

## EU SCHEME FOR YOUR PROFESSIONALS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

### Introduction

Integration to the European Union (EU) requires a professional, accountable and effective public administration, free of political interference and corruption as well as accessible to all citizens. At the same time, EU membership heavily depends on an administration that is specialised in EU *acquis* and capable of meeting the challenges of the integration process. Given the importance assigned to public administration reform (PAR) in the enlargement process, the EU supports the six Western Balkans countries (i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>1</sup>, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) not only through guidance and political support but also through dedicated pre-accession funds, institutional cooperation instruments (Twinning, TAIEX and SIGMA) and capacity development (through the Regional School of Public Administration – ReSPA). Public administration reform and good governance continue to be key priorities under the political and administrative criteria.

Despite important reforms initiated in the aftermath of communist collapse and the launching of the EU integration process for the region, public administrations in all six Western Balkans countries demonstrate similar structural and procedural weaknesses and capacity gaps related to both policy analysis and formulation as well as to the management of EU integration agenda and process. European Commission and OECD SIGMA country reports confirm a pressing need for, among other, “strengthening public governance”; “fighting corruption”; “strengthening the rule of law”; enhancing “public administration capacity”; improving the “difficult business environment” and developing a “professional civil service”.

The Paris Balkans 2016 Summit reconfirmed the European perspective for all Western Balkans countries. In the circumstances marked by the outcome of the referendum in the UK, the regional leaders also reaffirmed that their countries’ future lies in the European Union.

Aiming at supporting the accession process, the European Commission and the Western Balkans governments agreed to implement a **pilot one-year Project** for a regional executive training programme and exchange component for young civil servants from the Western Balkans.

The **overall objective** of the Project is to contribute to progress in the accession process and deepen regional cooperation in the Western Balkans

**Specific Objectives** are further refined in its specific objectives as follows:

- **Specific Objective 1:** To **build professional capacity** and prepare the next generation of public administrators and policy makers in the six Western Balkan countries who will be in charge of the accession process and drive and lead future change in their societies, in particular those required under the SAA implementation and accession negotiation process.
- **Specific Objective 2:** To promote the **regional cooperation** element of the EU integration process at the level of civil service by making cross-border connections between these leaders and agents of change

Therefore, the Project’s specific purposes **resonate well** with the EU’s enlargement policy for the Western Balkans and **mirror** the European Commission’s objective under the Multi-Country European Integration Facility programme to assist the IPA II beneficiaries in the overall development towards EU accession and regional reconciliation.

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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.