



## Regional Conference on Gender Equality and Public Administration Reform in Western Balkans

30-31 January 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

Location: Palace Serbia, Hall Belgrade

### Discussion Paper

#### Introduction

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organisation established to enhance regional cooperation, promote shared learning and support the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while public servants from Kosovo\*<sup>1</sup> participate in ReSPA activities funded by the European Commission. ReSPA's purpose is to help governments in the Western Balkan 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 (EU). Since its inception, ReSPA has contributed to the development of human resources and administrative capacities through training programmes and innovative cooperation mechanisms such as the exchange of good practices, peer reviews and development of know-how.

The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funds for support of ReSPA activities (research, training and networking programmes) in line with the EU accession process. The current EC grant supports the main objective of ReSPA work in 2018: Improve regional cooperation in the field of PAR and EU integration, and strengthen the beneficiaries' administrative capacities. This objective is being achieved through the following three pillars of ReSPA Programme of Work:

- (1) European Integration Pillar: Increased capacity of the ReSPA Members' public administrations necessary for the successful conducting of the EU integration process;
- (2) Public Administration Reform Pillar: Facilitated and enhanced cooperation and exchange of experience in Public Administration Reform and EU integration activities in ReSPA Members;
- (3) Governance for Growth Pillar: Ensured effective coordination of the implementation of the Governance for Growth pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy.

Following expressed interest by the ReSPA Members, and consultations with the European Commission, it has been decided that ReSPA should organise activities to contribute towards improving gender equality in the Western Balkans. One of the activities will be the Regional Conference on Gender Equality and Public Administration Reform (PAR) in Western Balkans.

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<sup>1</sup> \* 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.



## Background

Gender Equality issues and policies are becoming more and more important in the Western Balkan region. In the past few years significant developments in gender equality policies have been noticed across the region, and there is a need for exchange of information and experience among public servants and experts from the Western Balkan countries.

For ReSPA, Gender Equality is a new field of work, and therefore we reached out to find partners in public administrations in the ReSPA Members who could support the process of developing regional cooperation in this area. In particular, the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia is willing to share their positive experiences with other countries of the Western Balkan region. ReSPA would like to promote this initiative and to facilitate exchange of experience and peer-to-peer learning within the region. Therefore, ReSPA is organising the Regional Conference on Gender Equality and Public Administration Reform in cooperation with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

ReSPA identified a need for linking Gender Equality and Public Administration Reform (PAR). The Regional Conference on Gender Equality and PAR in Western Balkans will provide a forum for discussion about various topics related to PAR from a gender perspective. In particular, one session will be devoted to Public Financial Management (PFM) from the gender equality angle, and will focus on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).

During 2017, the European Commission's DG NEAR supported specific research project: Study on Gender Equality in Public Administration in Western Balkans. ReSPA Secretariat and public administrations from Western Balkan countries provided inputs for this Study. This Study is now being finalised, and results of the Study shall be presented to the relevant audience. ReSPA will facilitate this process and will explore possibilities for future activities regarding gender equality in public administration. At the upcoming Regional Conference on Gender Equality and PAR in Western Balkans, research results for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia will be presented and discussed.

## Purpose

In order to promote regional cooperation of public administrations and experts in the field of Gender Equality and PAR, ReSPA will organise the Regional Conference on Gender Equality and Public Administration Reform in Western Balkans. This Regional Conference is co-organised with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The Conference will bring together selected public servants dealing with gender equality and PAR in relevant governmental institutions, experts on gender equality and PAR from the Western Balkan region, and representatives of non-governmental organisations active in this field. The Conference will bring together participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The aim of the Conference is to influence development of gender equality policies, and to link these with PAR efforts in ReSPA Members.

The Conference sessions will be organised around the following topics:

- Overview of recent developments in Gender Equality Policies and Public Administration Reform (PAR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia;
- Gender equality and Public Financial Management (PFM), focusing on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB);
- Results of the regional comparative research on Gender Equality in Public Administration, focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.