



ReSPA Annual Conference 2016

At the ReSPA Annual Conference, Mrs. Gordana Djurovic, lead author, presented a comparative study with baseline analysis entitled “Optimization of Public Administration in Western Balkan Region”. This research and preparation of the study was supported by ReSPA. The study is focused on the current situation in the optimization of public administrations in the Western Balkan countries.

izens and businesses of the region.

ReSPA’s Annual Conference, that was held on 15-16 November 2016 in Podgorica, initiated a more enduring experience exchange and concrete follow-up activities related to the systemic changes needed for effective optimization of public administration. One of the key Conference conclusions is the recognized necessity for change in the current organizational culture in public administrations. This sector should introduce

and insist on quality management, rewarding success, and learning from both failures and good examples.

Participants in the Annual Conference were 200 practitioners and experts from public admin-

istrations of the Western Balkan region, experts from EU countries, representatives of international organizations (OECD, SIGMA, UN, World Bank), academia, and civil society organizations.

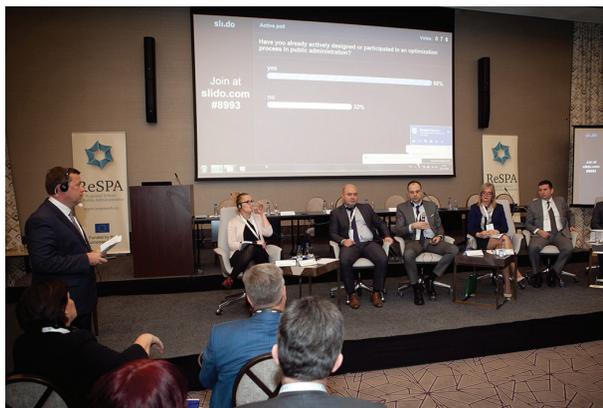
Public Administrations across the region have already engaged deeply in reform processes, and they adopted strategic plans in all identified areas of optimization. The goal that should be set for the next period is to address all necessary preconditions for improving performance and quality of services provided to citizens and businesses. This should



Mrs. Ratka Sekulovic, was appointed as Director of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) in July 2016. Before coming to ReSPA, Mrs. Sekulovic was the Director of Directorate for Management of EU and other funds in the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro. Prior to that position, she was Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro. She has a Master of Science in European Economic Integration from the University of Podgorica, Montenegro.

aim at increased efficiency and productivity of services, but the basis needs to be provided for by the broader optimization of processes and structures of public administration that should lead to rationalized, transparent and accountable new systems. This process has to be supported by all key state and social stakeholders – and, above all, citizens that should be provided with opportunities to directly participate in design and implementation of reforms, thus contributing to further democratization.

Hence, the focus on optimization in the next period should be on public services (in particular education and health)



In order to holistically reflect the complexity of the optimization of public administration in the Western Balkans, the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) has devoted its 9th Annual Conference to a discussion on experiences, methodologies and innovative practices in this process. ReSPA has chosen this topic in order to help demystify optimization as one of most important mechanisms for pushing public administration reforms towards creation of more rational, transparent and accountable services for the cit-

which brings in a whole new set of challenges. Most of those optimization efforts will require policy and legislative change, as well as working with institutions which tend not to be under direct government control. Moreover, the complexity in public sector organization is manifold higher than in public administration, which requires a more sophisticated and innovative ap-

proach to design and implementation of optimization efforts.

Having in mind all the pending reforms goals, regional cooperation through the exchange of experience and joint efforts in Western Balkans can significantly contribute in overcoming some of national challenges and accelerating the progress in all identified areas. ■

Regional Conference on Administrative Justice in the Western Balkans

ReSPA and the Administrative Court of Montenegro organised the Regional Conference on Administrative Justice in the Western Balkans, that was held in Podgorica, Montenegro, on 22-23 November 2016. Participants of the Conference were legal experts from the Western Balkans and the European Un-

ion, who also had the opportunity to visit the Administrative Court of Montenegro and get acquainted with its work.

In her introductory speech, Ms. Ratka Sekulovic, ReSPA Director, expressed hope that the Conference would provide a clearer vision on the future ways of regional cooperation which

ReSPA would be able to support. „In the recent presentation of the EC 2016 Enlargement Package, Commissioner for European neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Mr. Johannes Hahn reiterated that the progress on public administration reform has been uneven among the countries. He stressed that citizen's rights to good administration, access to information and administrative justice have to be better ensured. ReSPA's ultimate goal is to support public administrations in the Western Balkans in fostering the implementation of the European Principles of Public Administration as a significant precondition for the EU accession,“ Ms. Sekulovic pointed out.

„The Administrative Court is a bastion of the rule of law when it comes to the application of law by the executive branch. It is a guarantor of effective protection of human rights and freedoms, while protecting public interest,“ said Ms. Branka Lakocevic, President of the Administrative Court of Montenegro. „In the future, the Administrative Court will be facing big challenges in implementation of new institutes of the new Law on Administrative Procedures and new Law on Administrative Dispute. We will advocate for improving the level of efficiency, effectiveness and transparency. This goal can only be achieved through joint efforts and commitment of judges and all employees of the Administrative Court. The ultimate goal is to protect the interests of all participants in administrative disputes“, Ms. Lakocevic pointed out.

Conference topics included: Organisation of administrative justice and jurisdiction of admin-

ReSPA and the Administrative Court of Montenegro organised the Regional Conference on Administrative Justice in the Western Balkans. Participants of the Conference were legal experts from the Western Balkans and the European Union. This Conference brought together over 80 judges, practitioners, experts and academics dealing with modernisation of the Administrative Justice in the Western Balkans and beyond.



istrative courts in the Western Balkans; Administrative dispute of full jurisdiction according to new administrative dispute acts in the Western Balkans; Enforcement of administrative judicial decisions and remedies; European Principles of Public Administration: Fair treatment in administrative disputes; Relevant judicial practice at the Europe-

an Court of Human Rights, and other related topics.

The Conference also presented a new ReSPA's comparative study on legal remedies in administrative procedures in the Western Balkans. This study is available at ReSPA website: <http://respaweb.eu/11/library#respa-publications-2016-7> ■

Regional Conference on Better Regulation and Competitiveness in Western Balkans

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and relevant projects of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) active in the Western Balkans, held a regional conference on Better Regulation and Competitiveness in the Western Balkans, with more than 80 participants and 30 speakers. Participants were experts and practitioners from the Western Balkans and European Union countries, as well as representatives from the business associations from the region. This Conference was held in Belgrade, Serbia on 1 and 2 December 2016.

In his opening address, Mr. Dražen Maravić, Chair of ReSPA Governing Board at Senior Officials' level and Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia, expressed his belief that ReSPA as a regional hub can provide support in the Better Regulation efforts. „During the last two years, ReSPA organized over 100 networking events, with more than 2,000 public servants who participated in those events, and with 250 regional and international experts,“ Mr. Maravić pointed out.

„Many times, we have seen how important it is to have

ReSPA, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and relevant projects of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) active in the Western Balkans, held in Belgrade, a two-day regional conference on Better Regulation and Competitiveness in the Western Balkans, with more than 80 participants and 30 speakers.

good and transparent regulatory framework, especially at the local level, where we have offices dealing with these issues. We have already seen great results in terms of attracting foreign investment and enabling economic growth at the local level, but also at the national level. For example, the result in the issuance of construction permits in Serbia is that now the process takes less time and the number of permits issued has increased,“ said Ms. Laura Pavlovic, Director of the Office of Democratic and Economic Growth at USAID Serbia.

On behalf of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Mr. Radu Cotici, Expert on Governance for Growth, Public Administration Reform and Anti-corruption, said: „According to the Balkan Business Barometer, the private sector would like to be more involved in the development and drafting of regulations, given that they are not satisfied with the current situation. Therefore, the Regional Cooperation Council will make particular efforts to assist governments in implementing the best possible standards in this area and in improving regulatory framework to the extent possible.“

The comparative research on Better Regulation and Competitiveness in Western Balkans, that



was supported by ReSPA, was presented at the Conference. The research specifically highlighted efforts related to the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in the countries of the region. RIA is an instrument which assists to policy makers in assessing necessity of new legislative activities, and in the assessment of methods by which these activities could be best framed in order to achieve desired goals. Through RIA one identifies issues to be resolved, establishes goals, formulates options in drafting policy and legislation, and evaluates its impact on business environment.

Topics of the Conference were related to Better Regulation in the context of EU accession, trends in the area of Better Regulation on the global level, in the Euro-

In the present post-crisis setting of slow growth, high unemployment and fiscal stringency in most of the countries in this region, the need for improving cost effectiveness and quality of regulation remains critical. Better regulation understood as the changes that improve the quality of regulation, provides a real opportunity to stimulate economic activity, unlock productivity and support growth.

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

During 2016, USAID funded preparation of studies on public-private dialogue in Serbia, Macedonia and Albania. Those studies were presented and discussed during the Conference. The conference also presented the results of surveys and studies

of the business environment in the region. The representative of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Ms. Valentina Ivanic, presented the results of the 2016 Balkan Business Barometer re-

search. Ms. Dragana Stanojevic, Director of the USAID's Business Enabling Project, presented the results of the „BEP Survey of 1,000 Businesses in Serbia“, and Ms. Amalija Pavic, representative of the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Serbia spoke about the survey „Fourth Lap Time“ rich in important data on the business climate in Serbia.

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



Strategic orientation for 2017

ReSPA has undergone a profound strategic shift since its foundation. It works now principally through networks and regional working groups. This represents a move away from it being a training-focused centre to a regional cooperation hub for its Members' public administration reform activities with a view to facilitate the European integration process. The strategic document for period 2016-2020 defined the role of ReSPA as an innovative regional hub for policy research, knowledge sharing and networking programmes in the field of public administration in Western Balkans.

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

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