

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

Key Senior Expert for developing

Western Balkans Regional Study on Digitalisation

1. Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is the 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, 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 to support their preparations for membership of the European Union.

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

The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funds for the support of ReSPA's activities (research, training, and networking programmes) in line with the EU accession process. To date, ReSPA has implemented three EC Grant Contracts (GCs) in the period 2010-2015, while the current EC grant supports the implementation of activities required for ReSPA's contribution to achieving its three strategic objectives during the period 2019-2024.-

Specific objective 1: Improved implementation of PAR and PFM Strategies in the Western Balkans

Specific objective 2: Improved professionalisation and depoliticisation of the Senior Civil Service

Specific objective 3: Improved quality of public services

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.

ReSPA works primarily through regional networks that operate at three levels, i.e. at the level of ministers, of senior officials, and of networks/working groups of experts and senior practitioners. There is the 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, as well as five working groups focused on the following themes: (1) Centre-of-Government Institutions; 2) Better Regulation; 3) Human Resource Management and Development; 4) E-Governance; and 5) Quality Management.

2. Description of the assignment

ReSPA conducted a comprehensive Comparative Study on Service Delivery ² in the Western Balkans in 2018 (study finalised in 2019), in accordance with the following four SIGMA principles and criteria developed for assessing service delivery: (1) citizen-oriented service delivery policy; (2) fairness and efficiency of administrative procedures; (3) the existence of enablers for public service delivery; and (4) access to public services. The Service Delivery Study and covered three thematic areas:

- (1) Implementation of General Administrative Laws
- (2) Digitalisation and E Government
- (3) Quality Management

The primary objective of the Comparative Study on Service Delivery at macro-level was to provide an operational overview of public service delivery in the Western Balkan region and to gather practitioners' insights into how services are delivered in these countries. Secondly, the study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the operational level of service delivery (i.e. of the actual level of implementation of developed services) at organisational or micro-level. In this way the study attempted to capture the practices of Western Balkan countries in relation to service design and change procedures, to measure user satisfaction, to assess the extent of their citizens/users-oriented approach, their quality-measurement procedures, their management of digital enablers, levels of accessibility, and other operationally relevant aspects of their operations.

The extensive scope of this study prevented a deep dive into certain detailed aspects of service delivery. As one of the most areas of dynamic public administration reform, moreover, public service delivery is undergoing rapid changes, including through digitalisation of services, meaning the results of the 2018 study already need updating from a current perspective.

ReSPA has therefore decided to continue studying different components of service delivery separately. In the area of **quality management**, ReSPA is conducting a Periodical Regional Quality Management Analysis to be updated biannually as one of the functions of its Regional QM Centre. In 2021, meanwhile, SIGMA conducted a detailed Western Balkans study on the implementation of **laws of general administrative procedures**.³

The key area currently in need of further assessment is the **digitalisation of public services**. Unlike digitalisation, the policy, legal and institutional framework does not change rapidly and has recently been studied as part of the SIGMA 2021 assessment, meaning further analysis by ReSPA at this time would add a little value. Although the SIGMA monitoring assessment reports, published by SIGMA for the Western Balkan countries in November 2021, were compiled in accordance with the existing assessment methodology which includes key aspects of digital government, the Principles of Public Administration⁴ do not include a separate principle solely related to digital government. At present, these principles and the assessment methodology only cover key components of digitalisation at a rather general level under the area of Service Delivery.

² <https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/Comparative+Study+on+Service+Delivery.pdf/2342ffd1fe9e64da16d225f545eef521.pdf>

³ <http://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/implementation-laws-administrative-procedure-western-balkans-sigma-june-2021.htm>

⁴ <http://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/principles-public-administration.htm>

Although the SIGMA Principles and methodological framework are being revised to incorporate digitalisation, this revision will take some time and the new methodological framework will only be applied in the next round of assessments in Western Balkans.

However, digitalisation has meanwhile become a priority area for many governments in the Western Balkans, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. A wide variety of digitized services have been rapidly developed over the past two years to meet the rapidly changing needs of citizens caused by this pandemic. In this time it has become clear that the digitalisation of the entire public administration is a prerequisite not only for achieving better delivery of public services but also for improvements and reforms at all levels of public administration. This imperative is already evident in the action plans of strategic documents developed for public administration reform in the Western Balkans and for achieving progress towards establishing efficient and transparent information societies in Western Balkans

The changes in the functions and scope of digitalisation in government over recent years is reflected in the recent evolution of various terms to describe this role, including 'e-Government', 'Digital Government', and 'Digital Public Administration'.

The quality and extent of digital public administration reforms in the Western Balkans have been assessed in a number of different studies adopting various research approaches and measurements. Some Western Balkans administrations have already been included in comparative research conducted by the EC (including in its studies on *eGovernment Benchmarks* and the *European Interoperability Framework Monitoring Mechanism*). SIGMA's monitoring assessments have also provided some insights into the level of digitalisation of public services in Albania, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia in 2021, while Bosnia and Herzegovina is still currently being assessed in 2022.

The aim of the Western Balkans Regional Study on Digitalisation is to provide an overview of the key changes that have taken place in the realm of digital public administration in the Western Balkans since 2018. The study will thus provide a comparative regional overview of progress achieved in the application of digitalisation to public service delivery among ReSPA members (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and Kosovo*.

The study will show how governments in the Western Balkans are currently approaching digital transformation and assess the extent to which their public administration institutions are focused on and progressing in the development of e-service delivery models. Specifically, the study will look into and assess progress in the following areas:

- ✓ *The current level of use of digital technology/infrastructure to optimise digital service delivery, including the development of institutional frameworks and national digital government portals (with this analysis to be conducted at a more general level).*
- ✓ *The potential for digitising services and processes and current levels of preparation and implementation of government plans for making appropriate services digitally available, including for connecting registers and ensuring their interoperability through four main aspects: legal, semantic, organizational, technical.*
- ✓ *The proactive use by governments of digital technologies, data and Big Data to enable more responsive, inclusive, accountable governance following an "open by default" approach. Examples include open datasets, open-source solutions and multiple reuse cases (within legislative limits).*

- ✓ *How and to what extent systems in the Western Balkan countries have facilitated increased co-operation and data-sharing between institutions and whether these have led to cost reductions and increased efficiency in accordance with the “once-only” principle.*
- ✓ *How governments in the region are redesigning services to focus on the needs of their citizens in ways that take advantage of data, the Internet and digital technologies (digital by default and/or digital by design), including the deployment of new technologies such as AI and blockchain.*
- ✓ *Whether and to what extent government transactions and services are fully available and updated online, including trust services and key e-government enablers such as e-ID, e-signature, e-payment, single sign-on, e-seals, etc.*

Regarding the areas of Digital Skills and Cyber Security, the study will build on the latest respective assessments conducted for the Western Balkans. The topic of Digital Skills has already been the subject of a comprehensive Western Balkans assessment undertaken by the RCC and the new study will refer to the findings of this assessment that relate to the public sector.

The analytical framework of the study will further define the sub-components of the different areas analysed in accordance with their importance from ReSPA's perspective (including in relation to its regional approach, regional networking, and the use of in-country support mechanisms).

An additional component of the study will refer countries' existing **Public Administration Reform Action Plans with related measures**, mapping key digitalisation initiatives in these areas

In all the topics included in the study, account will be taken of how digitalisation has been applied in tackling the pandemic **and the impacts of this crisis on the digitalisation process.**

ReSPA is therefore seeking a Key Senior Expert/Team Leader to provide the upgraded Service Delivery Study with a focus solely on analysing the digitalisation of public services in the areas specified for the assessment/Study.

The Key Senior Expert will work in close cooperation with a Senior EU expert and will approve the analytical framework with data collections sheets developed by Senior EU Expert. The Key Senior Expert will work on analysing the state of the art in the described areas, using methodology tools determined in the analytical framework (desk research, semi-structured interviews, etc.) as well as conducting in-depth analysis of the aggregated results from the different countries.

Based on a comparative analysis of the data collected via different methodical tools, the Key Senior Expert will formulate key findings and recommendations for ReSPA Members and Kosovo⁵ in a single Regional Study on Digitalisation in the Western Balkans.

3. Tasks and responsibilities

⁵ * 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

The Expert shall perform the following tasks and responsibilities:

Preparatory activities - up to six days (6) days

- Become familiar with “Digitalisation and E Government” sections within ReSPA Comparative Study on Service Delivery and ReSPA support mechanisms of support;
- Review and agree upon the analytical framework prepared by the Senior EU expert and in agreement with ReSPA;
- Examine and approve the data-collection sheets prepared by the Senior EU Expert.

Development of Western Balkans Regional Study on Digitalisation - up to twenty-two (22) working days

- Conduct desk research based on the agreed analytical framework prepared by the Senior EU Expert.
- Map and examine existing international studies related to the digitalisation of public services that include Western Balkans administrations (including a recent Situation Analysis and Comparative Best Practice Study developed by ReSPA related to key digital enablers in Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- Conduct a comparative analysis of the data collected from international studies on digitalisation in accordance with the approved analytical framework.
- Review and harmonize the compiled country reports drafted by country experts,
- Include a digest of user-friendly and good digital usability examples from the region (with visuals and summarised key findings) as a specific output of the Study.
- Identify common issues across the region.
- Make recommendations on how to improve the digitalisation of public services in the region.
- Propose ways of measuring progress in the digitalisation of public services in the region.

Validation, revision and presentation of the Study – up to four (4) days

1. Based on ReSPA’s comments on the draft Study, the Expert will produce a final document including a Digest/compilation of analytically arranged examples of user-friendly services and good digital practices from the region (with visuals and summarised key findings).
2. The Expert will present the key findings from the desk research and analysed country reports at a meeting of ReSPA’s e-Government Working Group
3. The Expert will present the final study at a regional event (optional).

The Expert will liaise directly with the responsible ReSPA Programme Manager and take into consideration any instructions received beforehand. All materials should be submitted to the responsible ReSPA Programme Manager for approval beforehand and any necessary

adjustments must be made in accordance with the advice and feedback of the ReSPA Programme Manager.

4. Necessary Qualifications, Experience and Skills

Educational background:

Qualifications and skills:

- At minimum of a Master's level degree in Public Policy and Management, Public Administration, Science in Information Technology, or other related fields.

General professional experience:

- More than 15 years of professional experience in the field of public administration reform, including in the area of digitalisation.

Specific professional experience:

- A minimum of 5 years' relevant professional experience in the field of Service Delivery/Digitalisation.
- Experience in drafting analytical papers.
- Experience of working in the Western Balkans (desirable).

Skills:

- Strong presentation and moderation skills.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English.
- Ability to write clear and coherent guidance documents.
- Ability to work with people of different nationalities, religions, and cultural backgrounds.

5. Timing and Location

The assignment is expected to be undertaken primarily from home and only on-site on the occasion of the presentation of the Study at the regional event. The assignment will start in June 2022 and will be finished by the end of November 2022.

6. Remunerations

The assignment foresees remuneration for up to thirty-two (32) **working days** for the senior eGovernment Expert.

Activity	Max. No. of working days
Preparatory activities	6
Development of the WB Study on Digitalisation	22

Validation (and revision), presentations	4
Total	32

The payment will be made in two instalments:

- The first instalment will be made after the successful realization of the preparatory activities.
- The second instalment will be made after the development and validation of the Study and its successful presentation at the regional event.
- Note: No other costs will be covered apart from the expert's costs per day, which comprises the expert's fee per day and a lump sum for covering related costs (e.g. for travel, accommodation, local transport, meals, and other incidental expenses).

ReSPA reserves the right to change the timing and volume of the assignment and will inform the assigned expert in a timely manner if such changes occur.

7. Reporting and Final Documentation

The Expert will be requested to deliver the following documents before the payment is conducted:

Outputs

- A Western Balkans Regional Study on Digitalisation with a Digest of user-friendly e-services and practices (in the draft and the final document)
- Presentation of the Study at the regional event
- (Post-study) Report on the development of the Study

8. Reporting and Final Documentation

The Expert will be requested to deliver the following documents:

- *The final report* (in English), no later than three days after the completion of the Assignment. The report will be subject to the approval of the ReSPA as a contracting authority;
- A timesheet (original and signed);
- An invoice (original and signed).