



Terms of Reference

External evaluation of the EC Grant Contract IPA/2019/405-139

A team of experts or consulting company required

1. Introduction and background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organization for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, while Kosovo*¹ is a beneficiary. 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 for membership in the European Union.

ReSPA establishes close cooperation with ministers, senior public servants, and heads of units in Member countries. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, specifically Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional and international players such as OECD/SIGMA and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as well as agencies and civil society organisations. Since its inception, ReSPA, as an international organisation and a key regional endeavour in Public Administration Reform, has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through in-country support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research material.

ReSPA works primarily through regional networks which operate at three levels: Ministerial, Senior Officials, and networks/working groups of experts and senior practitioners. There is one network – Programme Committee composed of the representatives of institutions in charge of PAR, Public Financial Management (PFM) and government policy planning and the European Integration (EI) coordination process and five Working groups gathered around five thematic areas: (1) Policy development and coordination; 2) Better Regulation; 3) Human Resource Management and Development; 4) E-Governance; and 5) Quality Management.

ReSPA developed its six-year **Strategy 2019-2024** for providing support to its members in conducting the reform of the public administrations. The Strategy contains the Intervention

¹ * 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

Logic (IL) with defined strategic outputs, outcomes and impact. The Strategy is being implemented through biannual Programmes of Work. For the period 2019-2022 the Strategy has been implemented through PoW 2019-2020 and PoW 2021-2022. As of 2010 **EU continuously provides funds for the implementation of the ReSPA Strategy and its programme activities**. So far three EC Grants² were implemented. Currently, ReSPA is implementing its fourth **EC Grant Contract IPA/2019/405-139** “*Support to the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)*” in the amount of 4.35 Million EUR from May 2019 to 31 December 2022 which is the subject of evaluation and is further in the text referred as **Action**. The evaluation will be conducted upon completion of the Action. **The activities implemented within the Action should contribute to reaching the ReSPA Strategy 2019-2024** outcomes which shall also be part of this evaluation.

The **main stakeholders** involved in ReSPA activities and this concrete Action are the ministries responsible for Public Administration within the governments of the Western Balkans, as well as the central structures in charge of coordination among institutions, independent bodies and the Parliament within the scope of their scrutiny and oversight powers. The actual organisation varies according to the assignment of responsibilities at the level of each beneficiary. An illustrative list is provided hereafter: Ministries and offices of the minister responsible for public administration reform co-ordination and public administration development, such as the Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Interior, Office of the Minister for Public Administration; Civil service commissions/offices; Government Offices/General Secretariats; Legal Secretariats; Ministries of Justice, Ministries of Finance, oversight bodies, and institutions responsible for European integration or approximation. The **primary target group** of the ReSPA activities is the senior and middle-level managers working within the ministries and governmental agencies responsible for PAR, PFM, and EI, other relevant line ministries in the ReSPA Members and beneficiaries, depending on the area and type of activities. The citizens and businesses of the Western Balkan countries, to whom the public institutions deliver public services, are the indirect beneficiaries of the project.

The overall objective of the action which should be evaluated is to support the public administrations of the Western Balkans to provide better services for citizens and businesses. **The specific objective** aims to improve the implementation of the key horizontal governance and public administration reform fields identified in the national PAR strategies. The results of the action are the following:

Result 1. Enhanced regional cooperation in the area of PAR and EU integration.

Result 2. The implementation of selected actions within the PAR National Action Plans is supported.

Result 3. Quality management tools are promoted to strengthen managerial accountability and support the implementation of the national PAR strategies.

² 1. CN 2010/256-128 “Running of ReSPA and Organisation of ReSPA Activities”, 2. CN 2013/331-241 “Mainstream of ReSPA Activities” and 3. CN 2016/373 854 “Support to the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) in its efforts to contribute to the Public Administration Reform under the EU integration process in the Western Balkans”

2. Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope

In line with its contractual obligations and the budget available for conducting the evaluation, ReSPA should carry out an independent evaluation of the activities implemented within the abovementioned action. The evaluation process will be guided by the ReSPA monitoring toolkit and the ReSPA Intervention Logic.

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the **relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence and EU-added value** of the Action and its **contribution to reaching the ReSPA Strategy 2019-2024 outcomes**, in order to further improve ReSPA's approach to support provided to its members in PAR process.

Therefore, the objectives of the evaluation include the following:

1. To assess whether the intervention logic of ReSPA remains to be relevant and to make recommendations on what needs to be changed in the future phase;
2. To assess to what extent ReSPA has executed the Action's objectives, as stated in the Action document, including ReSPA contribution to PAR implementation at the level of respective ReSPA members, through the establishment of enhanced regional cooperation, implementation of specific reform actions and promotion of quality management tools³;
3. To identify lessons learned from 44 months of implementation of the action and provide recommendations for further work of ReSPA. Recommendations should include, where appropriate, indications of additional tools and resources to be used for a more effective and meaningful impact.

3. Description of the assignment

1. ReSPA outputs and outcomes

During the lifespan of the EC Grant Contract, ReSPA implemented around 160 different activities. ReSPA activities are composed of the following broad categories: Ministerial dialogues, High-level Networks, and Thematic Working Groups. The interaction among government representatives is facilitated by: Face-to-face meetings and exchange of information; Promotion of good practices and exchange of experience; Comparative studies and regional research; Training, workshops, seminars, and seasonal schools; Mobility schemes and Study visits; Thematic Annual Conference and other conferences; Peer-to-peer learning, and in-country support for pilot projects and short-term technical assistance.

ReSPA developed a toolkit for monitoring the outputs of the IL based on which the annual monitoring exercises were carried out, and two annual monitoring reports were produced, one in 2021 and the other in 2022. While **monitoring is focused on the IL outputs** (corresponding to ReSPA thematic areas Policy Coordination and Development, Better

³ **Specific Objective (SO):** The implementation of the key horizontal governance and public administration reform fields identified in the national PAR strategies improved; **Result 1 (R1)** : Enhanced regional cooperation in the area of PAR and EU integration; **R2:** The implementation of selected actions within the PAR national Action plans supported; **R3:** Quality management tools promoted to strengthen managerial accountability and support the implementation of the national PAR strategies.

Regulation, Human Resources Management and Development, Quality Management, eGovernment), the evaluation shall be carried out according to the Intervention Logic set up in the **ReSPA strategy**, which is completely coherent with the objectives of the Grant Contract, although it is further detailed and corresponds better to the fields of ReSPA operation. Therefore, the evaluation must assess ReSPA contribution to the below outcomes defined in the ReSPA Strategy IL (see Annex 1), which correspond to the Specific objective (SO) of the EC Grant Contract (as in footnote 3).

Outcome 1: Improved PAR Programming and Implementation

Outcome 2: Improved coordination and coherence of the processes in PAR, PFM and the European Integration Agenda

Outcome 3: Strengthened consideration of merit and performance in PA recruitment and careers

Outcome 4: Improved quality of services delivered to citizens, including improved accessibility and digitalisation

These outcomes have already been monitored on a regular basis according to the methodology agreed upon by SIGMA and the WB administrations (SIGMA, Methodological Framework 2019). To detect the specific contribution of ReSPA's actions more effectively, ReSPA focused only on a selected number of SIGMA indicators that can be found in the ReSPA Monitoring toolkit.

2. Assessment of ReSPA contribution

The evaluation will identify possible and credible contribution links between ReSPA's outputs and short-term outcomes on the one hand, and the aforementioned outcomes monitored by SIGMA and/or WB administrations on the other. For the ReSPA outputs and short-term outcome indicators, the source of information will mainly be the ReSPA monitoring reports for 2021 and 2022, with the addition of selected interviews and further data collection for 2019-20 when the monitoring exercise was not conducted. For selected outcome indicators, SIGMA monitoring reports will be the main source of information, with the addition of country visits and interviews with resource persons. The evaluation should also be based on more in-depth thematic case studies (2 to 3 case studies, each to be carried out in a limited number of countries).

Furthermore, the evaluation will identify the lessons learned from the experience carried out in the period considered to enable the ReSPA team, its Governing structures (Governing Board at the Senior Official level and GB at the Ministerial level) and European Commission to strengthen their future action to support PAR implementation.

3. Evaluation criteria and preliminary Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will assess the action against the criteria of **relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence, and EU-added value**. The 'impact' criterion is not considered because the timeframe of the evaluation does not allow looking for intermediate and longer-term impacts. It will provide answers to the following indicative evaluation questions (additional questions or revisions of the current ones can be proposed by the evaluators, in agreement with ReSPA, during the Inception phase):

➤ Questions related to the evaluation criterion “**relevance**” include:

EQ 1 To what extent does the design and pillars of the action address the problems identified in the region related to PAR implementation?

EQ 2 To what extent do the ReSPA activities address the needs of WBs administrations in addressing PAR challenges and capacity-building needs?

EQ 3 To what extent, ReSPA action corresponds to EU priorities and strategies in the WB area at the time of implementation?

➤ Questions related to the evaluation criterion “**effectiveness**” include:

EQ 4 To what extent has ReSPA achieved the expected outputs and short-term outcomes, in terms of strengthened networking and cooperation at the regional level; support to selected actions through regional studies and country-level recommendations; promotion of advanced skills and tools in the different fields of intervention? What have been the facilitating and hindering factors of its action?

EQ 5 What have been the unintended effects of ReSPA, if any?

EQ 6 What overall lessons can the ReSPA team, its Governing structures (Governing Board at the Senior Official level and GB at the Ministerial level) and European Commission learn from the implementation of the ReSPA actions so far?

➤ Questions related to the evaluation criterion “**efficiency**” include:

EQ 7 To what extent was ReSPA implemented, and did it meet the demand of regional stakeholders efficiently, avoiding waste and delays? And what advantages did it show compared to alternative institutional solutions, such as a network of country-level institutions or others?

➤ Questions related to the evaluation criterion “**sustainability**” include:

EQ 8 To what extent did ReSPA establish links with the relevant national structures and authorities to ensure the continued maintenance and consolidation of its contributions in the future?

➤ Questions related to the evaluation criteria “**added value**” include:

EQ 9 What has been the value added of the EU's continuous support in PAR, compared to the possible alternatives, such as the support of individual EU member states, UN bodies, or other International Organisations (IO)?

➤ Questions related to the evaluation criterion “**coherence**” include:

EQ 10 How did the implementation of ReSPA actions ensure complementarities and generate synergies with other EU regional programmes or programmes supported by other international and country-level stakeholders?

4. Methodological approach

The evaluation will include a document review, interviews, in-depth meetings, focus groups and case studies. An evaluation matrix should be developed during the inception phase. For each Evaluation criterion, evaluators should develop an evaluation question, sub-question, indicators, data collection instrument(s), data source(s), and data analysis.

Document review

The evaluator(s) will carry out a document review at the beginning of the contract, both from the package provided by ReSPA and further identified as relevant for the subject. The following documents will be particularly assessed: ReSPA monitoring reports, ReSPA Interim reports, SIGMA country reports, and EC reports.

Interviews and in-depth meetings, focus group discussions

Interviews, in-depth meetings, and focus group discussions will be carried out with different stakeholders and beneficiaries, including ReSPA staff, ReSPA Governing Board Members at the Senior Official Level, EC representatives, Members of ReSPA Working groups and the Programme Committee network.

Case studies

The case studies will focus on the assessment of the contribution of ReSPA outputs and short-term outcomes to the actual improvements of PAR implementation at the level of a ReSPA member, based on objective consistencies between ReSPA's products and selected PAR indicators, stakeholder testimonies and the reconstruction of contribution mechanisms. They should arrive at the identification of credible and reasonable stories, according to the principles of contribution analysis.

The case studies should seek to cover 5 ReSPA members, 5 thematic areas and the 3 modalities of ReSPA intervention (i.e.: i. general training and networking activities; ii. In-country support projects; and iii. regional studies with recommendations). To ensure such coverage with the available resources and taking into account different languages, the case studies should be selected as follows: one case study per ReSPA member and one per thematic area⁴ (a different thematic area to be selected in each ReSPA member). In terms of modalities, i. the general training and networking activities will be assessed in three countries, while ii. in-country projects will be assessed in one of the remaining ReSPA members and the implementation of iii. Regional studies with recommendations will be assessed in the other.

The analysis of case studies will include:

- an in-depth meeting with WG members from the selected ReSPA member and identified thematic area, where, in response to a predefined grid of questions, hypotheses will be formulated on the link between ReSPA activities and specific progress in PAR implementation; and some meetings/interviews to validate the formulated hypotheses. Meetings organisation and availability of stakeholders will be ensured by ReSPA.
- a brief report with the evidence gathered. The report will provide a short answer to the EQs, mainly to highlight consistencies and differences compared to the preliminary answers provided in the documentary phase. The focus, however, will be on EQ 6 in order to reconstruct the actual ReSPA contribution to the strategic outcomes.

⁴ Please see page four.

5. Expected deliverables

The deliverables that the evaluator(s) will be accountable for producing are:

- a. Inception report and a PPP slide presentation at the end of the Inception phase – the evaluator(s) shall prepare an inception report before the fully-fledged data collection exercise. The inception report provides the project management and the evaluator an opportunity to clarify that they share a common understanding about the evaluation and clarify any misunderstanding. The inception report will include: (i) a general section including an overview of PAR implementation framework (including country monitoring reports available) and ReSPA actions (including typologies and related quantitative data); (2) the outline of the evaluation methodology, including identification of institutional stakeholders, case studies, criteria for the foreseen contribution analyses; (3) the evaluation matrix, including the reviewed EQs completed with Judgement Criteria and Indicators. (4) the work plan, including themes and ReSPA members proposed for the case studies.
- b. Documentary report (evidence report) and a PPP slide presentation at the end of the documentary phase – The evaluators will submit a documentary report ('evidence report') with the evidence collected for each EQ (outputs from interviews, quantitative data, and other data). The information must be in the English language, not edited but readable to support the preliminary answers provided in the PPP. ReSPA will provide its suggestions on the base of the PPP and these will be taken into account in the validation phase.
- c. A short report on each case study - The report will provide short answers to the EQs, mainly highlighting consistencies and differences compared to the preliminary answers provided in the documentary phase. The focus, however, will be on EQ 6, in order to reconstruct the actual ReSPA contribution to the strategic outcomes.
- d. Draft final evaluation report – A draft final evaluation report should be delivered with adequate time to allow discussion of the findings and formulation of comments. It should contain draft findings of the evaluation and draft case studies, drawn based on documentation review, interviews, in-depth meetings, and focus group discussions.
- e. Final evaluation report – the final external evaluation report will require formal approval and will have the following indicative headings:
 - i. Executive Summary
 - ii. Introduction
 - a. Description of the intervention
 - b. Purpose of the evaluation
 - c. Evaluation methodology
 - d. Challenges encountered during the evaluation
 - iii. Findings
 - a. Findings related to each evaluation question
 - b. Case studies
 - c. Additional findings
 - iv. General and detailed Conclusions
 - v. Recommendations
 - vi. Lessons Learnt
 - vii. Annexes

The deliverables will be written in English.

6. Tasks and Responsibilities

The team of evaluators coordinated and managed by the Lead expert shall implement their work in two phases:

1. Inception phase

- a) Kickoff meeting with ReSPA Director and PMs to set the technical and organizational framework of the evaluation.
- b) Obtaining the necessary documentation and information to understand ReSPA functioning, areas and types of intervention.
- c) Familiarising with the ReSPA Intervention Logic (IL) and showing that they understand the contents of the direct and induced outputs (or short-term outcomes) and how they are expected to contribute to the expected outcomes.
- d) Based on the above, the evaluators will review the set of Evaluation Questions (EQ) presented under Section 3 of the ToR or add another one, including judgment criteria, indicators and sources of information, and propose a final set of questions.
- e) Preparation of the work plan for data collection and preparation of the inception report, including methodology (document review, interviews, in-depth meetings, focus groups, etc. as deemed appropriate)
- f) Submission of the Inception report by the Lead expert, to be approved by ReSPA.

2. Implementation phase

This phase will consist of the following phases:

- a) Documentary phase
Upon obtaining the needed documentation and the interviews with ReSPA Programme Managers at ReSPA premises, the evaluators will prepare a PPP with the preliminary answers to the EQs and the hypotheses to be tested in the case studies and validation phase, including the related work plans. In addition to the PPP, the evaluators will submit a documentary report ('evidence report').
- b) Case studies and validation phase
The case studies will be summarised through a PPP including their main conclusions, the validation of the answers to the EQs, and the first outline of the conclusions and recommendations to be developed in the synthesis phase. A note after each case study should be submitted to ReSPA.

The above-mentioned 'evidence report' should be updated.
- c) Synthesis phase

Preparation of the Final Draft Report, which will synthesize the answers to the EQs, an overall conclusion of the evaluation, the detailed conclusions and the recommendations based on lessons learned.

d) Review of the final draft report

The ReSPA team will have ten (10) days to comment on factual accuracy, the relationship between the findings, conclusions, recommendations, as well as the relevance, usefulness and implementability of recommendations. The evaluator(s) will then have five (5) days to submit the final evaluation report. The comments of ReSPA shall be integrated into the final evaluation report either directly in the report or in the form of an annex (management response) in case of disagreement with the evaluator(s).

The abovementioned tasks and responsibilities represent the milestones of the assignment, but the Lead expert may propose slight changes/adaptations, upon agreement with the ReSPA Programme Manager in charge. The engaged Lead expert will coordinate the work of field experts and consider the instructions received from ReSPA beforehand.

ReSPA will provide the evaluators with ReSPA documents. ReSPA staff will be available at its premises for meetings and interviews during the different phases. ReSPA shall provide support to the evaluators in organisation of meetings and interviews/in-depth meetings for case studies and other purposes related to the evaluation at the country level.

7. Timing and location

The assignment foresees work from home, online and in the field (ReSPA premises and in respective countries). The assignment will be performed **from 10 January to 15 March 2023**, net of time for approval of the reports.

Fieldwork (evaluation missions) is envisaged in five implementing ReSPA Members: Albania (Tirana), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo and Banja Luka), Montenegro (Podgorica), North Macedonia (Skopje) and Serbia (Belgrade). All mentioned locations will be included in the evaluation mission.

The evaluator(s) will be responsible to make arrangements for the field visits and appointments with relevant stakeholders that will be arranged in cooperation with ReSPA.

8. Remunerations

The maximum amount of funds allocated for a team of experts or the consulting company that will deploy the team of experts and will carry out this assignment is 18.000EUR for a total of up to 40 expert days.

Note: No other costs will be covered apart from the expert cost per day. The expert cost per day comprises of expert's fee per day and (if needed) a lump sum for covering related costs which include, travel, accommodation, local transport, meals and other incidentals.

9. Necessary Qualifications

The Lead expert

The Expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- MA in organisational development, organisational behaviors, business management, strategic planning, public administration, public policies, project management, or other related fields;
- Ph.D. will be considered an asset.

General professional experience:

- At least 10 (ten) years of relevant professional experience in the EU and/or Western Balkans context working with or in the public sector, civil society, and consultancy;

Specific professional experience:

- At least 5 years of experience in monitoring and/or evaluation of programmes financed by the EU or other donors;
- Experience in preparation of analytical documents/monitoring or evaluation reports;
- Experience in running focus groups and conducting interviews;
- Monitoring and/or evaluation of programmes in public administration will be considered an advantage.

Skills:

- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English;
- Ability to write clear and coherent guidance documents;
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to convey complex concepts and recommendations in a clear and persuasive style tailored to match different audiences;
- Ability to work and manage a team;
- Ability to prepare and deliver well-structures Powerpoint presentations;
- Ability to work with people of different nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds.

Field expert/s (to cover all the ReSPA members)

The field expert/s shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications:

- At least a university degree (240 ECTS) in business management, strategic planning, public administration, public policies, law, economics, finance, project management or other related fields;
- MA will be considered an asset.

General professional experience:

- At least 7 years of experience in the EU and/or Western Balkans context working with or in the public sector, civil society, and consultancy.

Specific professional experience:

- A deep experience in working with public administration and PAR, including deep knowledge of public administration and good communication capacities;
- Familiarity with the state of play related to PAR in various administrations of the Western Balkans will be considered an asset.
- Experience in monitoring and/or evaluation of programmes/projects;
- Experience in running focus groups and conducting interviews;
- Experience in preparation of analytical documents/monitoring or evaluation reports.

Skills:

- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English.
- Fluency in one or more languages of ReSPA Members⁵;
- Excellent moderation skills;
- Ability to work in a team;
- Ability to prepare and deliver well-structures Powerpoint presentations;
- Ability to work with people of different nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds.

10. Reporting and Final Documentation

Before the payment, each expert will be requested to deliver the following:

Outputs

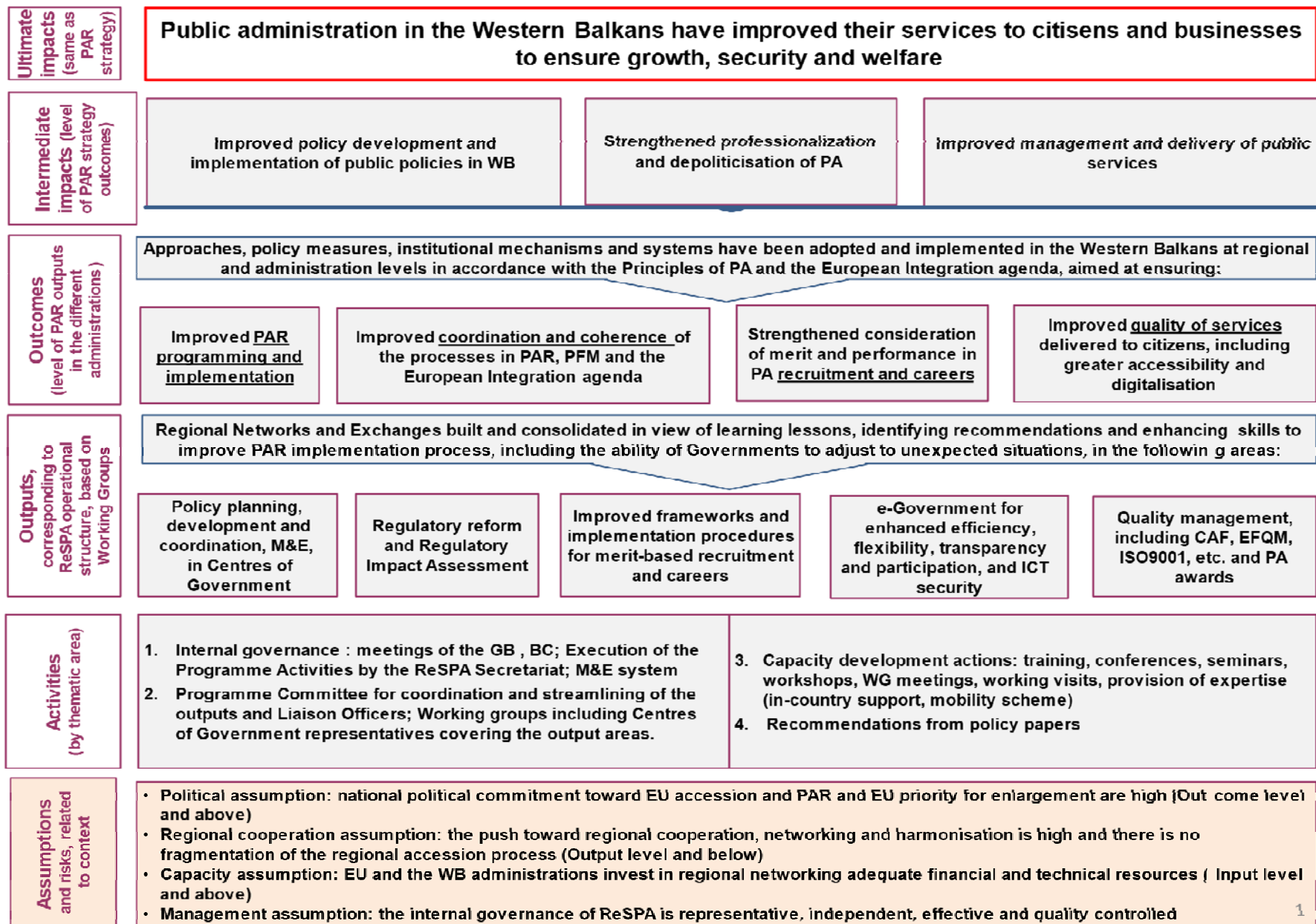
- A slide presentation at the end of the Inception phase;
- A slide presentation at the end of the documentary phase;
- A short note after each case study;
- An 'evidence report' including the references to the main evidence collected to respond to the EQs (not edited, but readable).
- Final Evaluation report in the English language edited by the native speaker. The report will be delivered no later than seven days after completing the Assignment. The report will be subject to approval by ReSPA as the contracting authority;
- A digest of the Final Evaluation Report and a PPP presentation.

Documents required for payment

- Invoices;
- Timesheets;
- Report on the conducted assignment.

Annex II

⁵ The team of experts shall cover all ReSPA Members' languages.



Annex III

Timesheet for Expert

Contract No: _____

Contracting Authority: _____

Regional School of Public Administration

Name of the Expert: _____

Period of Performance: _____

(Month) (Year)

Annex to invoice no: _____

Date	Week day	Place of performance	No of days worked	Comments
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Expert _____

Approved
by _____