1.

ReSPA policy studies are planned and executed according to regional priorities and country demands. The studies are based on a comparative approach and provide specific recommendations to be adopted and implemented by the participating countries. Specific questionnaire 1 provided quantitative data and a limited number of qualitative considerations regarding the adoption and implementation of the recommendations of these studies.

The ReSPA studies conducted and monitored for this report related to three areas: Regulatory Reform & Regulatory Impact Assessment; Service Delivery; and Human Resource Management (HRM). (In the case of HRM, two studies were conducted: on merit recruitment and individual performance appraisal.) The response rate to the questions on Service Delivery were notably low, with only two out of five countries responding, which is an issue that needs to be investigated. However, the response rates to the questions on Regulatory Reform & RIA and for both of the HRM studies were satisfactory. According to the responses to these questions, the results of the studies and their recommendations were as follows:

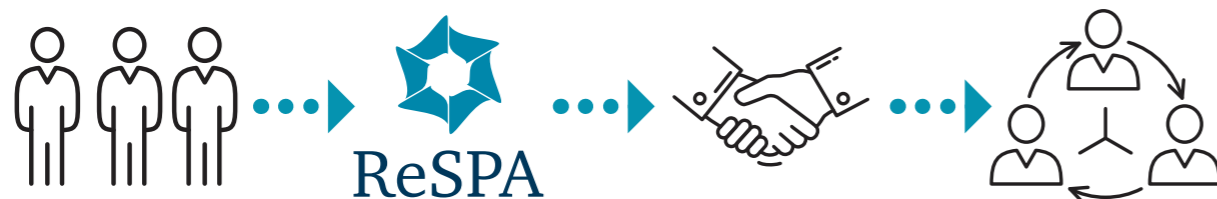
- 41.79% of the study recommendations for Merit-Based Recruitment were adopted and implemented, while 35.82% were adopted but still in preparation.
- 30.23% of the study recommendations for Individual Performance Appraisal were adopted and implemented, while 39.53% were only adopted.
- 51.1% of the recommendations for Regulatory Reform and RIA, were adopted and implemented, while 22.2% were only adopted.

Apart from the Service Delivery study, which represents a specific case to be better understood, about 70% of the ReSPA study recommendations<sup>7</sup> have been adopted and some 30–50% have been both adopted and implemented. This is certainly a satisfactory result. Given that a rather long time-period has elapsed since the conduct of some of these studies, however, further assessments are needed of the recommendations that are lagging behind, since the information available is insufficient to afford an understanding of all the implications of the monitoring results regarding this very important tool for direct support to institutions.

### 3. Monitoring of ReSPA in-country support activities

Implementation of in country support activities was monitored through Specific questionnaire 2.

In-country support is a form of support that ReSPA offers to its members to address specific issues related to PAR implementation. This support includes providing an expert to work with the relevant country-level institution(s) for a given period on a project approved by ReSPA to help the institution(s) in various tasks, such as the finalisation of a strategy, the acquisition of a methodology, or the establishment of a new intervention model, etc. To date, such in-country support has been activated for the following seven projects: one project in Serbia on a Learning Management System; two projects in Albania on Cyber Security; two projects in Montenegro on Digital Transformation; one in BiH Federation on Common Assessment Framework (CAF); and one project in BiH Republika Srpska on CAF. According to the scores provided by the recipient institutions, these seven projects were greatly appreciated: on fourteen scores available to assess the contribution of these projects to the recipient institutions, six were 5/5 and eight were 4/5. The respondents' comments were also very positive, showing that the beneficiaries highly appreciated the assistance provided by ReSPA in response to their specific problems. Indeed, the results show that in-country support is a highly valued modality for providing direct support to institutions. Despite the success of the projects, it should be noted that the number of days available for this mechanism was partly underutilised.



### 4. The lessons learned and key recommendations

The following lessons have been learnt through this monitoring exercise:

- ReSPA is a **hub for networking and exchanging experiences** of public administration in the Western Balkans (WB) and throughout the EU. The senior staff of the public administrations of ReSPA members participating in its initiatives have access to the most up-to-date information, curricula, best practices, technologies and tools. By exchanging experience and knowledge with their peers at regional and EU level, these members also have the opportunity to broaden their views.
- There is a **difference between initiatives** addressed to senior staff for enhancing their role of in institutions and initiatives addressed directly to institutions for enhancing their capacity for PAR implementation. This difference must be taken into account when planning and executing future activities.
- An **annual survey** based on questionnaires seems the most suitable tool with which to implement Annual Monitoring, though some important challenges still need to be addressed.

The Report offers the following key recommendations:

- To ensure **dissemination at all levels and follow-up** of the results of the 2021 Annual Monitoring exercise. These results should be addressed in the 2022 ReSPA Programme of Work.
- To strengthen individual capacities and motivation further through **more training and networking on key tools for PAR implementation** (e.g. on the Policy Cycle, EU integration, IPA III, RIA, and CAF, etc.).
- To improve existing tools and promote new tools to **strengthen the direct influence of ReSPA activities to enhance institutional capacity**.
- **To improve the monitoring survey**, including the quality of questionnaires, but also to consider possible alternatives if it proves difficult to target the interviewees and ensure increased and balanced response rates.
- **To plan monitoring for next year.**



<sup>7</sup> 70% refers to responses received from two countries only (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina)

# 4. ReSPA Governance

## Governing Board

During the reporting period, the **Governing Board at the Ministerial level** held a regular 11<sup>th</sup> session on 6 November 2020, online. The main emphasis of the Meeting reflects the recognition of the job done by ReSPA in these challenging times, but also during its ten years of existence. The ministers from ReSPA's Members unanimously adopted the Annual Report as well as the Budget 2021-2022 and Envelope 2021 and endorsed the Declaration on Digital Transformation. The ministers also provided preliminary support to the institutionalization of a Regional Quality Management (QM) Center within ReSPA, including presented next steps in that regard. The closed session devoted to governance issues was followed by the open session, which consisted of two parts: Award of Effective CAF User label to ReSPA and Ceremony of Public Administration Awards. The Governing Board members at the Ministerial level organized the Extraordinary 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 15 July 2021, devoted to the renewal of the contract of employment of the current ReSPA Director, since ReSPA Members had expressed different positions related to this issue and had not reached a consensus on the employment contract renewal in email communication and informal meetings. The Governing Board concluded to grant a temporary Contract of Employment for three months to the current ReSPA Director and initiate the recruitment and selection process for the position of ReSPA Director with the support of EPSO.

**The Governing Board at the Senior Official level** held four regular sessions (46<sup>th</sup> on 8 December 2020, 47<sup>th</sup> on 19-20 April 2021, 48<sup>th</sup> on 1-2 July and 50<sup>th</sup> on 1 October 2021). The Governing Board also held an Extraordinary 49<sup>th</sup> Meeting on 22 July 2021 dedicated to the recruitment and selection process of the ReSPA Director. At its regular sessions, during the reporting period, the Governing Board adopted four quarterly Reports on ReSPA Operations and Implementation of the PoW, approved the ReSPA's PoW 2021-2022, ReSPA Monitoring Toolkit, acknowledged Annual Financial Report 2020 – IFRS Financial Statement and ReSPA Interim IFRS Financial Statements and Interim Financial report 01.01.-30.06.2021, nominated the KPMG for the Independent Auditor to perform an independent audit of ReSPA Annual Report 2020 as well as adopted the following decisions: Resolution No GB-SL R/01-2021 on Addendum to the Core Budget 2021 and Decision No GB-SL D/01-2021 on the payment of EUR 107,000 into Working Capital Fund for 2021. During the meetings, the ReSPA Secretariat regularly informed the Governing Board on the preparation of the new EC Grant, the steps undertaken towards RQM centre monitoring process, In-country support status, Status of Kosovo\* accession to ReSPA, the status of payment of national contributions, staff issues and other topics relevant for the functioning of the organization.

During the reporting period, the Governing Board at the Ministerial level adopted the following decisions in written procedure: Decision N°GB-ML D/01-2021 Relative to the Performance of the Director of ReSPA for 2020 and endorsed the proposed strategic objectives for the next evaluating period (2021), Decision N°GB-ML D/02-2021 on the Temporary Contract of Employment for current ReSPA Director and the launching of the vacancy announcement for the recruitment of the ReSPA Director and the Decision N°GB-ML D/03-2021, Amending Decision N°GB-ML D/02-2021, dated 16.07.2021, "On the Temporary Contract of Employment for current ReSPA Director and the launching of the vacancy announcement for the recruitment of the ReSPA Director, while the Governing Board at the Senior Official level in the written procedure adopted Decision N°GB-SL D/02-2021 on Discharging Director from her Administrative and Management responsibility in the framework of the Independent Auditor's Report for the year 2020.

## Other topics

*Conduction of the Work Load Analysis (WLA) and review the staff's Job Descriptions (JDs) in the Regional School of Public Administration*

During 2018-2020 ReSPA underwent the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process as well as the External Feedback Procedure (PEF). As a result of these complementary processes, in June 2020 ReSPA was awarded the "Effective CAF User Label". In order to receive the Label, ReSPA had to prepare an action plan of any shortage identified by the external evaluators during the PEF procedure, with concrete deadlines and responsibilities for tackling them. In this regard, one of the few remaining issues identified in the abovementioned action plan, still to be addressed, is the one related to the improvement of ReSPA Organizational Chart and conduction of the Work Load Analysis.

To that aim, in August 2021, ReSPA organized the procurement process and contracted an international expert to:

- assist in the revision of the Job Descriptions with concrete recommendations for improvements;
- prepare the Work Load Analysis for ReSPA (current status quo and future perspectives)
- as well as prepare a revised/upgraded organizational chart of ReSPA in line with needs and priorities as well as available funds, taking into account future perspectives and the WLA.

This assignment is expected to be finalized within end of October 2021.

## Budget Committee

ReSPA Budget Committee met three times during reporting period. The first Meeting took place in March 2020, where the Secretariat presented a report on implementing the ReSPA annual work program, budget, and staff resources. This Meeting is of importance because of the yearly financial statements and budget implementation report presentation. Budget Committee reviewed annual financial reports and recommended to the Governing Board to acknowledge the same. At the same time, Budget Committee Members recommended payment into Working Capital Fund for 2021 and permitted carryover funds from the previous year for the authorized ReSPA activities listed in the ReSPA Core budget Addendum 2021. Based on previous experience, the Secretariat recommended that the Governing Board nominate KPMG for ReSPA Auditor for 2021.

The second BC meeting was organized as a joint session with Governing Board Members to present and adopt the Auditors report for 2020. At the same time, the Budget Committee recommended that ReSPA Governing Board adopt the Independent Auditor's Report for ReSPA Financial Statements for the period 01.01-31.12.2020 and discharge the Director from her management and administrative responsibility for 2020. Governing Board adopted all recommendations provided by the Budget Committee.



The most important agenda items on the Budget Committee session held in September were presenting the inter financial reports and ReSPA Core budget for 2022. Budget Committee Members had no comments regarding both items.



# 5. Cooperation and Partnership Building

**Network of Schools of Government** – ReSPA Director attended the virtual Meeting devoted to the future of the public service on 25 November 2020. Before the coronavirus crisis, the OECD had begun a series of discussions to build a vision of the future of work in the public service, which will be increasingly forward-looking in terms of skills development, flexible and responsive to unforeseen circumstances, and fulfilling to a diverse range of public employees. The Meeting was mainly focused on the future of the public service in light of the current coronavirus crisis opportunities (lessons learned, implications, new skills needed, research opportunities, training methods, etc.). The event was organized by OECD.

**DISPA meeting** – ReSPA Director took part in the Meeting of DISPA Network on 3 December 2020. The Meeting was devoted to the sustainability in public administration, in particular to sustainability as a new focus for education and training (most important sustainability areas to be taken up in the near future, which methodologies of raining are then most suitable and effective, how do we reach/address target groups the best).

**The Digital Leap. How COVID19 Transformed the Digital Future for the Western Balkans** – ReSPA Director attended the online presentation of the study “The Digital Leap. How COVID19 Transformed the Digital Future for the Western Balkans” on 17 December 2020. During the event, the findings of the study were presented, as well as their meaning for the future of the digital transformation in the Western Balkans. The event was hosted by the Center for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz.

**Launch of the National Human Development Report 2020** - ReSPA Director attended the presentation of the key findings and recommendations of the National Human Development Report 2020, hosted by UNDP Montenegro.

**Meeting with Mr Đorđe Radulović, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Montenegro** – ReSPA Director met Minister Radulovic on 24 December 2020. ReSPA Director congratulated Minister Radulović on being appointed to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs and presented key information about the ReSPA since its establishment, its main achievements in the last year, as well as the activities planned for the upcoming period. Minister Radulović emphasized that Montenegro will continue to build a strong partnership with ReSPA and highlighted that Montenegro would support all activities with the aim to reform the public administrations, and especially those in the areas of digitalization, development of e-administration and improvement of Information and Communication Technology. He added that the partnership with ReSPA encourages the promotion of improvements made to the standard of public administration, which is an important area on the path to European accession. He also stressed that Montenegro firmly believes in the importance and value of regional cooperation. It is completely devoted to establishing good relationships with the neighbouring countries and regional cooperation as one of the pillars of foreign affairs.



**Seminar Modern and Efficient Parliament** – ReSPA Director attended the online event in the organization of the European Parliament, devoted to the effective communication and the use of new IT tools. The event's main topics were: Parliamentary communication during the pandemic; Disinformation and strategic communication; Parliaments in the post-covid times-lessons learnt: what is next?; and Building effective networks. ReSPA Director addressed the audience within the panel devoted to building effective networks and gave a speech on boosting regional cooperation.

**Committee of Experts on Public Administration, 20<sup>th</sup> session, 12-21 April 2021, virtual format** – ReSPA Director took part in the 20th session of CEPA (UN DESA), in particular in Observers' session, giving the speech related to the following policy measure: Recognize the quality of institutions, institutional reform and governance as a highly strategic policy area in itself.

**ASPA (American Society for Public Administration) 2021 Annual Conference, 15 April 2021, virtual format** – ReSPA Director took part in the ASPA 2021 Annual Conference, in the following panels: New Ideas in Leadership and Management and Achieving Good Governance and Meaningful Public Service through Cross-Sector Collaboration.

**DIGITALL Public Conference (European Commission, Directorate-General for informatics), 20 April 2021, online** - ReSPA Director took part in the DigitALL Public Conference in the capacity of a speaker at the Round table on “How are countries outside the EU progressing towards digital government”.

**Meeting with John Tully (Delivery Associates), 21 April 2021, online** - ReSPA Director met Mr John Tully and discussed the opportunity to collaborate on training for the Western Balkans government civil servants.

**Consultations for the preparation of the Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026, the Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 and the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Electronic Document, 26 April 2021, Podgorica (Montenegro)** - ReSPA Director participated in the event organized by the Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media of the Government of Montenegro dedicated to the Consultations for the preparation of the Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026, the Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 and the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Electronic Document

**Meeting of the Thematic Group “Civil Service & Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy”, 20 May 2021, virtual format** - ReSPA Director and Programme Manager (Legal) attended the Meeting of the Thematic Group “Civil Service & Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy”, in the organization of the Department of Public Administration (DOPA), Republic of Albania

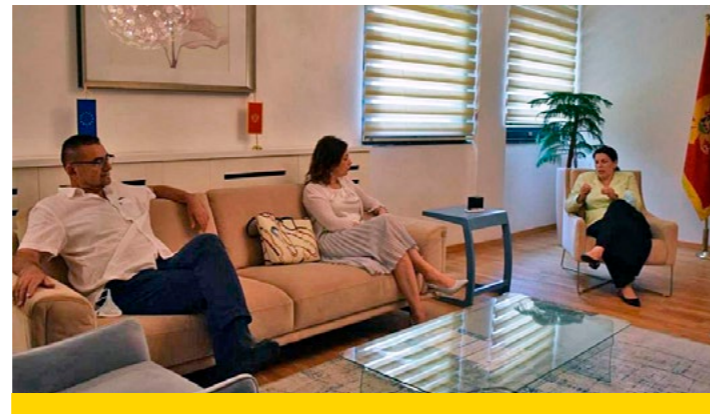
**DISPA Meeting, 26 May 2021, online** - ReSPA Director took part in the Meeting of the DISPA (Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration) Network devoted to the Leadership Exchange Programme.

**Round table discussion: “Public Administration Reform: Where does Kosovo\* stand compared to the countries of the region for 2019 and 2020?”, 9 June 2021, Prishtina, Kosovo\*** - ReSPA Director and Programme Manager (Legal) attended the round table discussion: “Public Administration Reform: Where does Kosovo\* stand compared to the countries of the region for 2019 and 2020?”, organized by Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS). The opportunity was used to meet the Deputy Minister of Interior of Kosovo\*, who is in charge of PAR, Mr Bardhyl Dobra.

**13<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), 16 June 2021, Antalya, Turkey** - ReSPA Director took part in the 13th Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The agenda was comprised of the following topics: Introductory remarks by the Representative of the Chairmanship-in-Office of the South-East Europe Cooperation Process and the RCC; RCC Secretary General's Annual Report 2020-2021; SEE 2030 Strategy - presentation and endorsement; Endorsement of the nomination proposal for the RCC Secretary General 2022-2024 and Interventions by the guest organizations.



**Meeting with Chief Negotiator for the EU Accession of Montenegro, 25 June 2021, Podgorica, Montenegro** - ReSPA Director, accompanied by Programme Manager - Coordinator met Ms Zorka Kordić, Chief Negotiator for the EU Accession of Montenegro at Government of Montenegro, to discuss the role of ReSPA for Montenegro's EU accession process. The Director emphasized that Improved collaboration between ReSPA and European Integration Office and the Government of Montenegro will lead to improved public administrations, and in that regard, expressed the readiness of the ReSPA to support activities of the European Integration Office aimed at reforming public administration, especially those within policy coordination and the coordination of European affairs.



**Working breakfast with diplomatic core, 28 June 2021, Danilovgrad, Montenegro** - ReSPA Director hosted H.E. Mr Ridi Kurtezi, Ambassador of the Republic of Albania, H.E. Mr Branimir Jukić, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, H.E. Mr Veljko Milonjić, Director General for Multilateral Relations and International legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Montenegro, Mr Oliver Stamenković, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Minister-Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Marko Mrdak, Deputy Chief Negotiator of Montenegro and other diplomatic representatives on traditional working breakfast. ReSPA Director presented the state of play of Public Administration Reform in the Western Balkans as well as ReSPA's main achievements over the past ten years. Traditional working breakfast confirmed good collaboration between ReSPA and Ambassadors of its Members, which is a baseline for further initiatives within the Public Administration Reform process in the region.



# 6. The Way Forward

Public Administration Reform leads to more effective governance by simplifying administrative processes, modernizing service delivery and economies, attracting investors and creating jobs. Such reforms are a way of reforming the entire system of public administration. It is a story of in-depth change within society and constant development and a story of devotion, hard work and political commitment.

This path is not easy at all and cannot be completed overnight. The European Commission and the Western Balkans governments have been with us at every point in this road. We all know that regional collaboration is the key to overcoming national challenges in different public administrations in the region.

**I am proud that we have made visible strides in implementing national reforms and, jointly with the Western Balkans governments, achieved results steadily. The digitalization of business processes, the increased number of electronic services, the optimization of public administration, the improvement of quality management in civil service systems, merit-based recruitment and professional development of civil servants are just some areas where improvements have been made. I believe we have contributed significantly to making public administration better for serving our citizens.**

ReSPA still has a lot of work to do, and there are many challenges ahead for the Western Balkans governments and us. We remain committed to supporting the reform process in the various public administrations in the region to help achieve EU accession. ReSPA aims to continue strengthening its internal capacities. We continuously invest in our staff and business intelligence. With the European Commission's support, we will continue to provide new, innovative initiatives and deliver tailor-made solutions to develop more efficient governance and improved public services for citizens and businesses.



**I take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues, ReSPA Members and partners for their trust, institutional cooperation, and the constructive exchange of experiences during our first ten years of existence which I expect to continue in the years to come.**

## List of Acronyms used in the Report

<b>BC</b>	– Budget Committee
<b>CAF</b>	– Common Assessment Framework
<b>CSO</b>	– Civil Society Organization
<b>DG</b>	– Directorate General
<b>EC</b>	– European Commission
<b>EIPA</b>	– European Institute for Public Administration
<b>EU</b>	– European Union
<b>EUI</b>	– European Union Integration
<b>GB</b>	– Governing Board
<b>GIZ</b>	– Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>IPA</b>	– Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
<b>IT</b>	– Information Technology
<b>KDZ</b>	– Zentrum für Verwaltungsforschung
<b>NEAR</b>	– Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
<b>NIPAC</b>	– National IPA Coordinator
<b>NISPAcee</b>	– Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe
<b>OECD</b>	– Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OGP</b>	– Open Government Partnership
<b>PA</b>	– Programme Assistant
<b>OGD</b>	– Open Government Data
<b>PAR</b>	– Public Administration Reform
<b>PM</b>	– Programme Manager
<b>PoW</b>	– Programme of Work
<b>PoA</b>	– Plan of Activities
<b>QPAS</b>	– Quality of Public Administration and Services
<b>QM</b>	– Quality Management
<b>RACVIAC</b>	– Centre for Security Cooperation
<b>RAI</b>	– Regional Anti-corruption initiative
<b>RCC</b>	– Regional Cooperation Council
<b>ReSPA</b>	– Regional School of Public Administration
<b>RQMC</b>	– Regional Quality Management Centre
<b>SEE</b>	– South East Europe
<b>SIGMA</b>	– Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
<b>SL</b>	– Senior Official level
<b>ICT</b>	– Information and Communication Technology
<b>HRMD</b>	– Human Resources Management and Development
<b>WG</b>	– Working Group

## ReSPA Secretariat 2021

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## ReSPA Project Staff

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**Ms Jovana Popović**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Vision:**

We are an intergovernmental innovative regional hub for policy research, knowledge sharing, regional cooperation and networking in the field of public administration.

**Mission:**

We improve regional cooperation, promote shared learning and support the development of public administrations within the Western Balkans, and support the integration of the countries in the region into the EU.

**Motto:**

Building Together Governance  
for the Future!



# Annual Report 2021



# ReSPA

Regional School  
of Public Administration

BUILDING TOGETHER  
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE

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