



8th ReSPA Governing Board Meeting at Ministerial level: Albania hands over chairmanship to Bosnia and Herzegovina



Tirana, 6 November 2017
– Ministers in charge of public administrations in the Western Balkan countries met in their capacity of members of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level for the 8th ReSPA Governing Board meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting, **Senida Mesi, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania**, highlighted Albania's chairing of ReSPA in the previous year and said that "the presence of ministers from the Western Balkans at the meeting in Tirana shows readiness of each country to further collaborate with each other regarding strengthening of capacities for the implementation of Public Administration Reform, and the exchange of experiences with the main objective towards the integration in the European Union."

Bernard Brunet, representative of the European Commission DG NEAR, said that the European Commission is com-

mitted to ReSPA "not only as the institution itself, but also to the regional cooperation that ReSPA embodies."

"I see ReSPA's future brighter than five years ago. It has a better financial position, clear vision and strong support of all the countries in the region," Brunet said.

During her address to the members of the ReSPA Governing Board, **Director of ReSPA Ratka Sekulovic** pointed out that "the Public Administration Reform (PAR) in the Western Balkans region is a very demanding task that requires significant resources and sincere political commitment."

"The new 2019-2024 ReSPA Strategy will enable us to better integrate and synergise our efforts in order to provide the best possible impact in the implementation of PAR Strategies in the region," Sekulovic added.

During the meeting, ReSPA Secretariat and experts present-

ed on several important topics such as: Better Regulation efforts, Methodology for Costing of PAR Strategies, examples of good practice in e-recruitment for public service in Albania, and quality management in public administration.

Members of the ReSPA Governing Board endorsed ReSPA's Annual Report, as well as the Recommendations for Improving Public Participation, and encouraged ReSPA to follow up, in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), on their implementation by relevant institutions.

ReSPA Governing Board also took note of the Highlights of ReSPA activities planned for 2018, and adopted the Annual envelope and ReSPA Budget for the next year.

At the end of the meeting, Bosnia and Herzegovina formally accepted Chairing of ReSPA from Albania in a ceremony of handing over the ReSPA Flag.

New Chair of ReSPA, Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina Josip Grubesa, said that for him personally, taking over the Chairmanship of ReSPA "is a big challenge as well as responsibility."

"For Bosnia and Herzegovina, since we are taking over from the Republic of Albania who in the last year accomplished significant progress in the Public



Administration Reform, it will mean firm determination to follow the example and use possibilities of cooperation with

ReSPA to make improvements in the public sector,” Grubesa said.

During the day, on the margins of the ReSPA Governing Board

meeting, a number of bilateral ministerial meetings were held, through which regional cooperation is additionally strengthened. ■

10th ReSPA Annual Conference: Innovation in Public Administration – Navigating in Times of Change

Budva, 12–13 October 2017
– The ReSPA Annual Conference gathered over 150 participants and 37 speakers from more than 50 different institutions of the Western Balkans, EU and worldwide to identify the best-case examples of innovative processes in Public Administration, and the challenges of their integration for the countries of the Western Balkans.

ReSPA’s 2017 conference on „innovation¹ and transformation”

builds on last year’s 9th Annual Conference devoted to „optimisation² and incremental change”.

In her opening speech, **ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic** said: “Over the past thirty years we have learnt that the public organizations that are most open to trying out new ideas and programmes, discover that their readiness to innovate makes them stronger and more efficient, regardless of which

country or public they are serving. That is the reason why this conference opened the door to renowned institutions and speakers not only from the European Union and the Western Balkans, but also from across the globe. We have also understood that a silo orientation in public administration is not an answer but an obstacle to confronting old and new, local and global challenges.”

- 1 If optimisation is about improvement and incremental change, innovation is about transformation and more radical change. While, historically innovation has always been a characteristic of successful public administration, today it is faster and more profound than ever before. The economic crisis has increased the pressure for innovation in the public sector of many countries even more, and nearly all international development organisations are now engaged in propagating innovation.
- 2 The OECD defines innovation as „the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations“. It suggests a framework for public sector innovation with four components: (1) Generating and Sharing ideas, (2) Empowering the Workforce, (3) Navigating Rules and Processes, and (4) Reviewing Organisational Design.



Hermann Spitz from the EU Delegation to Montenegro followed her lead and said: „Our societies are changing more rapidly than ever before. So, public administration cannot sit idle and watch. It has to take up the challenge and change by adapting more effective business models, and improve its service delivery for the benefit of the citizens. In this regard, the ReSPA Annual Conference can contribute to the debate by sharing experiences, lessons from the past, new tools and approaches.”

„Changes were never easy in this part of the world. Managing them, it is probably even more difficult. And changes through embracing new ideas and innovations, that is the only way towards a higher level of openness and transparency of public institutions,” said **Suzana Pribilovic, Minister of Public Administration of Montenegro**.

Josip Grubesa, Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina underlined the importance of adequate human resources. “Modernisation and improvement of public administration is the priority for all of us. However, such progress cannot be achieved without new ideas; and the ideas are created by the people. Consequently, people are the most valuable resource of public administrations,” Minister Grubesa said.



Participants' Innovation Challenges

The first day of the 10th ReSPA Annual Conference provided a platform and a framework for understanding and integrating innovation in public administration. Different views of young people and special client groups were articulated, the value of innovation in practice was critically examined, and various dimensions of innovation, such as the social, technological, organisational aspects of innovation, were actively discussed. Additionally, new innovation methods such as hackathons were taken into consideration for creative problem solving in the public sphere. Participants in the Conference also shared their views on major innovation challenges in public administration.

During the second day of the Annual Conference, within the ReSPA Café, an open discussion on the structure, culture and personal change took place. A central question was how to

promote innovation in public administration and how to address the needed cultural changes. Recognising, measuring and awarding innovation outcomes were explored in other conference sessions. The exchange on regional and international experiences with innovation award schemes gave the

participants valuable insights in how to organise such a learning and sharing process in the future.

Conference conclusions

Storytelling has been highlighted as one of the most practical and efficient ways to examine the opportunities for building an organisational culture, no matter if the focus is on developing countries or not. Nonetheless, challenges and goals are the same: opening to the public needs and exploring even beyond that. During the ReSPA Café, the participants generated a lot of great ideas and inputs for the organisational change and transformation of governments. The enthusiasm of individuals has been underlined as one of the success factors and a driving force of the non-existing formula for innovation in the public sector.

The presented innovation projects from the Western Balkans confirmed that there are



Participants state:

“This year, parents could use an electronic service that we introduced on the e-government portal: it concerns enrolment of children in elementary schools. This service reduces one go to school by scheduling appointments with psychologist (online), which in those moments means so much to them.”

*Mirjana Begovic, eGovernment and Information Security Directorate,
Ministry of Public Administration, Montenegro*

“The profile of civil servant of today is changing. Common digital transformation is not giving any benefits if not followed by social innovation.”

Rozalinda Stojova, Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Macedonia

“Changing the mindset of public servants takes time and a lot of effort, especially from individuals in public administration. Now we are gradually widening the circle of people involved, so it is getting easier.”

Milan Josimov, Ministry of public administration and local self-government, Serbia

“The success of innovations in the public sector depends on the people, but you need a leader who thinks in that way. You know, we need leaders who say: ‘It is not important who makes the decision; what is important is that the best decision is taken.’ And we are convinced that the best decision is taken by everyone in the organisation. Not by the Numero Uno, and this is the case in a lot of organisations.”

Frank van Massenhove, the chairman of the Belgian Federal Office of Social Affairs

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good case examples in the region - even though there is a lot of room for improvement, where ReSPA can provide further support.

Conference participants have contentedly voted for the introduction of a Western Bal-

kans Public Sector Award. Establishing of this award will be one of ReSPA's long term objectives, again requiring an effort from all the stakeholders in the region, the EU and around the globe. The aim of the Public-Sector Award will be to sup-

port a continuous dialogue in the Western Balkans through an exchange of best practices and fostering of an organisational culture. The conclusion was also that using information and communication technologies through a hackathon could





be an added value. This gives ReSPA space to exploit possibilities for organising a hackathon (ReSPathon), or a similar event in the future.

At the conference, ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic mentioned ReSPA's intent to establish a regional Quality Management Centre. Director Sekulovic emphasized that such an establishment can follow on all the ideas reflected during the conference, by using quality management tools which represent a holistic approach in addressing the above listed innovation subjects: strategic planning; strong administrative and political engagement; increasing cooperation with citizens and NGOs; social responsibility;

client/citizen/stakeholder orientation, and the needed strong political buy-in.

During the event, it became clear that ReSPA would need to put a stronger focus on quality in public service delivery, as well as on enhancing managerial accountability through better use of quality management systems. The results of ReSPA's efforts in this domain will be reflected in its events in the upcoming year, including the next ReSPA Annual Conference.

Final discussions at the conference have led to the conclusion that it is obvious that solutions of the past cannot be the same as for the future. Furthermore, the shifting focus should be on what is being done in

Public Administration and how it can be done differently. As for public servants, a safe environment with appreciation and motivation at work must be a priority in changing the internal culture. This can only happen in a culture which allows experimentation, risk taking and potential failure; with a clear role of the leadership that needs to put the organisation in a strategic focus, to serve as an example of how to encourage different team setups, and to foster a new and safe culture in the organisation. Several definitions of innovation have been reflected on during the event, and one of them was: „New things that add value!“ ■

ReSPA Director participated at the SIGMA Ministerial Conference “Good Public Governance – Delivering for Citizens and Businesses”

Paris, France, 13-14 December 2017

– “Public administration reform is a process which never stops,” said Jean-Eric Paquet, Deputy Secretary-General of the European Commission at the SIGMA Ministerial Conference. This conference gathered all of SIGMA’s partners at ministerial level for the first time in 25 years, with the aim to discuss good public governance and how it can help to deliver better outcomes and services for citizens and businesses.

ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic used participation in the event to connect with attendees from different perspectives and views, exchange the ideas and opinions and pave the way for firmer collaborations of ReSPA and its counterparts based on shared values.

Some of the topics discussed at the conference were transformation of public administrations to deliver for citizens in challenging times; importance of public governance for a long-term economic development; citizen engagement as



part of governance reforms; importance of the rule of law for citizens and businesses; supporting structural economic reforms through good public governance; creating a competitive and

business-friendly environment through better public services and developing a transparent, predictable and accountable approach in public governance to contribute to the rule of law in practice. ■



Workshop on Structured Democratic Dialogue

Nicosia, Cyprus, 6-7 December 2017 – The Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA) hosted ReSPA's Workshop on Structured Democratic Dialogue, where a new strategic perspective of ReSPA has been discussed in a participatory manner.

ReSPA Governing Board members at senior level and members of the ReSPA Secretariat took this opportunity to get a grasp of the CAPA's experience and practical implementation of the Structured Democratic Dialogue methodology. This becomes even more important in light of the fact that CAPA is an extraverted organisation that has always kept up with the international trends in Public Administration, in order to adapt its assistance to the customers from the civil service and wider public-sector organisations.

The interactive workshop on Structured Democratic Dialogue demonstrated how the related methodology can be applied in complex situations involving many stakeholders with diverse perspectives, in order to help better define a problem and choose the best solution while at



the same time cultivating participants' commitment to the implementation of decisions.

This workshop was preceded by 33rd ReSPA Governing Board meeting at Senior Official level. The Governing Board discussed the internal affairs related to programme and operational issues. Among others, the Governing Board approved the Quarterly Report for the previ-

ous period; adopted the Resolution on the extension of Programme of Work 2016-2017 to 2018, and approved the 2018 Plan of Activities and 2018 Communication Action Plan. Moreover, the Governing Board agreed on further steps related to the In-Country Support Mechanism Utilization and involvement of the Governing Board members in ReSPA events. ■

ReSPA's participation in the Danube Governance Forum: Improving Governance Together

Vienna, 4 December 2017 – The Danube Governance Forum was organised by the programme Capacity Building of the countries in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova (BAC-ID), in cooperation with ReSPA

and the Network of Associations of Local Government Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS).

The Forum was focused on: i) improving the capacity of public administration within the Danube Governance Hub; ii) enabling

local governments to fulfil EU standards and deliver better services. The objective was to agree on the priorities in improving governance of the countries in the Region on their way to the European Union, while promoting the



cooperation of the public sector – national and local institutions – with civil society, science and the business sector.

The event gathered more than 100 participants for the final event of the current phase of the BACID programme. The participants represented national public administrations, local governments, civil societies, media and science from 16 different countries, as well as international organisations.

Goran Pastrovic, Programme Manager was engaged in the Quality Management (QM) panels to present the work of ReSPA in this area. He has mentioned that according to ReSPA's experience, primarily deriving from studies (regional baseline QM study and Feasibility study on the establishment of QM centre), QM may contribute to the PAR reform through transformation of organisational culture. Goran Pastrovic further elaborated that it can be realised by yielding the floor to those

who know their institution best, who know where the bottlenecks are. How can QM Systems be used for finding solutions? – By initiating an open and structured dialogue in the QMS team internally and with the management. An open, structured and monitored dialogue with the employees (employee satisfaction surveys), stakeholders, veto players, clients, users and citizens (other types of surveys). The success factor lies in publishing of the results (where possible), communicating them (internally and/or externally), etc. Actually, QM can contribute in a simple way: by improving the institutional performance in all its aspects, in the long term, according to the mandate, vision, and mission.

What are the success factors and next steps for the implementation of Quality Management tools in the Public Administration Reform?

“The main success factor for implementing Quality Man-

agement is senior management commitment. They have to support it on a political level and to understand what its instruments are. The main conclusion of the conference regarding the next steps for implementing Quality Management in the Western Balkans is that they be made through the establishment of the Regional Quality Management Centre; and the role of ReSPA here could be very important,” said **Thomas Prorok, Deputy Managing Director of the Austrian based KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research and the organiser of the Danube Governance Forum.**

Another two reputable speakers at the conference gave their views by responding to the same question. **Marija Nikoloska from the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of Macedonia** stated that the exchange of experiences in the Western Balkans region is one of key success factors for implementing



Quality Management tools in Public Administration. **Samra Ljuca from the Civil Service Agency of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina** explained that ReSPA could have a significant role in promoting Quality Management tools in

her country and all over the Western Balkans region.

The final outcome of the conference was an agreement on the success factors and proposed further steps to be implemented under the Danube Governance Hub (Vision and Mission) in

the following fields: Open Government, Quality Management, Better Services for Citizens, Involving Civil Society and Businesses, Decentralization, Public-Private Partnership, Local Economy, EU Funding for Municipal Services. ■

Regional Conference on Measuring Gender Equality in the Western Balkans



ReSPA, 1 December 2017 – Achieving gender equality in the countries of the Western Balkans being a continuous challenge, issues and policies related to this aspect are inevitably gaining relevance in the pre-accession countries in this region. Gender equality is a new field of work for ReSPA, and its representatives set out to find partners in public administrations of ReSPA Members who could support a joint endeavour to make a more forceful regional cooperation in this field.

Cooperation was initiated with the Department for Gen-

der Equality of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, and their representatives partnered in the organisation of the Regional conference entitled „Measuring Gender Equality in the Western Balkans.” Partners in the conference were also the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

With an aim to influence development of gender equality policies in ReSPA Members,

the conference brought together more than 50 public servants dealing with gender equality issues in relevant governmental institutions of the Western Balkans, experts from the region and the EU, representatives of non-governmental organisations active in this field, and representatives of international organizations (UNDP, EIGE, OSCE).

The main themes were gender equality policies in the Western Balkans, and measurements with a focus on the *Gender Equality Index* and its application in policy making. Also, the participants were ac-



quainted with the main findings of the comparative research on Gender Equality in Public Administration in the Western Balkans.

One of the most interesting themes to the conference participants was EU's Gender Equality Index as a composite indicator for measuring the concept of gender equality. Based on the EU policy framework, it also serves to monitor the progress of gender equality across the EU.

Measuring progress of gender equality is an integral part of effective policy-making. Thus, the Gender Equality Index supports the development and implementation of evidence-based gender equality policies and legislation, and shows different outcomes of those policies for women and men. It is to be hoped that this mechanism will help to further raise the awareness of public servants in ReSPA Members of progress and challenges in the implementation of gender equality policies.

ReSPA Secretariat and regional public administrations have provided inputs for the Study on Gender Equality in Public Administration in Western Balkans, a specific research project implemented by the European Commission DG NEAR during 2017. The Study is now being finalised, and its preliminary results were presented at the Conference. During 2018, ReSPA will continue exploring options to expand activities in domain of gender equality in public administration. ■

Keynote speakers' quotes

„It is important to establish the Gender Equality Index as an important measuring instrument for further creation of gender equality policies.”

*Zana Filipovic, General Director a.i.
of the Directorate for Relations with
Religious Communities within the Ministry for
Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro*

“What we want to do now is make a step further into building a system which will endorse gender equality as its core cross-cutting principle based on human-rights and anti-discrimination commitments.”

*Fiona McCluney, UN Resident Coordinator
and UNDP Resident Representative to Montenegro*

“Republic of Serbia is the first country in the Western Balkans to have used Gender Equality Index as a tool for measuring gender equality. Representatives of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU), and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia are happy to share their findings and experiences with the other Western Balkans countries.”

*Branka Draskovic, Special Advisor to the Deputy
Prime Minister and to the President of the Coordination
Body for Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia*

“We believe that the mechanism for measuring gender equality is very important. However, through fieldwork in local communities, we have realised that there was not enough awareness of the importance of using such mechanisms. It is upon all of us to point out that it is not just a female theme and that it is far from insignificant.”

*Gordana Stevanovic, Deputy Ombudsman
at the Government of Serbia*

“EIGE's principle of working with project beneficiaries is transparent and demand-driven: invitation for cooperation has to come from a country. Support to EU candidate and potential candidate countries lies in their gender equality endeavours, in line with EU gender equality policies.”

*Jolanta Reingarde,
European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)*

“Sharing regional experiences is an excellent opportunity for all of us committed to gender equality. For the OSCE, gender equality is particularly important.”

*Lia Magnaguagno, Head of the Democratization
Programme at the OSCE Mission to Montenegro*

12th Meeting of the Working group on Ethics and Integrity – Integrity and Conflict of Interest



Belgrade, 30 November – 1 December 2017 – 12th Meeting of the Working group on Ethics and Integrity contributed to sharing good practices in domain of detecting conflict of interest and integrity.

Participants in the meeting were 30 members of the Ethics and Integrity Working group and Working Groups on Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD), Public Procurement (PP), and Administrative Procedures and Administrative Justice (APAJ), senior officials of the Western Balkans institutions responsible for preventing and combating corruption (heads/deputy heads of anti-corruption agencies, conflict of interest commissions, ministries of justice, etc). The meeting was also attended by a represent-

ative of the Transparency International Serbia.

„My expectations from this meeting were to find out what were legal frameworks on this topic in the Western Balkans, what types of detecting conflict of interest had been established in the countries of our region, and what were the problems in the implementation of this system. The event met my expectations to a great extent, thanks to the organisers and their excellent preparation. The inputs from this event will be very useful for my future work, especially in terms of administrative disputes before my administrative court regarding access to free information and conflict of interest. I will also keep in touch with the colleagues from Montenegro and Macedonia,“ **Judge Jelena Tis-**

ma Jovanovic from the Administrative Court of the Republic of Serbia said.

The draft textbook on Integrity Challenges in the Western Balkans was presented on the first day and commented by the members of the Working Groups. The textbook has been developed by the Norwegian Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector (CIDS). At the meeting, it was agreed to develop training modules on integrity in different areas that the integrity relates to: Human Resource Management, Public Procurement, Conflict of Interest, Internal Financial Control, Access to Information of Public Interest, and Administrative procedures. Cooperation of CIDS and ReSPA will continue in regard to further work on the integrity related activities.



A draft methodology for detecting hidden conflicts of interest was presented on the second day of the meeting, and comments/proposals obtained will be used for its finalisation.

„I think all the experts' explanations are very important for our daily work. To this regard, we

really appreciate some examples related to the detection of hidden conflict of interest, due to the fact that all the countries in the region have adopted legal frameworks for prevention. Therefore, it is important to correct the way of implementation of the appropriate norms. In Albania actually,

the law on free access to information is being implemented, and eProcurement will raise the transparency and will contribute to the impartiality of public officials,“ **Agathi Nano, Expert at the Section of Inspection, Government of the Republic of Albania** commented. ■

ReSPA participated in the Meeting of the South-East Europe 2020 (SEE 2020) Strategy's Coordination Board

Vienna, 30 November 2017
– Within its mandate, ReSPA ensures effective coordination of the implementation of the Dimension N – Effective Public Services of the Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE2020 Strategy. At the meeting, the Coordination Board assessed the monitoring process of the Strategy implementation in 2017, the results presented in the Annual Report on Implementation, as well as the key findings of this

year's Balkan Barometer Survey. They also discussed the SEE 2020 Programming document 2018–2020, timelines for the next programme cycle, and roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders.

ReSPA Programme Manager (Legal) Dusko Glodic presented the Strategy related activities that have been accomplished by ReSPA during 2017, in the areas of Better Regulation, Human Resources Management Policy and Quality Management.

ReSPA representative underlined the importance of the newly established ReSPA Coordination Structure for the Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE2020 Strategy.

This meeting of regional organisations and structures involved in the implementation of the SEE2020 Strategy also aimed at exploring the potential for expanding cooperation with other regional organisations and structures. ■

7th Meeting of the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Network

Ohrid, 29–30 November 2017 – Public Administration Reform (PAR) Network has an important role in coordination of ReSPA working groups and in provision of holistic approach to all ReSPA's activities. Consequently, the key topics for the meeting were designed to put the focus on the Methodological Guide for Costing PAR Strategies, and the role of Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC)





in enhancement of Managerial Accountability. These topics are especially important for public officials and servants responsible for PAR, especially in terms of development and application of action plans for the implementation of PAR strategies. Therefore, it has been agreed that ReSPA explore options for organising tailor made seminars on the im-

plementation and utilisation of the tool, in cooperation with the EC, SIGMA and CEF.

During the meeting, the Feasibility study on the establishment of a regional Quality Management centre in ReSPA was presented to the network members. ReSPA's Plan of activities for 2018 was also presented, including its purpose, logic of in-

terventions, timetable, locations of various events; as well as the development of ReSPA Strategy 2019-2024 and the new EC grant 2019-2022.

The important segment of the meeting was devoted to a traditional exchange of information on the most relevant activities of ReSPA working groups between 6th and 7th meetings of PAR Network. ■

First Meeting of the ReSPA Coordination Structure for Governance for Growth Pillar of the South-East Europe 2020 Strategy



Sarajevo, 23 November 2017
– ReSPA organised the first meeting of its Coordination Structure for Governance for Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). This structure is composed of representatives of the already existing ReSPA Working Groups which activities are directly connected with the SEE2020 Strategy and its Effective Public Services dimension: the Work-

ing Group on Better Regulation, Working Group on Human Resources Management and Development, and the Working Group on Quality Management.

At the meeting, members of the new Coordination Structure gained additional information about the role of Governing and Coordination Structures for SEE2020 Strategy, specifically about the Governance for Growth Pillar and its Dimensions and Activities. The Em-

ployment and Social Affairs Platform was presented as a particular project for the implementation of the SEE2020 Strategy; a model of regional flagship initiatives in the implementation of the SEE2020 Strategy was presented, too, as well as the monitoring cycle and the Balkan Barometer 2017, including integration of results of Balkan Barometer into SIGMA PAR assessments. Representatives of ReSPA introduced their

plans regarding PAR and Governance for Growth, while RCC highlighted the interconnected areas of cooperation such as improvement in public partic-

ipation quality though collaboration with the ReSPA Better Regulation Working Group.

The Coordination Structure will ensure future cooperation

between ReSPA and RCC, especially in programming and monitoring phases of the annual cycle of implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy. ■

ReSPA takes part in Cyber Security Drill for Europe and CIS Regions

Chisinau, Moldova, 21–23 November 2017 – A three-day cyber drill – Joint ALERT (Applied Learning for Emergency Response Teams) for Europe and CIS Regions, was hosted by the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure of Moldova. The event was organised by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the ITU in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) within the frame-

work of the ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe and for CIS.

In his opening speech, Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of Moldova stressed the crucial importance of capability to deal with cyber threats and cyber security as they far exceed national boundaries.

The conference gathered technical and management teams taking part in the drill, as well as over 120 experts in tech field of cyber security and management.

The interactive communication was supplemented by simulation of hackers' attacks highlighting the need of holistic approach and preparedness in crisis management.

At the event, the representatives of ReSPA presented their work in the eGovernment area with special emphasis on practical experiences in Open Data and eParticipation in respect of cyber security. ■



Representatives of ReSPA and RCC signed Memorandum of Understanding

ReSPA, 10 November 2017 – ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic and Gazmend Turdiu, Deputy Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), have formalised the productive cooperation between the two organisations by signing a Memorandum of Understanding.

ReSPA is RCC's partner in implementing the Effective Pub-

lic Services Dimension of the Governance for Growth Pillar of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy. In the framework of the MoU, ReSPA and RCC will continue cooperation to improve the capacities of the public sector for development and implementation of policies in line with the goals of the SEE 2020 Strategy. ■



Ambassador of Kosovo* to Montenegro visited ReSPA

ReSPA, 10 November 2017 – During his visit to ReSPA, Ambassador of Kosovo* to Montenegro H.E. Skender Durmishi emphasized the importance of this organisation for the Western Balkans region in relation to the process of public administration reform. He also expressed gratitude for ReSPA's continuous support to the capacity building of civil servants in Kosovo*.

Ambassador Durmishi informed ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic that the Government of Kosovo* had adopted the Initiative for Accession of Kosovo* to ReSPA in October 2017. It is expected that the Parliament will adopt the Law on



Accession of Kosovo* to ReSPA by the end of the year. Director Sekulovic thanked the Ambassador for the visit, and stated that ReSPA would continue supporting the governments in the Western Balkans in de-

veloping better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and help them in preparations for the European Union membership. ■

* 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



ReSPA at the DISPA Meeting

Tallinn, 14–16 November 2017 – ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic has taken part in the meeting of the DISPA (Directors of the Institutes and Schools for Public Administration) network. The meeting was devoted to bridging of gaps between training needs and design of programme activities using different ways and methodologies of development. The ReSPA Director used the opportunity to exchange experiences, good practices and lessons learned in the field of Public Administration with the directors and representatives of the Institutes and Schools of Public Administration, and to explore possibilities for cooperation between ReSPA and its counterparts in the wider region. ■

ReSPA continuously facilitates improved cooperation among technical secretariats of National Investment Commissions

ReSPA, 31 October 2017 – The 3rd Conference on regional co-operation among technical secretariats of the National Investment Commissions (NICs) of the ReSPA Members and Kosovo* was organised in order to 1) enable a follow up of the activities organised during 2015 and 2016; and to 2) provide a platform for exchanging experiences acquired during the previous period in relation to the functioning of NICs and its technical secretariats, the func-

tioning of sector working groups, and preparation/revision and updating of the Single Project Pipeline.

The cooperation among technical secretariats, promoted and supported by ReSPA since 2015, has become one of key ReSPA's instruments for strengthening the capacities of its Members for the use of IPA funds and obtaining support for infrastructure projects from the Western Balkans Investment Framework.

During the event, the participants discussed the upgrade and revision of the Single project pipelines; they shared experiences and emphasized the importance of interinstitutional cooperation, coordination with the international finance institutions and functioning of sectoral working groups. They also provided recommendations on how ReSPA could further support their work. ■





Meeting of representatives of the European Commission, OECD-SIGMA and ReSPA



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Brussels, 23 October 2017

– The meeting gathered the representatives of the European Commission's DG NEAR (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations), DGBUDG (Directorate-General for Budget), OECD-SIGMA and ReSPA. The main themes discussed were Managerial Accountability, Quality Management and planned establishing of the Quality Management regional centre at ReSPA.

The discussion was inspired by ReSPA's Feasibility Study (April – September 2017) where establishing of the mentioned regional Quality Management centre has been proposed. Using a focus group as a qualitative research tool, this study aimed at



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identifying the needs and expectations from the ReSPA's Quality of Public Administration and Services Working Group. On the other hand, the study launched a regional wide large-scale questionnaire identifying

the state of play (detailed baseline), needs and expectations, and the potential role of ReSPA. The general conclusion of the meeting was that a holistic approach is required, and further consultations are expected to take place during all the phases foreseen in the establishment of the Quality Management centre at ReSPA. The implementation will be based on a custom-made approach to serve all interested beneficiaries. This will be done in close cooperation of ReSPA Governing structures with the European Commission and SIGMA, taking into account the expected Managerial Accountability Guidelines to be prepared by SIGMA and tentatively published in February 2018. ■



Meeting of ReSPA National Coordinators

ReSPA, 21–22 December 2017 – The main objective of this meeting was to highlight the role of National Coordinators in the implementation of the activities planned for 2018, and in monitoring of ReSPA's activities. The ReSPA Secretariat used the opportunity to present the plans for development of its new 2019–2024 Strategy and the new EC grant Action document, and to share initial experiences with the online system of applications for participants in ReSPA's activities. General conclusion was that the engagement of National Coordinators is significantly contributing to a better realisation of overall ReSPA's activities. ■

32nd Governing Board meeting at Senior Official level

ReSPA, 2–3 October 2017
– The Governing Board discussed internal affairs related to programme and operational issues. Among others, the GB approved the Report on ReSPA Operations and Implementa-

tion of the Programme of Work for the period 12 July – 30 September 2017 and adopted the decision on discharging the Director from her management and administrative responsibility for 2016. The Govern-

ing Board also supported the Strategic Planning Approach as proposed by ReSPA Secretariat, as well as the proposal on revitalisation of the ReSPA Centre of Government (CoG) network. ■

Year-end interview with ReSPA Director Ratka Sekulovic



ReSPA

Regional School of Public Administration

- **Please give an overview of ReSPA's successes and challenges in 2017**

2017 was a successful and fruitful year for ReSPA. We have strongly positioned our

organisation as the key regional endeavour in public administration reform (PAR) in the Western Balkans region. More than 50 successfully implemented regional events, 10



regional comparative studies and baseline analyses, over 1,500 participants from public administration institutions and over 200 regional and international experts involved in ReSPA activities, clearly show the importance of our mission. Although ReSPA Members share similar challenges in their reform processes, it is not an easy task for ReSPA to find approach, activities and initiatives that will fully satisfy each of them. The achievements in PAR need a longer time and, above all, sincere political commitment in ReSPA countries.

- **What are your thoughts on the opportunities and challenges for the upcoming year?**

ReSPA prepared a detailed Plan of Activities for 2018 that will follow the same objectives as for 2016-2017, and will be guided by three main principles: resources, prioritisation and continuity. The focus will be put on the promotion of recently prepared valuable ReSPA comparative regional studies and analyses in order to be useful and implementable in the field. Still, the awareness and commitment to the implementation of these recommendations will be challenging. However, the development of the new ReSPA Strategy for the 2019-2024 period will ena-

ble us to better integrate and synergise our efforts in order to provide the best possible impact in the implementation of PAR Strategies in the region.

- **What are the areas within ReSPA's remit that have the greatest potential going forward?**

ReSPA organised its work in many areas relevant for PAR, and some working groups have existed for quite some time, over five years, while some of them have been established in the past two years in order to respond to the needs and to better integrate Public Finance Management with PAR. Public Internal Financial Control, Better Regulation, Support to better utilization of IPA funds, HRMD and Quality management might be the areas of particular interest of ReSPA Members. Definitely, these areas will be properly addressed in the new ReSPA Strategy.

- **How do you plan to develop the new ReSPA Strategy for the 2019–2024 period? Do you already see new strategic directions?**

The development of the new ReSPA Strategy will be done in a wider consultative process that will include all relevant stakeholders. However, the draft Action Document

of the new EC Grant for the 2019-2022 period shows that the main Pillars of ReSPA work may be the following: Regional cooperation on PAR and European Integration, Support for the fulfilment of the recommendations from Action Plans for PAR and PAR Special Groups, and Quality Management tools that contribute to the managerial accountability in a wider context.

- **Your message to ReSPA's partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders for 2018?**

In 2018, ReSPA will continue with activities of common interest for all Western Balkans countries, but also with providing specific support to each individual country and to peer-to-peer learning. We will focus much more on the recommendations from ReSPA research documents in order to measure the progress achieved at the regional level, but also in each ReSPA Member. Also, ReSPA will continue our productive cooperation with a number of partners in the region and beyond, in order to ensure synergies of our efforts in providing support to the public administrations in the region.

I would like to use this opportunity to wish to all of our partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders a lot of success and prosperity in 2018! ■



ReSPA Secretariat 2017

About ReSPA

Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an intergovernmental organization for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. It is financed by a European Commission Grant and administered with the subscriptions of its members. **ReSPA's purpose** is to help governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and prepare them for membership in the European Union.

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

ReSPA's main achievements in 2014–2017: Over 150 networking and capacity building activities (seminars, workshops, conferences, study visits, seasonal schools, trainings, meetings) involving over 2,500 public servants from the Western Balkans, and more than 300 international and regional experts; 15 regional comparative research projects with policy recommendations for Public Administration Reform related solutions.

* 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.