



# PAR

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

#KosovaPAR2023



**300 +  
PARTICIPANTS**



**58  
SPEAKERS**



**12  
INSIGHTFUL  
PANELS**



**6  
PLENARY  
SESSIONS**

“Public Administration Reforms for an  
Agile and Resilient Governance”



### **Cooperation and networking**

Representatives from over 21 countries, including political figures, academics, public officials, experts.

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The KosovaPAR2023 conference concluded by leaving a resounding message: the journey towards a robust and inclusive public administration is not a destination, but a continuous process of evolution. By acknowledging challenges, embracing innovation, and fostering genuine collaboration, Kosovo can weave a stronger public service tapestry, one that promises a brighter future for all its citizens.



# KOSOVAPAR2023 Conference Report



22-24  
November  
2023

## Public Administration Reforms for an Agile and Resilient Governance

Last November, the Republic of Kosova hosted KosovaPAR2023, an international conference dedicated to Public Administration Reform (PAR) and a first-ever event that brought together in Kosova over 21 countries to explore various aspects of reforms in the field. The main conference theme "**Public Administration Reforms for an Agile and Resilient Governance**" was discussed through 12 vibrant panels and 6 plenaries. For two days, political figures, experts, and practitioners exchanged on how to implement reforms that contribute in making governance more robust while at the same time adapted to new contexts and realities. **The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo led the conference in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister** and with the invaluable support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the University of Prishtina, and crucial international partners like the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and the International Finance Corporation (WBG). The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosova, Mr. Albin Kurti, the Minister of Internal Affairs as well as the Ambassador of Germany to the Republic of Kosova opened the conference, while Professor Wolfgang Drechsler from Harvard University/University College London/Tallinn Technology University delivered a keynote speech on "The Future of Public Administration: Agility, Stability, Digitality."

KosovaPAR2023 event offered the opportunity **to delve deeply into the concept of PAR and analyse international trends and approaches** in order to ultimately pave the way for more practical and impactful reforms applicable in Kosova and elsewhere. Hence, the conference strived to not only enrich theoretical understanding but also **provide guidance for real-world implementation of effective reforms**.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kosova in their opening speeches highlighted the efforts of the government in introducing advanced and well-informed policies that contribute to making our public administration more agile and able to deliver to citizens and businesses increasing demands. In an ever-changing world where technologies and digitalization occupy a significant role in delivering public services and conducting government affairs, the leadership of the Republic of Kosova pointed out the efforts to modernize and digitalize public administration.

Prime Minister Kurti highlighted the following steps undertaken by the government:

- Approval of the new strategy for public administration;
- Approval of the new strategies for e-government and cybersecurity;
- Approval of the law on public officials;
- Approval of the law on public sector salaries.

With the Law on Public Officials and the Law on Public Sector Salaries, the government has created, among other things, all the appropriate mechanisms for:

- Open recruitments for everyone from outside and within the public administration;
- Regeneration and strengthening of human capacities (diaspora, internships for young men and women);
- Opening the system for the inclusion of women and girls in leadership positions;
- Fair representation of communities in each category;
- Equal opportunities for the employment of persons with disabilities;
- Building-up a career concept (career advancement opportunities for civil servants including those from scholarship programs such as the Young Cells Scheme);
- Real opportunities for career advancement through the mechanism of fixed-term mandates at managerial levels;
- Performance measurement: quality and fairness
- Fair remuneration for public officials, removing injustices, arbitrariness and abuses;
- Building-up of a legal order: moving away from a chaotic situation with 58 normative acts regulating salaries to only one comprehensive law; and from 170 different bonuses, without any criteria and procedures, to only 15 well-defined bonuses with clear criteria and procedures.
- Reduction of the difference between the lowest and the highest salary, i.e. the "compression ratio" has gone from 20 times what it was to only 4.78 times, significantly raising the lowest salaries and reducing those that were abnormally high for a country like Kosovo.

The number of services digitalized has increased from less than 20 to more than 150, and this year we are planning to add another 100 services to our e-Kosova platform. The process of rationalization of agencies is contributing to speeding up decision-making and implementation of decisions. In his concluding remarks, Prime Minister Kurti said that the reforms conducted by his government enable exactly what was discussed in the two days of the conference: flexibility and stability in public administration.

On his keynote speech, Professor Drechsler emphasized the connection between public administration, innovation, and economic growth, arguing that bureaucracy can play a crucial role in enabling innovation

and contributing to making the entrepreneurial state. Public administration reform is not the same as digitalization and vice-versa, both must be conducted jointly and simultaneously. According to Prof. Drechsler, digitalization cannot be successful without competent civil servants, and digitalization is a means to improve working conditions and the performance of civil servants, as well as to deliver public services in an easier and faster manners to citizens and businesses. Highly educated and trained civil servants are key, and the project of Kosova to establish the Kosova National School of Administration will highly contribute to improving public administration in Kosova. For Prof. Drechsler, the reforms in public administration conducted by the Government of the Republic of Kosova are a living proof that reformed tailored based on context matter more than fashion-driven reforms, and the significant improvement of ranking of Kosova in almost all international indexes related to governance and democracy as well as economic growth adds to the credibility of the positive change happening in Kosova.

**Among the many topics that were tackled, corruption was undoubtedly an important one given its detrimental impact in public governance,** principles of responsible management, and therefore in citizens' life quality and well-being and consequently their trust in public officials and institutions. The discussion concentrated on the **necessity of effective enforcement of public values, institutional ethics and personal honesty.** In that respect, an emphasis was put on the adopted standards of professional conduct, ethics codes and charters for individuals holding public office which were drafted and implemented the last decade by governments and international institutions and organizations. Defining what is right and wrong, including the key role of different societal and political actors, is a direct **matter related to rule of law, education and transmission from one generation to another.** **Although socio-cultural context and political are important in fighting corruption,** it is proven that a professional bureaucracy, driven by core principles such as meritocracy, accountability, transparency, openness, integrity and inclusion, is vital in fighting corruption and, at the same time, in promoting high ethical standards and public values. Hence, the efforts in professionalizing public administration and enhancing the integrity of civil servants and institutions directly impact the issue of tackling corruption at the institutional and national level.

**Through a managerial perspective, a panel provided insights on the way how to modernize public administration.** It appeared evident that reform and organizational change must be based on a clear strategy that allows preventive rather than corrective/punishing policies, that **administrative reforms should be embedded within the broader context of social perception and acceptability** by all relevant stake-holders. Moreover, it was specifically emphasized that **reforms require preliminary investigations that provide data and results** (see relevance of the qualitative and/or quantitative methodology), while comparisons and lessons from other countries are also useful (see importance of being connected to international and European networks of practitioners in public administration). The managerial perspective requires also the implementation of training and development of the key actors of the reforms (see programs such as "train the trainers").

A crucial aspect of modernization of the public service is based on **policies allowing a gender mainstreaming in public policy and budgeting**. As a key component of PAR, gender perspective was discussed in a specific panel in order to present the different actions undertaken for and by the public administration of Kosova, in compliance with the **Kosovo Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022-2027 and its Action Plan 2022-2024**. The panelists exchanged insights on recent developments regarding the inclusion of gender mainstreaming into PAR, including through **Gender Responsive Budgeting and Public Procurement policies**. The modernization of public administration and services cannot be completed without thorough **consideration of accessibility**, a topic covered by a panel on the compliance with principles of **equality of rights and non-discrimination**. Among others issues, the audience could be informed further on the new national strategy for persons with disabilities and a first-ever draft regulation for employment of people with disabilities, both in the process of being finalized and in full harmony with the new Law on Public Officials - the latter significantly improves the employment procedures and possibilities for people with disabilities.

Obviously, **as PAR is directly tied to the EU membership**, a still-potential candidate country like **Kosova needs to ensure at the earliest stage a quality policy planning in public administration** in order to shape an effective governance, ensure a high level of performance in delivering public services, social inclusion and economic competitiveness. Hence, a panel focused specifically on recent developments in the area of **strategic planning by combining theoretical knowledge with practical experiences**. For instance, the panellists could share their analyses for the best possible **internal coordination system when it comes to the management of overarching processes** (i.e. connected to the European integration), or by sharing the best possible organizational models ensuring the **effectiveness of the strategic planning or the performance management system**, without forgetting the role of the combination with data-driven and technology.

As mentioned by the keynote speaker, PAR goes hand in hand with digital transformation, both are complementary. **In the meantime, it is also clear that digitalization cannot take place without simultaneous cybersecurity measures**. A specific panel gathering the ministers of the region allowed the sharing of ongoing experiences throughout the Western Balkans. The speakers insisted on the crucial importance of **guaranteeing the building of human capacity and physical infrastructure** in order to set-up a safe cyberspace environment. To illustrate such a stance, the panel focused on the transformative processes undertaken by Western Balkan states, with a focus on the achievements in Albania and Kosovo (i.e. in digitalization of public services, administrative procedures, consideration of vulnerable groups, trainings to enhance digital skills, digital diplomacy, etc.) and on their infrastructure and legislation measures aiming to prevent all cyber threats.

Additionally and in a separate panel, the discussion over the digitalization challenges was broadened and focused on how **the bureaucracy can become a vector of innovation** in line with the ongoing fourth industrial revolution leading to an improvement of public sector capabilities. As a matter of fact, rapid digital transformation, the consequence of adapting to new realities due to Covid crisis or wars (see

Ukraine war), we are witnessing a shift from classic public service reception desks to one-stop-shops where citizens can receive many public services under one roof and more and more to online space enabling the public to get services without physically visiting the institutions. In addition to the example of Ukraine displayed by Deputy-Minister for digitalization, Ms. Valeriya Ionan, other **examples from the world were displayed**, like Latvia which corroborates the **importance of the whole of society transformation**, or Singapore which demonstrates how governance and entrepreneurial thinking, driven by **design thinking**, drives citizen-centred services and economic prosperity. The whole new technologies (i.e. expansion of automation and machine learning) oblige to plan and prepare the managers, the **future of jobs and skills** needed among the civil servants, while **ensuring that no citizen is left behind or excluded** by a shift to digital and online services. With such a young population, **Kosova has great opportunities to catch on rapidly the train of progress.**

Achieving good governance heavily relies on the **establishment of an agile and resilient administration**. As it was emphasized in a panel, **the democratization and sustainable development of institutions in post-conflict countries is a long-haul process** that requires extensive and well-coordinated efforts. Yet, there is a catch that must be considered, including for the requirements derived from the EU integration process: **the sole focus on stability might create rigid institutions which do not favour innovation**, key reforms and governance improvements. The lessons learnt from post-conflict environments demonstrate that **“one-size-fits-all” models are not a solution**, and that corresponds perfectly to the PAR process in Kosova. **Countries should therefore adapt, if not develop, models to their own context** and not conduct such key processes solely based on the guidance of predominant external bodies. On the ground, **the appropriateness and implementation of legislation remain a major challenge**, as well as the enshrinement of good governance principles such as meritocracy, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. In that respect, under the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, **the Government of Kosova is deeply committed to move on with a citizens-centric PAR**, as indicated by the content of the new PAR strategy, the new strategy on e-governance, and the two major laws aimed to address the structural problems of human resources management within the public administration.

**It has been noted that combined acts of reforms require a culture that is open for innovation**, and should take place through three approaches - displayed in a panel focused on the topic. The **first approach** is to look at the co-creation and co-delivery with stakeholders, identifying the main challenges related to leaving the comfort-zone of doing business as usual and tapping the potential of shared ideas and expertise. The **second approach** is to foster the knowledge transfer through the governmental entities, and especially the identification of the relevant matters through the development of co-operation or integration with international organisations and networks. Adopting innovative solutions from other countries and organisations provides opportunities, while at the same time unchallenged application embeds the risks of ending up with unsuitable results. The **third approach** is to discuss the preconditions related to the necessary human and technologic capacities in order to embrace innovative and effective ways of working and delivering public services. Short, cultural elements, incentives for attracting talents,

processes for efficient learning and skills development among civil servants need to be in place for making credible progress beyond slogans.

**As broad investments in training and education are key** to impulse a culture of and for change among civil servants and their managers, a panel specifically focused on the **future Kosova National School of Public Administration (KNSPA)**. The panellists reasserted that the quality of public services is equal to the price of this strategic investment – the creation of KNSPA. In that respect, the Government of Kosova has already taken the decision **to establish the school**, which will focus on **education, training, research and in-house consulting**. A high ambition that needs to be structured and developed. To this end, the Government has established an **Advisory Board comprised of renowned international and national experts** and who are accompanying the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kosova in this process of establishing KNSPA.

In a separate panel, a discussion evolved around already existing practices throughout the world where many countries are re-evaluating the role of the public services, the **necessary nexus between academics and technocrats and PAR**. The importance that **every reform should be evidence-based** was underscored, and so this is where universities, schools or institutes of governance give their contributions from the global trends and to the building of a more responsive, efficient, effective, reliable, accountable, agile and resilient bureaucracy. In the same line, a specific panel was dedicated to the **exploration of joint activities between universities and the public administration**, in order to co-create, run and evaluate tailor-made under and post-graduate academic courses for public officers, or to produce scientific research on various aspects related to public administration, and ultimately bridge the gap between the academic environment and public service.

Going back to the core of **PAR as a key component of the Cluster 1 of the European integration process**, it was underlined several times that **PAR cannot be a rigid "ticking the box" reform process**. A panel dedicated to the **streamlining of (E-) Governance and Administrative Burden Reduction (ABR)** raised that the evaluation of such reforms remains questionable even among the EU Member States, as they do not share a common model of public administration. Having said that, an important challenge persists once good practises from other countries are shared: **how can we identify and implement the most suitable PAR with the characteristics of the governance and society of a defined country?** Although no clear and universal response to the question emerges, it was highlighted that the exploration of strategies and best practises for implementing imported policies, especially with regards to e-governance, is deemed **useful when focused on user-centric design, data security and the digital divide**. Through the illustration of two practical cases in Kosova, justice and taxation sectors, the ABR process in **Kosova has come at a timely moment to adapt to the needs of a modern governance adjusted to the evolving needs of the citizens**. In fact, ABR enhances the citizens' expected transparency, efficiency, and accessibility to public services, it fosters economic growth and innovation and contributes so to the prosperity of the communities, while the **use of the "Design Thinking"** (thinking outside the box) as an innovative method allows continuous improvement of service



delivery. The implementation of ABR must be conducted in full alignment with PAR process, part of which it anyways is.

**Among the strategic sectors of reforms** that were discussed, it is crucial to first mention the process of **rationalization of agencies** in Kosovo which has been revitalized during the mandate of the current government. A specific panel recalled that the multiplicity of structures is an obstacle to effective implementation of policies and to accountability. In this regard, the discussion addressed a number of questions which also demonstrated the political will to implement such program and succeed in making policy execution faster, improving accountability and transparency as well as ultimately improving service delivery. Second, the **Inspection institutions** were discussed during a specific panel which gathered heads of institutions and well-known experts. In view of the variety of the existing inspection systems, it was emphasized that Kosovo must embark in a tailor-made framework and ensure that the ongoing inspection reform is well coordinated with the overall PAR, including in terms of budget and human resources. More broadly, lessons learnt were considered from the inspection reform in Albania, and in particular from the E-inspection (which software should be assessed and adapted to Kosovo's needs and realities), a system deemed as a powerful tool to reduce corruption and the interrelated human factor. A third area of reforms covered by a particular panel has addressed **local governance**, its legal framework and their progress. Essential topics related to local governance were discussed by the line Minister and domestic and international experts. These enriching discussions allowed the panellists to highlight the efforts made by the government to align with the contemporary dynamics and best practises (including with neighbouring countries and citizens' engagements) and to invest in human capacities, including thanks to multiple types of cooperation and memberships as well as due to the fact local governance is also engaged in its own digital transformation.

### **Conclusion: a roadmap for the future**

**The KosovoPAR2023 conference did not shy away from acknowledging the challenges public administration in Kosovo is facing.** Issues like brain drain, political influence, and resource constraints were openly discussed. However, **amidst these challenges, a spirit of optimism and determination** pervaded the event. Panellists and participants alike showcased a dedication to tackling these obstacles and embracing the opportunities for positive change. The event painted **a multifaceted portrait of Kosovo's public administration**, unveiling both intricate challenges and promising pathways for the future. Through a tapestry of panel discussions, the event delved into diverse themes, sparking insightful conversations on the need for innovation, inclusivity, and strategic reforms. The case of Kosovo clearly showed that profound reforms engaged by the government have already yielded results and proved that such reforms should continue and must be intensified.

In a way, through this conference, a **roadmap for the future** has emerged, and it calls for an **agile and innovative public administration** powered by technology and driven by a commitment to **gender equality and inclusivity**. Discussions emphasized for instance the vital importance of **bridging the gap between academic theory and practice**, streamlining structures for **efficiency**, and **empowering local**

**governance.** Above all, it underscores the need for continuous dialogue, collaboration, and a shared commitment to building a public sector that serves the needs of all citizens in Kosovo and elsewhere. In fact, the case of Kosova and the other cases discussed by academics, practitioners, decision-makers and students from France, Brazil, Ukraine, Uganda, Malta, Netherlands, Finland and many other countries served the true purpose of this conference: an exchange of practices and a rich dialogue for better public administration and governance.

**The KosovaPAR2023 conference concluded by leaving a resounding message:** the journey towards a robust and inclusive public administration is not a destination, but **a continuous process of evolution.** By acknowledging challenges, embracing innovation, and fostering genuine collaboration, Kosova and other states can weave a stronger public service.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosova and all the participants already made an appointment **to pursue the lively discussions at KosovaPAR2024, on 25-27 September 2024 in Prishtina.**

*#KosovaPAR2023 Team*

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