



ReSPA

Regional School  
of Public Administration

BUILDING TOGETHER  
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE

# ANNUAL REPORT

17 October 2022 – 17 October 2023




Co-funded by the  
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# Empowered public servants build strong public institutions.

## The ReSPA team is committed to this growth.

ReSPA is a distinctive, regionally-driven platform dedicated to supporting the reform of public administration (PAR) by fostering a high-level policy dialogue, sharing knowledge, facilitating learning, networking, public sector mobility and capacity building, conducting topical research, and analysing policies. As a collaborative endeavour of the European Commission and the governments of the Western Balkans, it operates under the governance of five Members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, while Kosovo\* is a beneficiary.

Focusing on civil servants empowerment, ReSPA facilitates the development of modern, transparent and effective public institutions that can effectively serve their citizens and foster the European integration of the Western Balkans.



The ReSPA team works closely with government representatives, European Union officials, and renowned experts from the region and beyond. To date, ReSPA has successfully organised more than 650 activities, benefiting over 10,000 civil servants in the Western Balkans. These activities equip participants with the skills, knowledge, networks and expertise to advance their respective institutions and administrations. ReSPA has undertaken more than 40 research studies, putting forward more than 250 pertinent policy recommendations, all contributing to the advancement of PAR in the Western Balkans.

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\* 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.

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## Chair of the ReSPA Governing Board's Welcome



**Minister Davor Bunoza,**  
Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Aware that the quality of public administration is an important element of the well-being of the citizens themselves, we in Bosnia and Herzegovina are continuously working on building stronger administrative capacities for the development of modern and professional public administration. This is our primary goal, but a common goal as well together with the ReSPA. I have to point out that we regularly invest significant efforts to align the public administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the European Union standards to make it eventually more efficient, transparent and available to the citizens.

I am pleased to note that improvements are visible in the fundamental areas such as human resource management and civil service development, development of strategic planning system, coordination and policy-making, development of information technologies, e-government and e-services, and strengthening of the public administration transparency. However, we are aware of the fact that there are many challenges before us requiring serious political and professional engagement at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Efficient, up-to-date and reliable administration is the precondition for good country governance and the main driver of its growth and development.

Significant progress was achieved over the previous years in the field of providing services to the citizens, as well as visible improvements in fundamental areas such as human resource management and civil service development. At the level of individual institutions and for the sake of better coordination, a network of training managers was established at the level of institutions of BiH and the Instruction on the manner and procedure of submitting electronic applications by the candidates in the recruitment procedure of the institutions of BiH was adopted, reducing the costs of copying and certifying documentation, as well as the postal service costs, and saving time for the preparation of documentation. The eConsultation web platform is also in function, where every individual can provide comments and suggestions related to legislative proposals. When it comes to the recruitment procedure, there has been significant progress in the implementation of the procedure, although there were no amendments to the legal framework.

The users are the core of our interest, but in addition to adequate human resources, it is clear that reform processes also require significant financial resources. Aware that no country in the region has unlimited funds at its disposal, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains focused on quality financial planning and good management of public finances.

Finally, I would like to point out that the relevant analyses were prepared in cooperation with the ReSPA, as well as the Roadmap for creating the necessary preconditions under the PAR Action Plan for introducing electronic services, which ultimately leads to the consistent application of the principle of merit in all areas of human resource management.

## Director's Welcome



Maja HANDJISKA-TRENDAFILOVA

*Dear ReSPA partners and friends,*

I am delighted to share the ReSPA Annual Report, which presents our accomplishments in supporting our Members to enhance the quality of governance and advance the PAR Agenda over the past year.

We began the year with boosted confidence as the European Commission demonstrated its trust in our institutional vision and strategy by signing the 5<sup>th</sup> EC Grant Contract. With robust programmatic support from the European Commission, **we tailored our program activities to align with our Members' priorities and their "citizens first" approach**. Given the public's expectations for efficient public services and policies, we placed a strong emphasis on skill development. This focus wasn't solely in the context of the designation of 2023 as the Year of Skills, but because of ReSPA's deep-rooted belief that human capital is the crucial enabler in transforming public institutions into organisations that serve our citizens and contributing to the European future of the region. This implies that supporting lifelong learning, unlearning, and relearning in the public sector is essential for driving reforms.

To advance knowledge sharing, encourage innovation, and create a supportive environment for the growth of individuals and institutions in public administration, we collaboratively engaged with our trusted partners such as DG NEAR, SIGMA/OECD, KDZ, WeBER, etc. Furthermore, we actively broadened our alliances with esteemed European Union educational institutions, institutes and academies like the European University Institute, College of Europe, EIPA, INSP, EKKDA, and SNA, thus fostering connections with the key regional and international partners. The overarching aim of these endeavours was **to empower public administration teams in the Western Balkans to engage in learning and knowledge exchange with their EU and regional counterparts**. This allowed them to participate in various regional initiatives and, notably, for the first time, actively contribute with a stronger regional voice to the activities of EU bodies such as the Data Protection Board, Network of Directors of Schools (DISPA) and the EIPA CAF Resource Centre. Continuously boosting partnerships, ReSPA contributed to the key regional and global fora and processes, emphasizing the centrality of human capital in the public sector.

We have delivered **approximately 80 learning initiatives, networking events, mobility schemes and on-demand instruments** through which we supported, *inter alia*, the development of important PAR and Public Financial Management (PFM) strategic frameworks in Albania and North Macedonia; Cybersecurity Action Plan in Albania, as well as the preparation of important learning content of the Digital Academy in Montenegro, along with an upgrade of Learning Management Systems (LMS) for public administration in

Serbia. Throughout our activities, over the last year, we have empowered close to **1,200 civil servants from the Western Balkans** and engaged close to 200 experts and practitioners from the region, the European Union, and beyond.

The results from our most recent monitoring of activities, conducted in May-June, indicate **an overall excellent satisfaction with ReSPA activities**. This reflects the participants' contentment with how these activities contribute to their personal and institutional development. These results provide valuable feedback for our future endeavours and serve as a strong motivator for the entire ReSPA team.

In light of the renewed enlargement context and the central role of PAR in the accession process, we acknowledged the increasing demand for ReSPA's assistance in developing and boosting **Members' capacities for the European Union integration**. In response to these developments, we have redefined our thematic areas and introduced a new one – "European Integration and Accession Negotiations", within which we have implemented a series of regional learning and networking activities to address these evolving needs.

In the realm of Quality Management, our **Regional Quality Management Center (RQMC) has continued to evolve into a regional hub for excellence in Quality Management, playing a pivotal role in enhancing the capabilities of public administrations and improving public services**. In particular, five additional institutions rolled out the European Common Assessment Framework (CAF), while six implemented the CAF External Feedback Procedure (PEF). Concurrently, we have enhanced regional expertise through ongoing capacity-building efforts, resulting in a significant milestone – this year, we independently awarded the CAF-Excellence Label to one institution from the Western Balkans, ensuring the region's contribution to boosting the European CAF Agenda.

Internally, **we have expanded our team with new members** dedicated to partnership development, digitalisation, and internal operations to ensure the efficient execution of our dynamic program activities. This allows us to continue empowering public administration in line with the latest development trends and advancements, enabling them to address significant societal challenges. ReSPA remains wholeheartedly committed to supporting our region's public sector transformative journey and fostering a brighter European perspective as we look to the future.

Warm regards,

**Maja HANDJISKA-TRENDABILOVA**



## Advancing reforms through Learning, Connecting and Sharing

With the backing of the European Commission and under the strategic guidance of the Governing Board, through **79 activities** ReSPA team leveraged the expertise of **1,179 public officials** who hail from **close to 200 public institutions** and have collectively participated for **2,240 days**. In this endeavour, we collaborated with **173 international and regional experts and practitioners**.

96%

of all the participants evaluated the content of ReSPA actions as excellent/good

95%

of all the participants evaluated the applied Methodology as excellent/good

96%

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

## Learning, Connecting, Sharing

Public servants are at the forefront of the policy challenges facing governments and societies nowadays. To drive reforms, public officials must confront the evolving challenges within the public sector. It involves acquiring new skills to enhance decision and policy-making, improve efficiency, promote accountability, and foster innovation. ReSPA's program managers collaborate with working group members to identify priority topics and design learning programs that align with the genuine needs of public administrators in the Western Balkans.



Our learning activities come in various formats, ranging from academies, summer/seasonal schools, training sessions, workshops, and webinars, conducted in face-to-face, online, or hybrid formats, including:

- ✦ **Regional Academy on the Evidence-Based Policy-Making Process**
- ✦ **Summer School on EU Accession Negotiations**
- ✦ **Seasonal School on Digitalization**
- ✦ **Executive Training Programmes** crafted with renowned learning institutions in the EU
- ✦ **Regional Training Programmes and Workshops**

Facilitating regional connections among public officials and liaising them with their EU counterparts is vital to ReSPA's comprehensive strategy. This approach promotes collaboration and knowledge exchange, bolstering individuals and institutions, expediting progress and integrating the latest trends into daily work practices, ultimately fostering development and regional growth.

Our multifaceted "Connecting" strategy employs various methods, including:

- ✦ **Regional high-level policy dialogue on PAR**
- ✦ **Intra-regional and WB-EU ReSPA Mobility Schemes Programme** that brings the region together in joint learning
- ✦ **Regional meetings** of ReSPA Thematic Groups
- ✦ **ReSPA Horizontal Activities** that forge stronger connections with EU Member States and partners
- ✦ **Working visits to EU member states**



The ReSPA team fosters innovative solutions to drive positive changes in PAR by sharing vision, plans, achievements, and lessons learned with the stakeholders and partners, integrating the institutional motto "Building Together Governance for the Future" into daily activities, strategic objectives, and guiding principles.

In practice, this means crafting a blend of various methods, including

- ✦ **ReSPA Open Days**
- ✦ **Showcasing good practice examples between public administration teams**
- ✦ **Sharing new trends with public administration teams**
- ✦ **Sharing ideas and innovative approaches with thematic group members** while developing a plan of activities



## ReSPA's Regional Approach: Adapting to Transformative Changes

Over the years, ReSPA has adapted itself to effectively meet the needs of its Members, aiding them in enhancing their public administration systems, efficiently adapting to societal changes, and addressing emerging issues like increased policy complexities, digital transformation, environmental concerns, and shifting demographics.

**Jointly, with working group members, the ReSPA team has addressed critical challenges Western Balkan administrations face.** These include improving strategic and well-coordinated evidence-informed policy development, ensuring the transposition, implementation, and enforcement of EU policies and standards during the accession phase, professionalization, merit-based recruitment and enhancing service delivery through digitalisation, innovation, and quality assurance, all focusing on creating citizens-centred public administration that delivers growth.

Starting this year, ReSPA has redefined its thematic areas, aiming to adjust the programme of working to its Members' ever-evolving needs while responding to emerging topics. Regional meetings with thematic group members and a series of ReSPA Open Days held at the beginning of the year provided valuable input for customising and fine-tuning ReSPA's work programme.





# POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

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**Policy Development and Coordination** thematic area aims to strengthen the role of public administration in advancing evidence-based policy-making, enhancing regulatory processes, and improving policy coordination.

The quality of policy-making is crucial for steering economic and social development and navigating continuous crises. To achieve **effective policy coordination in the WB administrations**, this process should be predictable, planned for the medium term, linked to the budget perspective, evidence-based, and inclusive of consultations with relevant stakeholders.

In 2022, the WB administrations saw the extensive utilisation of two vital tools for regulatory management: **RIA** and **public consultations**. These tools have been pivotal in promoting evidence-based and participatory policy-making across the region. There has been recognition of the need to strengthen regulatory and methodological frameworks, more consistently adhere to existing formal rules and advance in conducting public consultations in most administrations. Still, there is a pressing need for systematic analysis and the utilisation of feedback received during public consultations to inform the final policy design, analysis and approval.

for planned actions, and alignment between policies and budgeting. This Academy is envisioned to comprise five modules, providing public servants with the necessary methods and tools for improving complex policy planning. During the reporting period, the Academy organised two modules.

**The First Module**, titled “Introduction to Policy-Making”, served as a bridge between theory and practice. It **offered insights into the various phases of the policy cycle and emphasised the role of data and statistics in public policies**. The primary focus of the First Module was to present practices and experiences related to evidence-based policy-making, with a particular emphasis on the utilisation of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), the impact of indicators in public policies, innovations in the decision-making process, models for utilising impact indicators in public policies, and the interrelationships among public policies and performance management.



During the reporting period, **ReSPA decided to support coordination capacities crucial for the “whole-of-government” agenda**. In achieving this complex goal, ReSPA has launched an extensive multi-modular capacity development program specifically designed to boost the capacity for evidence-based policy-making. **The Regional Academy for Evidence-Based Policy-Making** has been established to address several key concerns, including policy fragmentation, the limited abilities of public servants to address intricate policy challenges, inadequate budget allocation

**The Second Module**, titled “Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies”, **delved into models, effects, and the foundations of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), including the importance of linking financial planning to evaluation**. The Module also shed light on models and effects and setting the foundation of M&E, and discussed adequate data sources, monitoring of the EU integration process, as well as gender perspective in strategic planning and its importance for M&E. Finally, participants got insights about the importance of linking financial planning



and M&E and had an opportunity to learn from relevant EU examples of strategy/budget planning and policy coordination, as well as get an update on the revised principles of public administration.



#### Miroslav GROZDANOVSKI

IPA Coordinator, Ministry of Information Society and  
Administration of North Macedonia  
Sector for EU Integration and International Cooperation

*"This Academy is a must for every civil servant with a certain role in policy development, documentation, monitoring and evaluation. The content is structured in a way that is engaging and easy to follow and helps us to understand the importance of data in proper policy management and independence of various phases in the policy cycle. This Module focused on Monitoring and Evaluation, and we got the opportunity to gain insight into the Montenegrin model and exchange experiences with the Western Balkan peers. In addition to this, we have learned a lot about indicators and had an opportunity to learn from prominent SIGMA experts for policy formulation and the importance of regulatory impact assessment in all phases of the policy cycle."*

### Connecting teams from the Western Balkans with renowned governmental institutions from the European Union was an additional focus in this thematic area:

A **working visit to the Government office of Estonia** allowed the working group members to get in touch with best-recognized practices and champions within policy coordination and better regulation to uphold reforms in these crucial areas of PAR. Exchanging with their colleagues in Tallinn and visiting the e-Estonia briefing centre, they got an opportunity to dive deep into a variety of models and practices of strategic planning and policy coordination in Estonia, such as the decision-making process in the centre of Government, integration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals into the national planning system and national policies, linking budget planning and development planning, coordination mechanisms in Estonia and EU level, and the work on recruitment and training of the Top Civil Service Centre.



Working group members responsible for strategic planning, regulatory impact assessment, and policy coordination **visited their Slovenian counterparts** from the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Digital Transformation. They exchanged and learned from their Slovenian colleagues about designing, adopting, and monitoring national strategies, public participation processes, impact assessment of legislation, and budget planning.



**Bojana BOŠKOVIĆ**

Head of Regulatory Impact Assessment Department  
Ministry of Finance of Montenegro

*"I was impressed by the administrative capacities of the Slovenian public administration. All the officials we met, showed a high level of knowledge, professionalism and a genuine passion for reforms. The government has the motto: **people are important**, stressing that without the dedication of public servants, reforms and institutions cannot be built.*

*I found Slovenian experiences in the negotiation process, better regulation and online services the most useful for my daily work. Since Montenegro is also a small open economy, these Slovenian experiences could be easily replicated in our system."*

Traditionally, through **various learning initiatives**, ReSPA supported public administrators in policy development and coordination. One such initiative was an **Executive Learning Programme on Better Regulation**, which combined theory, practice and team exercises, targeting mainly young public servants dealing with impact assessments (for policies and regulations). The programme tackled the key concepts of Better Regulation (BR) and how they are applied across the policymaking and regulatory cycle, how administrations in the region implement regulatory impact assessments (RIA) and stakeholder consultations. Participants gained insight into the challenges and drawbacks of different modalities, which are some of the main innovative practices in EU MS regarding impact assessments, how the BR tools are used in practice in the European Commission (EC), etc.



Finally, to provide a comparative analysis of the integrated planning system in the WB public administration, ReSPA initiated the drafting of a **Paper on Integrated Planning Systems in Western Balkan Administrations**, which thoroughly explains public administration institutions' role in improving the integrated planning process, provides benchmarks from the EU MS and highlights good practices from the Western Balkans. The paper is in the final revision stage by the WB administrations and the experts.





# EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

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**European Integration and Accession Negotiations** thematic area seeks to boost the capacities of the Western Balkans administrations for an accelerated EU accession process.

In light of the concrete efforts of the European Union to advance the European perspective of the region, including the invigoration of the “New Enlargement Methodology,” the initiation of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania and the granting of candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2023 ReSPA shifted its focus back to this area through introducing a series of learning and networking activities, as well as through establishing a regional thematic group of public servants from the region dealing with the process. The goal is **to support the accelerated EU accession process** through capacity-building, learning, mobility and networking initiatives and various forms of technical assistance, as well as supporting a meaningful regional peer practitioners’ dialogue on relevant EU agendas.

Collaborative endeavour with the renowned European University Institute, esteemed lecturers and partners from the European Commission, and speakers from EU Member States resulted in an

intensive **Summer School on EU Accession Negotiations**. Designed to empower public officials not only in understanding but also in enforcing EU policies and standards during the accession phase, the programme focused on enhancing their knowledge and developing transversal negotiation skills, decrypting the “New enlargement methodology” through scenario-building on the accelerated integration and the phasing-in approach.



**Cvetanka DANILOSKA**

Senior Associate, Secretariat for  
European Affairs of North Macedonia

*“During these four days, we learned valuable information that deepened our knowledge regarding EU integration and accession negotiation process for the Western Balkans and the new methodological approach of the European Commission. We are well aware that the burden of European integration does not rely only on the EU but also on the candidate countries that prefer to become members of the European Union. We were provided with a team of highly professional and skilled professors, and I would like to say that there wasn’t one boring presentation during these 4 days, and we all gained invaluable experiences. We have learned how to build a win-win situation and resolve an issue in a way that each party finds acceptable.”*

Besides the School, ReSPA has played a significant role in advancing various aspects of the EU integration agenda. With strong support from the European Commission and in collaboration with renowned EU learning institutions, **ReSPA has initiated a range of comprehensive learning programs which tackled important topics**, including the legal framework, EU *Acquis*, and creating an investor-friendly environment:



As part of the European Day of Languages initiatives across Europe, ReSPA organised a **regional conference on the “Preparation of the national version of the *Acquis*”** to assist teams within the public administrations in ReSPA Members in making progress toward translating the *acquis* into their respective official languages. The Conference aimed to enhance the translation capabilities in the region, ensuring that the *acquis* is translated accurately and consistently despite its linguistic diversity.



Developed in partnership with the College of Europe, the **Executive Training on European Integration** equipped public servants with the knowledge, skills, and insights needed for effective navigation towards EU membership. Participants delved into EU external relations, decision-making processes, communication in an EU context, and the EU budget. They also identified best practices and engaged in scenario-building exercises. The program empowered participants to drive positive change, enhance regional cooperation, and contribute to the progress of the Western Balkans on the path to European integration.



**6-Module Training program on “Translation of the *acquis*”**, co-created with DG Translation (European Commission) to enhance the region’s translation capacities covering various aspects of translation, including the management of the translation process, translation techniques, quality management, terminology management, the use of e-tools in translation, and managing language data and procurement. During the reporting period, two out of six Modules were organised.



✧ In collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), **Training of Trainers on Enhancing Regional Expertise for an Investor-friendly environment** empowered public servants from various government bodies in the Western Balkans, such as Ministries of Trade and Economy, State Advocate/Attorney Offices, and Foreign Investment Agencies, to become proficient trainers. The program aims to cultivate institutional knowledge, foster policy discussions, and ultimately improve the region's stability and attractiveness to investors.

✧ **Thematic Meeting on EU Integration and Accession** – designed as a regional platform to enhance regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and learning in the domain of EU accession, the Meeting aimed to contribute to a more efficient implementation of the EU accession agenda. Focusing on capacity-building needs, further advancement of the gradual integration between EU and Western Balkans, the accelerated integration, and the phasing-in to EU Policies, programs, and frameworks, participants explored scenarios for speeding up the journey towards the Union. Specific focus was paid to the EU decision-making scheme, interpreting the relation between EU policy and EU law.



The ReSPA team is actively engaged in dialogues with essential EU stakeholders in the field of PAR to enhance the program's development. This considers the forthcoming comprehensive multi-module learning program covering all the relevant **Clusters of the acquis**, which will be delivered during the next reporting period.





# HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Human Resources Management and Professional Development** thematic area contributes to cultivating professional, motivated, and proactive civil servants who serve as catalysts for establishing transparent, accountable, and professional public administration institutions. Strategic and professional **human resources** and civil service management is one of the crucial enablers in making the public sector attractive to young professionals, their development and retention. This stresses the importance of **adequate and holistic policies to attract, motivate and retain employees and teams with the required skills and competencies** and to increase the public sector's attractiveness as an employer of choice. They should, *inter alia*, focus on **merit-based recruitment**, promotion and dismissal, lifelong professional learning and development and career perspectives for all

staff, staff wellbeing, purposeful jobs, managerial culture aligned with the principles of a good public administration, enabling framework for mobility, competitive remunerations and benefits, employer branding and overall good working conditions, inclusive and respectful work environment, and flexible working arrangements.



**The need for well-qualified staff is crucial for boosting the administrative capacity performance of public authorities** throughout the

region. The central HR units that exist in all administrations are relatively weak and mainly deal with everyday challenges. Most of the public administration departments in this region have already started developing new Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS), but they still struggle with regular updates. Also, **fostering effective leadership** through competence, stability, professional autonomy, and responsiveness of accountable top managers is a significant challenge in the region's public service and HRM areas. **A strategic approach to the professional development of civil servants, linking its different components and aiming to enhance performance, needs to be bolstered.**

**ReSPA tackled most of those topics and issues, supporting the Members in transitioning from personnel management to strategic human resource management.**

**Addressing burning staff turnover and retention issues, ReSPA initiated a staff satisfaction survey**, as a chief evidence-based tool to inform decision-makers, initially piloted by two administrations (Albania and North Macedonia), leading to conducting two more (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). At the follow-up session of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial conference, the ReSPA team presented the results of the Survey conducted in Albania while ministers discussed the motivation of civil servants, staff turnover, and how to transform civil services into modern and appealing ones.

In addressing challenges and exploring innovative approaches to **merit-based recruitment**, ReSPA facilitated **extensive knowledge sharing with key entities such as the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)**, DG Human Resources and Security, European School of Administration (EuSA), and the Belgian Federal Public Service Policy and Support (BOSA). HR and Recruitment teams from the Western Balkans had the chance to familiarise themselves with the latest trends in selection procedures and competition models, drawing insights from their EU counterparts.





**Dragana VRAČARIĆ and Aleksandra STANKOVIĆ**  
HR Management Service, Government of Serbia

*The study visit to organisations in Brussels was very useful and informative for us at Human Resources Management Services. From the numerous materials we received, we used the following in our immediate work:*

*Announcement of a call (several days before the announcement itself, the Service announces a call related to the institution, the positions and the conditions required). This announcement contains images or visuals and is posted on all social networks. Other institutions are expected to share the announcement.*

*Also, in view of these announcements, we have been particularly focused on inspector jobs, which are especially promoted through social networks and the Inspector Network.*

*Another proposal of the Service is to change the regulations regarding the duration of the announcement because the legal minimum is 8 days now, and the measure of the Service was oriented towards redefining the deadline so that the legal minimum for the delivery of the application is 15 days. We heard from the representative in Brussels that the deadline is one month, which is not applicable in this system, but a deadline of 15 days is quite feasible. These suggestions were incorporated in the Report on the quality of filled jobs, which the Service is obliged to draft in the second quarter of the current year for the previous one and submit it to the Government and the relevant Ministry.*

Members of the HRMD Working Group also **engaged in knowledge exchange with counterparts at the School of Public Administration of Catalonia and the National Institute of Public Administration of Spain.** This visit provided valuable insights into Spain's experiences in Human Resources Management and Development. They learned about best practices and innovative work models, setting the stage for further collaboration between Spanish institutions and those in the Western Balkans.

**Training programs focused on the hands-on empowerment** of civil servants in various areas, from data management to job description development:



**Training in HR Data Analysis** equipped civil servants with the skills to efficiently transform data into a consistent format for making strategic decisions within government institutions. Participants dealing with data analysis and report preparation improved their knowledge and skills in data cleaning, transformation, and various data-analysis tools. This will directly impact the optimisation and performance of their institutions and support leaders in making more informed decisions;







**A Regional Workshop on Future Job Descriptions** guided senior public officials on best practices and challenges in developing job descriptions, catalogues, and evaluations. Expert presentations and panel discussions empowered civil servants in their work on job descriptions, job analysis methods, and job evaluation systems, which are fundamental areas of HRM. The discussions allowed civil servants to share their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned in the region, especially the relationship between job descriptions and recruitment, appraisal, and remuneration.

transformation to be modern and attractive for civil servants.

The *Second meeting* is scheduled to be held in conjunction with the Network of Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration (DISPA) – this will be **the first time HR teams from the Western Balkans actively participate in the DISPA meeting**, engaging with EU training institutions to learn from their best practices and challenges.



Human resources are at the heart of any reform process, and the **well-being of public servants is a fundamental requirement for the ongoing growth and development of the region**. ReSPA held **two virtual gatherings at the regional level** to address this significant issue and initiated a regional survey on well-being in the public sector. In the first gathering, leading experts shared their insights with ReSPA working group members, focusing on essential factors for fostering content and satisfied public servants. The occasion of World Mental Health Day provided an excellent opportunity for HR teams to engage again in discussions on this critical topic and exchange experiences with their EU counterparts.

In addition to the learning programs, ReSPA also made a considerable effort to **create a platform for Directors/Heads of Training Institutions/Departments to facilitate dialogue and identify concrete opportunities for collaboration**.

At the *inaugural meeting*, organised as a follow-up of the 14<sup>th</sup> ReSPA Governing Board meeting at the Ministerial level, they exchanged good practices and challenges in everyday work and development, obtaining significant insights into the results from the pilot staff satisfaction surveys from Albania and North Macedonia. Also, they participated in the Ministerial discussion where Ministers shed light on the importance of strategic HR





# SERVICE DELIVERY

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**Service Delivery** involves two key areas: “Digitalization” and “Quality Management.” These areas help to support governments’ efforts to modernise and digitally transform their administrations, offering digital public services.

## Digitalisation

Digitalisation is a crucial factor in promoting good governance and reforms in public administration. It is pivotal in enhancing transparency, accountability, efficiency, and citizen participation. The ReSPA team supports governments in their reform journey into digitally transformed “e-Governments” that can improve public services and drive socio-economic development.



Although digitalisation differs from one to another public administration, the digitalisation of public services has been among the priorities of Western Balkan administrations. The delivery of digital public services has **significantly improved, although marked differences remain in the number of digital services and simplifying administrative procedures.** The role of the key enablers remains crucial for digital service delivery. Administrations that have national e-portals for services need to ensure more user-centric service delivery and accessibility to services to all citizens.

The situation also differs in the field of the development of central registries and catalogues of all available services that are being published, although there is substantial and steady progress in this area. Despite having the national interoperability frameworks in place, **further alignment with the latest European Interoperability Framework** needs to be undertaken in all administrations so that institutions can use the interoperability framework to its full potential beyond the limited number of institutions that benefit from it currently.

**Cyber security** in all administrations is characterised by developed plans, strategies and improved laws aiming to improve

the implementation of security standards based on improved technology for critical infrastructures, improving the ISO-related standards, reinforcing the capacity building in this area and increasing the number of security agents. Nonetheless, cyber-attacks in 2022 severely exposed the vulnerable points in cyber security that boosted the prioritisation of investments and policy reform efforts into this aspect of e-government.

The WB administration’s journey towards **open data** maturity requires dedication and collective effort. With common challenges across the region, new laws, political commitment and trained public servants could unlock the potential of open data for lasting societal and economic benefits.

All ReSPA members are members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), with a notable increase in the number of significant measures in national action plans but with an implementation that is still hampered and needs more incentives from the administrations.

Considering current development and challenges within the region, the Digitalization thematic area continued to **assist governments in digital transformation and progress in developing e-service delivery models and respective policies.** The ReSPA actions also addressed improving the safe use of data, the use and re-use of data, and the openness of governments towards their citizens. ReSPA organised regional exchange events devoted to supporting the participation of ReSPA members in the OGP initiative and strengthening regional learning and exchange on the digitalisation of public services that were found highly relevant for the undertaking of needed reforms in the digitalisation sphere. Finally, it promotes regional and EU peer learning in open data and data protection and encourages participation in high-profile EU and UN platforms, networks, and capacity-building activities.

During the **High-Level Data Protection Learning Week**, for the first time and in collaboration with SIGMA/OECD, GIZ and RCC, the ReSPA team enabled experts from the Western Balkans to actively engage with key EU Data Protection bodies.



Experts from the European Data Protection Board and European Data-Protection Supervisor bodies shared in-depth and latest trends in the specific legal, policy, institutional and methodological issues in the data protection area that can be models for spurring legal certainty for both individuals and organisations processing data and greater protection for the individuals in general in the Western Balkans and European Partnership Regions. Experts from the Western Balkans got a unique opportunity to learn and exchange with key EU experts on the latest developments in the EU's robust policy and legal framework on data protection, exchanging knowledge with counterparts from the region, the EU, and the Eastern Partnership Region.

offering a platform for OGP National Points of Contact, civil society representatives, and public officials responsible for OGP matters in the Western Balkans to engage in regional discussions and establish global connections. Another important activity was the **Open Data Regional Workshop**, which addressed challenges and opportunities related to improving regional data portals, focusing on increasing the publishing and usage of open data through these portals.



To address the urgent needs of working group members, ReSPA organised a **Regional Interoperability Training**. This training involved prominent experts and lecturers who assisted participants in topics of common interest, such as data sharing across government levels in the Western Balkans while safeguarding citizen rights, data privacy, and protection. The training also explored ways to enhance interoperability at both policy and operational levels, examined the EU framework, tools, and policies for interoperability, and shared good practices from countries like Estonia, Austria, and Croatia.

In the realm of Open Data, ReSPA traditionally connects teams from the region with global counterparts during the **Global OGP Summit**. As part of this global event, ReSPA organised a **Regional OGP Dialogue**,



Aiming to provide an overview of the key changes in the realm of digital public administration in the Western Balkans and an overview of the progress achieved in the application of digitalisation to public service delivery among its Members and Kosovo\*, ReSPA undertook a **Western Balkan Regional Analysis of Digitalisation in Government**, looking into how governments are currently approaching digital transformation and assessing the extent to which their public administration institutions are focused on progressing in developing e-service delivery models and respective policies. The study analyses, *inter alia*, the policy context and the potential for digitising services and processes; the state of national eGovernment portals; the current level of use of digital enablers and building blocks; state of base registers and to what extent they are interoperable; level of provision and use of open data; application of new technologies, etc.

level dialogues and/or regional events could be the platform to raise awareness and communicate the benefits of QM for the overall PAR process in the WB, including high-level/management training (dive-ins) on QM.

**Quality Management has been embedded in the PAR strategies for several years now in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and lately in Serbia and Montenegro.**

In 2022, growing interest was identified for the development of a specific strategic document in addition to the general PAR (new or upgraded national QM plans and roadmaps), along with building capacities of a critical regional group for EFAC and ensuring the participation and contribution of the WB CAF correspondents in the EU network to spur knowledge-exchange and learning.

## Quality Management

The prerequisite of modern and efficient public administration in service delivery is that it places users at the centre and delivers high-quality and easily accessible services online and offline to all people and businesses. Quality management (QM) is aimed at developing and monitoring service standards and tracking performance using general quality management instruments (such as CAF and ISO) and tools in public institutions.

**ReSPA members still lack fully systemic QM application and maintenance** that would allow them to fully utilise the benefits of CAF/ISO in terms of boosting their internal and external performance in line with national and EU priorities. Translated into concrete action, this means that decision-makers need to adopt (new) national QM policies/framework and appoint the lead institutions that will work to promote the new, improved way of organisational thinking and action towards more efficient and cost-effective public administration, focused on the needs of its citizens and clients.

Awareness raising and promotion remain the undeniable need, and using high policy-



## Regional Quality Management Center (RQMC)

at ReSPA has continued to address the growing interest in QM by **introducing the CAF in five institutions**: the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of North Macedonia, the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption of

North Macedonia, the Public Administration Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina Coordinator's Office, Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro and ReSPA.



Alongside the CAF implementation, RQMC focuses on strengthening regional proficiency in conducting Performance Evaluation Framework (PEF) procedures. This is especially crucial for institutions already using CAF and aspiring to achieve the "Effective CAF User" designation. In



the reporting period, **six projects of PEF Procedure** have been initiated/are ongoing or completed: RQMC of ReSPA, Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes in Serbia, Ministry of Information and Public Administration of North Macedonia, Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Office for Combatting the Drugs of the Government of Serbia and Civil Service Agency of Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina.



The overall increase of the volume and services provided by RQMC in 2022 demonstrated the regional needs for a facility that can deploy expertise and services for implementing PAR strategic processes related to quality management, application and institutionalisation of CAF and for building the capacities to be used for improving institutional performance and the level of quality of services provided to users.

With the strong support of an excellent team from the Austrian Center for Administrative Research (KDZ), RQMC of ReSPA will continue to work towards excellence in the region's public administration.

Find more about RQMC [HERE](#)



This year holds special significance for the RQMC team because **ReSPA awarded the Civil Service Agency of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the "CAF Effective User" Certificate**. This achievement demonstrates the **regional independence in CAF Certification**, underscoring the growing influence of RQMC as a result of boosting regional expertise in CAF and PEF through continuous learning and frequent networking.



### Refik BEGIĆ

Director of the Civil Service Agency, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

*"The CAF Certificate is a recognition that we will be proud to highlight in the next two years.*

*At the same time, this recognition is an obligation for the Civil Service Agency to apply strictly the management quality within the civil service of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

*Moreover, the Civil Service Agency will strengthen its performance and business processes, thus improving the quality of our work.*

*We will apply this tool in other civil service bodies of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

*Using this tool in the civil service will ensure that the quality of services is reflected in the quality of the services provided to our end users – the citizens of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina."*

Finally, ReSPA published **a Periodical Regional Quality Management Analysis** that confirmed the growing interest in developing (new) national Quality management plans and roadmaps, along with the need to conduct regular QM training and CAF implementation and follow-up actions. This demonstrates the intent/need to streamline QM-related decision-making for better coordination and planning of initiatives, putting QM higher on the PAR agenda in the Western Balkans.



## Unlocking the power of ReSPA's additional support tools that cater for the unique requirements of its Members

In addition to regional programmatic work, ReSPA developed agile support instruments to respond efficiently to particular current PAR-related reform needs of the Members:

**“On-demand” support mechanism** - a practical and exceptionally effective support instrument tailored to the unique needs of ReSPA Members. Each ReSPA Member can swiftly address specific needs and make a direct impact by requesting expertise in a particular area. Through a meticulous assessment of these specific requirements, the ReSPA team crafts each On-demand support project to empower them in navigating diverse challenges they encounter on their path to reforming public administrations.

Find more about On-demand support [HERE](#)

During the reporting period, ReSPA initiated **14 “on-demand support” reform projects**, covering topics such as the PAR Strategic Framework, *acquis* alignment, Public Financial Management, innovations in Public Administration (PA), e-learning and digitalisation capacity building for impact assessment, learning management systems, and anti-corruption best practices.

For instance, in **Albania**, through the on-demand mechanism, ReSPA provided support for the drafting of the PAR Strategy for 2023-2030, the creation of indicators and action plans for 2023-2025, the development of a new Public Financial Management (PFM) strategy, the formulation of a Cybersecurity Action Plan for 2023-2025, and organised training on Open Government Partnership (OGP) Standards.



In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, ReSPA supported the control authorities in implementing Regulatory Impact Assessment on all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina through a tailor-made training programme delivered to key public officials and is assessing the possibility of developing an electronic system to assist NGOs in the procedure of registration in BiH.

Supporting the advancement of the **Digital Academy** by empowering civil servants in various areas (from the application of AI and Machine Learning over conflict management in PA to leadership and change management) and supporting the preparation of the Analysis and Report on the Law on Administrative Procedures were areas of support in **Montenegro**.




**Vesna SIMONOVIĆ**

Head of the Department for Portals and Services  
Ministry of Public Administration, Montenegro

*In December 2022, the Ministry of Public Administration commenced the process of establishing the Digital Academy aiming to provide education and connect all relevant individuals involved in developing digital and leadership skills, including public servants, students, businesspeople, and vulnerable groups of strategic importance.*

*The ultimate goal of the Academy is to create fast-track programs that enhance the competencies and skills necessary for Montenegro's digital transformation, raise awareness of digital technologies in Montenegrin society and boost the digital competitiveness of the ICT sector.*

*One of the most challenging aspects of the Digital Academy for the Ministry was implementing various educational programs in 2023. These programs are delivered by both domestic and international instructors. To address this challenge, we received significant support through ReSPA's "On Demand" support mechanism. By using a straightforward application process and coordinating with the European Commission, we secured assistance for hiring future instructors to carry out five educational programs that will be accessible to the public in the fourth quarter of this year. This approach has allowed us to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness at the project's outset and ensures the sustainability of individual programs through the Train the Trainer (ToT) training model.*

*We highly recommend this type of support to everyone, just as we do with other ongoing ReSPA initiatives, such as the Mobility Scheme and e-Gov pilots. These efforts make substantial contributions to improving the digital transformation process.*

In **North Macedonia**, after completing a comprehensive evaluation of the previous PAR Strategy, ReSPA played a crucial role in developing the new PAR Strategy for 2023-2030 and its corresponding Action Plan. This was achieved through a series of inclusive meetings, workshops, consultations, and networking activities, all carried out following the SIGMA Principles. The result of these efforts was the enhancement of the new methodological framework, which covers the preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting aspects of the PAR Strategy.

The work continues to develop further an IT tool that will facilitate the digitised monitoring of the Action Plan of the PAR Strategy. In addition, strengthening the capacities of the Secretariat for Legislation through the creation of an electronic database for Laws and by-laws subject to alignment with the EU Law is also underway.

At the **Kick-off of the PAR Strategy for 2023-2030** hosted by Minister Aliu and in the company of David Geer, the EU Ambassador to North Macedonia, Gregor Virant, Head of the SIGMA Programme, ResPA Director Handjiska-Trendafilova underscored the significance of these efforts and underlined: *"Even with the most brilliant, fault-proof strategies – it is the importance of ownership, the highest level of political commitment, the culture of meritocracy, accountability, openness and transparency, humanity, and humility, instilling and demonstrating the public service ethos, human-centricity, performance focus, collaborative mindsets - all these are at least, if not more important than the strategic framework. In this journey, a much more structured focus on human capacity in the public sector is needed - promoting lifelong capacity building and learning. ReSPAs instruments – both the direct on-demand ones and the regional ones – which are our flagships as we leverage on the regional approach that lends itself perfectly to exchanges and learning – are at your full disposal as we move into the key phase of implementation and delivery."*



In **Serbia**, ReSPA supported the Public Policy Secretariat in the Policy Impact Assessment (PIA) and Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) quality control roles by producing a set of recommendations for their further improvement and continued support for developing the Learning Management System. In addition, ReSPA facilitated the organisation of a **joint workshop among French and Serbian institutions** focused on “New tendencies in public administration – attractiveness, greening and innovation”. Finally, ReSPA supported inspection processes in Serbia through the Review of the text of the Manual for taking the exam for Inspectors.

## Mobility schemes

Mobility between public administrators benefits both individuals and institutions and, as such, contributes to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector. It promotes a culture of learning, collaboration, and innovation, which are essential for addressing the complex challenges faced by governments and public organisations.

Mobility schemes are ReSPA’s short-term initiative that allows public servants from one (or more) ReSPA Member to visit and collaborate with institutions in another ReSPA Member or an EU member state. This enables them to gain in-depth, firsthand insights into specific success factors related to public administration reform processes and various topics of interest.

Find more about the Mobility scheme [HERE](#)

During the reporting period, ReSPA facilitated **four intra-regional Mobility schemes**, which served as a means to connect teams from the Western Balkans, fostering the exchange of knowledge and collaborative learning. These initiatives were built on the principles of mutual support, aiming to enhance cooperation in the future.



**Montenegro’s Human Resource Management Authority (HRMA) and the Civil Service Agency (CSA) of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina joined forces to exchange experiences** in the field of human resources. Their goal was to improve mutual efficiency, and they committed to working together on joint activities, ensuring ongoing cooperation and mutual support to enhance the effectiveness of both institutions.



**Representatives from the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) in North Macedonia had the opportunity to benefit from comprehensive mobility visits to counterparts in Montenegro and Serbia**, specifically to the Agency for Prevention of Corruption of Montenegro and the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption of Serbia (end of October). Advancing management processes, particularly in the context of ISO quality management procedures, human resources management and professional development (HRMD) and strategic planning were some of the areas of interest.

**Representatives of the Directorate for Infrastructure, Information Security, Digitalization and e-Services of the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro visited their colleagues from the Office for IT and eGovernment and Public Policy Secretariat in Serbia** and got valuable insights into service design and development, eGovernment infrastructure and portal eUprava, as well as presentation of ePaper project and the Register of Administrative Procedures and a Single window for public services. Provided information and best practices gained from the Serbian colleagues will enable further advancement in the digital transformation of Montenegro.



Acknowledging the importance of mobility in public service, ReSPA is currently developing the parameters of a **Regional Mobility Scheme**, which will be composed of three pillars: i) an intensive executive training at an EU-based institute or school, ii) a study visit in Brussels and iii) a job-shadowing component at Regional Organizations in the Western Balkans.

Facilitating regional connections among public officials and linking them with their EU counterparts is vital to ReSPA's comprehensive strategy. This approach promotes collaboration and knowledge exchange, bolstering individuals and institutions, expediting progress and integrating the latest trends into daily work practices, ultimately fostering development and regional growth.

This multifaceted strategy employs various methods, including mobility schemes, horizontal facility mechanisms, working visits to EU member states, and convening regional meetings that assemble key stakeholders on specific topics. These initiatives not only encourage knowledge sharing but also fortify regional connections and enhance engagement with EU institutions simultaneously.

**The Horizontal Facility mechanism** is designed to provide ad-hoc support for the participation of public servants from the region in various regional and international conferences, training programs, and similar educational events organised by EU Member State Institutes of Public Administration, prestigious schools and higher education institutions in the EU (both public and private) that focus on public policy, regional partners, and other international entities.

During the reporting period, ReSPA, through the Horizontal Facility, offered a **number of scholarships** to enable the attendance of public servants from the region at several significant events such as the “Quality of Public Administration with CAF – A Toolbox for Top Performance,” hosted by EIPA in June 2023, the “Summer School on Agile Governance,” organised by the European University Institute in June 2023, and the “Summer School: Learning to Address Tomorrow’s Administrative Challenges in Europe,” organised by the Greek EKDDA and the Francophone School of Management in July 2023.



Ongoing **Executive Training Programmes and Certificate in Economics for Policy-makers** assist public sector policy professionals in navigating the global economic landscape and acquiring the necessary toolkit to understand, design and implement effective economic policymaking. Its approach is practical and implementation-oriented by blending online and offline training sessions.

ReSPA diligently monitors the initiatives carried out under the Horizontal Facility, and the feedback received has been exceedingly positive. Nearly all Horizontal facility beneficiaries have given a 5 out of a 1-5 rating scale, highlighting the program’s profound positive impact on their professional development.



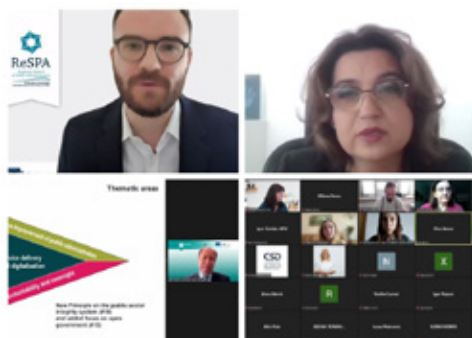
# Elevating Public Administration Reform through the power of sharing and partnerships

Embarking on innovative solutions that drive positive changes in PAR by sharing visions, achievements, and lessons learned and boosting partnerships at regional, EU and global level, the ReSPA team integrate the institutional motto, “Building Together Governance for the Future,” into daily activities, strategic objectives, and guiding principles.



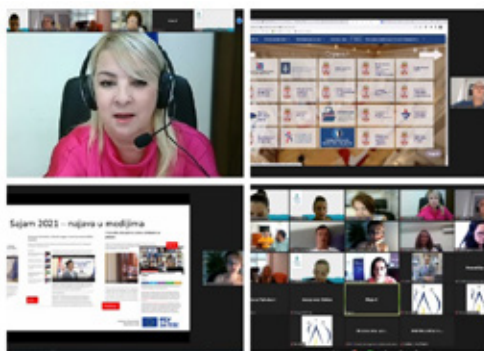
This year's activities started with a series of **ReSPA Open Days** in Sarajevo, Skopje, Tirana, Belgrade and Podgorica in which the ReSPA team shared their vision for the year ahead and engaged in discussions with stakeholders aiming to fine-tune the annual work program, based on provided valuable input

The workshop “New Tendencies in Public Administration: Attractiveness, Innovation and Greening” was a good platform for sharing France's latest public administration trends, including in areas related to HRMD, digitization and green transition. **French Minister Stanislas Guerini addressed the audience virtually**, presenting the French experience in attracting young and skilled professionals while improving the state's image as an employer.



**A joint webinar with the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) on “Promoting Public Administration Integrity via Regional Cooperation”** shed light on the coherent and comprehensive public sector integrity systems as critical principles of PAR. More than 50 public servants, practitioners, anti-corruption agencies, renowned experts and speakers, and schools/academies of public administration engaged in an expert discussion on the challenges faced for improving governance and promoting transparent, accountable and ethical public services. They focused on corruption prevention and learning tools developed by RAI, SIGMA

Programme and the efforts made by the ReSPA to strengthen the competencies for the integrity of public servants.



**Showcasing good practice examples between ReSPA Members' public administration teams** is one of ReSPA's aspirations. One such initiative was the students' internship programme in Serbian public administration, which was presented as a noteworthy model for other institutions, illustrating how to meaningfully engage recently graduated students in public administration and contribute to boosting the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer of choice.

**Recognizing and sharing the growing importance of employee satisfaction and well-being in public administration** was the focus of a virtual gathering of prominent experts who shared their perspectives with ReSPA working group members on aspects crucial for nurturing content and satisfied public servants. Human resources and capital are at the core of any reform process, and the well-being of public servants is a fundamental prerequisite for the region's continuous growth and development.



**Raising awareness on the importance of proper translation of EU Acquis as an integral part of the accession process** was the focus of the regional conference Preparation of the national versions of the EU Acquis, held on the European Day of Languages, co-organized with the Ministry of European Integration of Serbia.

**At the 31<sup>st</sup> NISP Acee Conference, ReSPA raised awareness of the importance of strategic foresight and innovation, including the usage of AI in the public sector.** Throughout two panels, ReSPA tackled issues such as how to build public sector resiliency through strategic foresight and innovation and the importance of the deployment of Artificial intelligence (AI) tools in public administration in the areas of policy-making, improving and creating new public services or for better internal management.



In the quest for more efficient and responsive public administration, partnerships offer substantive avenues for collaborations and synergies. The ReSPA team believes in a powerful synergy that accelerates reform, making it more impactful and sustainable than ever before.

**The ReSPA team unlocks the incredible potential of collaborations and partnerships at regional, EU and global levels to reshape the landscape of public administration by uniting the strengths and sharing knowledge, resources and expertise with international organizations and renowned learning institutions.**

Actively contributing to numerous conferences at global, EU and regional levels, addressing various aspects of public administration issues and boosting partnerships, ReSPA has been charging the engine of progress:

Contributing to the [UN Expert Group Meeting](#) that gathered distinguished experts and UN representatives who shared the best of expertise, knowledge and experience leading UN work in supporting its member countries towards successful implementation of SDGs, **ReSPA presented achievements of the Western Balkans in implementing SDGs, focusing on digitalisation and ReSPA's instruments of support to the governments that work for the overall region's progress in SDGs.** Underlining that *"successful implementation of SDGs in 'whole-of-society' commitment is vital to overall regional progress"*, the Director highlighted the ReSPA's role in backing governments in this complex and long-term endeavour.



The [22nd Session of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration](#) was an **opportunity for sharing results in advancing public administration reforms and institutional learning in the Western Balkans**, where ReSPA welcomed the cutting-edge advice and recommendations collaboratively developed during the work of the 22<sup>nd</sup> CEPA session.



The significant global and EU-level gatherings such as the [10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Global OECD Network of Schools of Government](#) and the [8<sup>th</sup> EC Enlargement Day](#) were opportunities **for improving connections with institutions dedicated to training, experts and policymakers, signing MoUs with relevant partners and discussing important issues** such as how Schools can act as leaders by driving the skills and knowledge agenda and defining the structure and content of learning systems.



At the regional level, the ReSPA team contributed to **regional flagship dialogues** and conferences such as the [PRESPA Forum Dialogue](#), [Tirana Connectivity Forum](#), [6<sup>th</sup> Western Balkan Digital Summit](#), [“Strengthening the Berlin Process through Parliamentary Diplomacy”](#), [3<sup>rd</sup> WeBER Regional Conference](#), [RCC High-Level Cyber Security Conference](#), [Regional SDG Conference](#), [Conference on “Quality of Public Services”](#) and many others, addressing different aspects of reforms in public administration, relevant for the region’s future within the European and Euro-Atlantic context, its progress in EU Enlargement process and importance of equipping public servants with digital skills for “future ready” governments. **Regional conferences** served as forums for exchange with partner institutions on various topics and exploring new avenues for collaboration in **supporting the governments in their progress with the EU accession negotiation process, cybersecurity, quality management, SDGs implementation, building bridges with civil society and delivering citizen-centred services.**





Apart from the strengthening strategic partnerships with SIGMA/OECD and KDZ, **ReSPA significantly diversified partnerships with National Schools of Public Administration in the EU** (EIPA, SNA, INSP, EKDDA, etc.), **relevant regional and international players** (GIZ, RCC, CEF, TCS, RYCO, NALAS, RAI, etc.) and **renowned learning institutions** (CoE, EUI, Hertie School, EIPA, etc.);

During the reporting period, ReSPA substantially expanded its cooperation network by forging stronger ties with relevant organizations and institutions in EU Member States. **These collaborations resulted in organizing joint events with key players in PAR** such as SIGMA/OECD, RCC, GiZ, and TCS **and delivering various learning initiatives counting on extensive knowledge expertise of prominent learning institutions** such as EIPA, CoE, EUI and Hertie School.

ReSPA will **continue to bring closer to the civil servants from the Western Balkans the knowledge and practices of EU Member States** by co-creating learning initiatives with EU partners and allowing public administration teams to contribute to important PAR networks such as DISPA.

During the reporting period, **ReSPA formalized its collaboration** with the Italian National School of Administration (SNA) by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in June 2023. Furthermore, ReSPA is actively engaged in discussions with the European University Institute and the French National Institute for Public Services (INSP) to explore similar cooperation in the future.



**ReSPA has joined** the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration ([IASIA](#)) and has become a member of the European Policy Centre ([EPC](#)).



## Monitoring of ReSPA activities: the vehicle for institutional continuous improvement

**Enhanced networking and collaboration in Public Administration Reform (PAR) at the regional level** are acknowledged as one of the most substantial achievements of ReSPA. ReSPA is confirmed as a **regional hub for capacity development exchange and a source of best practices and innovation in PAR**. Overall, at the personal development level, 90% of participants confirmed that ReSPA's activities have contributed greatly or to a good extent to facilitating communication and exchange of know-how among colleagues and/or leadership;

while Over **80%** of respondents think that ReSPA's actions contributed to advancing the PAR Agenda in their respective administrations.

## ReSPA Governance

### ReSPA Governing Board

The decision-making body, comprised of representatives from the ministries responsible for public administration reform in ReSPA Members, operates at two distinct levels: the Ministerial Level and the Senior Official Level. European Commission participates in Governing Board sessions in an advisory capacity.

The chairmanship of the Governing Board rotates among our members, with each Member assuming the role for a one-year term. During the reporting period, Bosnia and Hercegovina has taken chairmanship of ReSPA.

During the reporting period, the ReSPA Governing Board convened **one session at the Ministerial level and four sessions at the Senior Official level meetings**. In the 14th Ministerial-level Governing Board session, held in November 2022, the Governing Board approved the Annual Report for 2021, revised the ReSPA Strategy for 2019-2024, established the Core Budget for 2022-2023, and established the financial plan for the Core Budget for 2023. After this meeting, the Chairperson, on behalf of the Republic of Albania, formally passed the Chairmanship of ReSPA to the Governing Board member from Bosnia and Herzegovina.







Working closely with the ReSPA Secretariat, the Governing Board at both levels continues to invest substantial efforts to further ReSPA's mission and action in the Western Balkans.

**During each quarterly session at the Senior Official level, the Governing Board reviewed the ReSPA Operations report and the Programme of Work implementation for the previous period,** including the status of the On-Demand mechanism and the BACID project. Furthermore, the Governing Board endorsed the Resolution on Amendments to the Staff Regulations, approved the Programme of Work for 2023, and discussed the composition of thematic regional platforms, as well as numerous operational issues such as preparations for the Ministerial-level Governing Board meeting, ReSPA Campus transition to the host country, the implementation of the CAF at ReSPA, and staffing issues, including recruitment.



Regarding financial matters, the Governing Board at the Senior Official level reviewed



the Annual Financial Report for 2022, assessed the implementation of the Core Budget, and nominated KPMG as the Independent Auditor to conduct an independent audit of the Annual Accounts for 2022. They also reviewed the Expenditure Verification Report for the ReSPA Budget Implementation in 2022 and made resolutions amending the ReSPA Financial Regulations. The Senior Official-level Governing Board members participated in two development sessions co-created in cooperation with renowned institutions: one at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin (December 2022) and another at the European University Institute in Florence (July 2023).

Find more about Governing Board Meetings at the Senior Official level:  
[55<sup>th</sup> Meeting](#), [56<sup>th</sup> Meeting](#) [57<sup>th</sup> Meeting](#) and [58 Meeting](#)

## ReSPA Budget Committee

Comprised of representatives from the ministries of finance or the finance departments in ReSPA Members, this body guides the Governing Board on financial and budget-related issues.

During the reporting period, **the ReSPA Budget Committee convened four times**, traditionally taking place before the Governing Board at Senior Official level sessions, ensuring the provision of comprehensive advice and recommendations for the Governing Board's acknowledgement and approval of financial reports and other related operational matters.



This body tackled some crucial issues, such as the utilization of working capital funds as a bridging solution to address the outstanding balance from implementing the 4<sup>th</sup> EC grant, the examination of the annual financial report 2022, the assessment of Core budget implementation for the same year, the discussion of the process for selecting and nominating an independent auditor to conduct an audit of the 2022 ReSPA annual reports, the allocation of funds to the ReSPA Working Capital Fund and Expenditure Verification Report of the Core budget implementation for 2022. In a noteworthy development, the Secretariat organized a Budget Committee session in conjunction with the Development session on the Management and Coordination of EC Funded Projects (September 2023)

## ReSPA Secretariat: Teamwork matters!

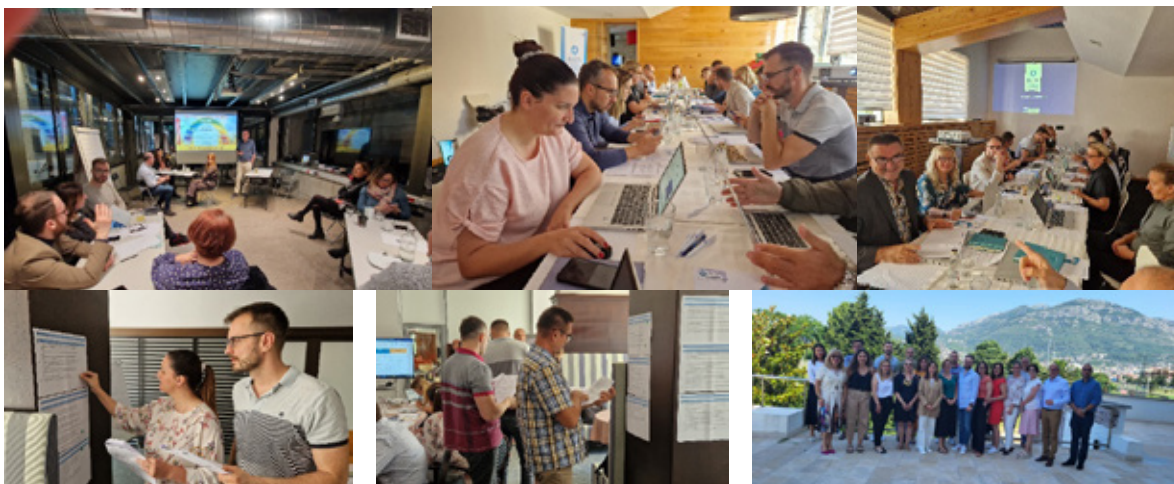
By collaborating effectively as a team, we unlock a treasure trove of insights, exchange ideas and experiences, and nurture our creativity and innovation. This cooperative approach is the driving force behind our enhanced problem-solving and decision-making abilities. We actively contribute to our organisation's ongoing success and growth through our combined efforts.

We're actively engaged in various **internal capacity-building initiatives**, equipping ourselves with the skills to facilitate activities effectively and efficiently and integrate digital tools into our daily workflow. Additionally, we frequently organize **programming workshops**, tapping into our internal resources, and delivering activities aimed at equipping public servants with the skills they need to lead future change.

Indeed, it brought us immense joy to commemorate World Environment Day and our 12th birthday by planting trees at Gorica Hill in Podgorica, Montenegro, **advocating the public sector's exemplary role in sustainable, eco-friendly public administrations.**



This year, we successfully finalized the second CAF cycle and have committed to addressing areas in need of improvement, recognizing that this is the pathway toward both individual and institutional progress.



Empowered internally with the **new project team members**, strong individuals with immense professional backgrounds, and most importantly - great personalities that fit into the ReSPA team as of day one - we are enhancing our partnership initiatives and expanding our program of work in the field of digitalization, while also elevating our operational activities. Together, we are driving positive change and shaping a brighter future.

Find more about ReSPA team members [HERE](#)

## The Way Forward: Navigating a Path to Excellence



Gentian XHAXHIU,  
ReSPA Programme Coordinator

As we embark on **developing the new ReSPA Strategy 2025 – 2031**, we must chart a clear course towards achieving our overarching mission: to foster excellence in public administration throughout the Western Balkans. The priorities we aim to embed in our new strategy will reflect our unwavering commitment to this mission, encapsulating the essence of our future endeavours.

Establishing the **Western Balkans Knowledge Management Platform on PAR** is an important priority. Envisioned as a comprehensive learning experience and networking solution, this platform will empower civil servants across the region to remain abreast of the latest developments in public administration. By providing easy access to information within a user-friendly digital environment, we aim to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing among civil servants.

The cornerstone of effective governance is the pursuit of evidence-based policy-making, policy coherence, and better regulation. Therefore, **ReSPA will continue to progress in the Evidence-Based Policy-making thematic area**. We remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting informed decision-making by fostering a governance environment that is informed, coherent, and responsive to the needs of our citizens. The “Regional Academy on Evidence-based Policy-making” will continue with its further modules during 2023-2024, aiming to strengthen the capacity of civil servants with knowledge about methods and tools that can make complex policy planning work more efficient and harmonize approaches in policy planning throughout the region.

As our region proceeds on the EU accession path and seeks closer ties with the European Union, ReSPA is resolute in its mission to provide comprehensive support to governments in building the necessary **regional capacities for European integration**. In doing so, ReSPA will continue to rely on the strong support extended by renowned Schools and institutes in EU Member States and on designing capacity-building programmes with an in-house staff of line DGs in the European Commission. An ambitious multi-module capacity-building programme targeting the Clusters of the negotiating process is under development and to be implemented during 2023-2024.

**The Regional Quality Management Center (RQMC)** will continue to evolve and grow, driven by implementing the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the exclusive CAF certification mandate that the Governments of the ReSPA Members have vested in it. We are excited about enhancing regional expertise for CAF Certification and actively encourage peer learning by drawing from the best practices of the European Union.

In a world of rapid change through virtual realities and artificial intelligence, **ReSPA will expand support for digitizing public services**. We remain committed to advancing digital

public services' impact, boosting digital transformation and exploring avenues of enhancing AI in the public sector. Our efforts will encompass addressing cybersecurity risks, fostering collaboration between the private and public sectors for IT development, promoting interoperability, and championing policies related to open data and the principles of the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

We are **diversifying the “arsenal” of direct support tools and initiatives** to further our mission. This includes launching the **3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the Western Balkans Public Administration Award** in collaboration with SIGMA, bolstering on-demand support mechanisms, enriching short-term mobility programs, supporting e-government pilot initiatives, establishing peer learning mechanisms, and collaborating closely with our partner institutions to bridge the region with EU member states.

A **more extensive Mobility programme** in the EU is also in its final stage of design – aiming to reach the top public servants who shall attend an executive learning programme in the EU, have an intensive working visit in Brussels, and finally go through a job shadowing experience in the regional organizations. Both initiatives will see the light of implementation in early 2024.

Our commitment to nurturing excellence in public administration extends to the continuous empowerment of civil servants. Based on a **comprehensive staff satisfaction survey** conducted across the region, we are actively addressing challenges and strengthening leadership skills within public institutions. Above all, we are deeply committed to the well-being of our employees, recognizing that our foremost priorities are the dedicated civil servants who serve our citizens.

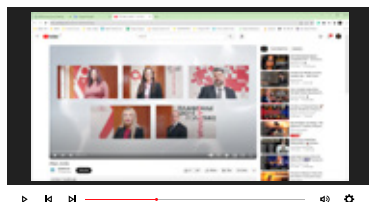
In the coming years, we anticipate exciting challenges and opportunities as we work towards realizing these priorities. Together, we will navigate this path to excellence, keeping our citizens and their well-being at the heart of all our endeavours. With dedication, collaboration, and unwavering commitment, we are poised to achieve great strides in advancing public administration across the Western Balkans region.

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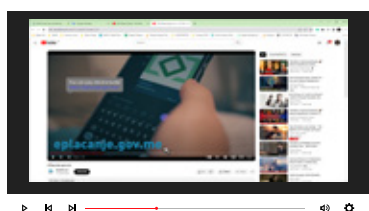




**ReSPA is eager to promote champions in Western Balkans public administration – teams and projects that influence the better lives of citizens and encourage regional economic development.** In that journey, we have started to produce a series of video formats that present both commitment to the public administration teams and impactful results to benefit our citizens and businesses in the region.



Watch the video [ePlacanje - ePayment](#) that premiered at the Celebration of the International Public Administration Day held by the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro. E-payment is the project of the Government of Montenegro to make public administration services simple, cheaper and available with a single click to the citizens.



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**Delve into the ReSPA Blog**, where we focus on providing expert insights across a wide range of topics within the intricate landscape of public administration agenda issues. Ovde idu sa sajta linkovi



Why is the transition from personnel management to strategic human resource management important?  
Wojciech Zieliński, A senior expert on HRM and Public Administration Reform  
24 October 2023

[LINK](#)

### **Why is the transition from personnel management to strategic human resource management important?**

Wojciech Zieliński

Senior expert on HRM and public administration reform



The 'New' Enlargement Methodology: Opportunities and Challenges  
Jelena Džankić, European University Institute  
29 August 2023

[LINK](#)

### **The 'New' Enlargement Methodology: Opportunities and Challenges**

Jelena Džankić

A Part-Time Professor in the Global Governance Programme at the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy



Continuous Support to Improve the Policy Cycle  
Dragan Đurić, ReSPA Programme Manager  
12 July 2023

[LINK](#)

### **Continuous Support to Improve the Policy Cycle**

Dragan Đurić

ReSPA Programme Manager

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>BC</b>	Budget Committee	<b>PP</b>	Policy Paper
<b>BR</b>	Better Regulation	<b>PoW</b>	Programme of Work
<b>CAF</b>	Common Assessment Framework	<b>PoA</b>	Plan of Activities
<b>CEF</b>	Centre of Excellency in Finance	<b>QPAS</b>	Quality of Public Administration and Services
<b>CoE</b>	College of Europe	<b>QM</b>	Quality Management
<b>CoG</b>	Centre of Government	<b>RQMC</b>	Regional Quality Management Centre
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization	<b>RAI</b>	Regional Anti-corruption Initiative
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General	<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>EC</b>	European Commission	<b>ReSPA</b>	Regional School of Public Administration
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>RIA</b>	Regulatory Impact Assessment
<b>EUI</b>	European Union Integration	<b>RTG</b>	Regional Thematic Group
<b>EUI</b>	European University Institute	<b>RYCO</b>	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
<b>EPC</b>	European Policy Centre	<b>SBS</b>	Sector Budget Support
<b>GIZ</b>	German Agency for International Cooperation	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>GB</b>	Governing Board	<b>SEE</b>	South-East Europe
<b>HRMD</b>	Human Resources Management and Development	<b>SIGMA</b>	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology	<b>SL</b>	Senior Official level
<b>INSP</b>	French Institute for public services	<b>SNA</b>	Italian National School of Public Administration
<b>IPA</b>	The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance	<b>SSEI</b>	Seasonal School on European Integration
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology	<b>ToT</b>	Training of Trainers
<b>KDZ</b>	Zentrum für Verwaltungsforschung	<b>WBs</b>	Western Balkans
<b>ML</b>	Ministerial Level	<b>WB3C</b>	Cyber Capacity Centre
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding	<b>WG</b>	Working Group
<b>NALAS</b>	Network of associations of local authorities of South East Europe		
<b>NEAR</b>	Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG)		
<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>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development		
<b>OFM</b>	Operations and Finance Manager		
<b>OG</b>	Open Government		
<b>OGD</b>	Open Government Data		
<b>OGP</b>	Open Government Partnership		
<b>PA</b>	Programme Assistant		
<b>PAR</b>	Public Administration Reform		
<b>PC</b>	Programme Committee		
<b>PEF</b>	CAF External Feedback Procedure		
<b>PFM</b>	Public Finance Management		
<b>PIA</b>	Policy Impact Assessment		
<b>PM</b>	Programme Manager		



# ReSPA

Regional School  
of Public Administration

## Regional School of Public Administration

📍 Branelovica, 81410 Danilovgrad, Montenegro

✉️ [respa-info@respaweb.eu](mailto:respa-info@respaweb.eu)

🌐 [www.respaweb.eu](http://www.respaweb.eu)

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