

Social Science Research in Kosovo

This policy brief is the outcome of the conference on “The role of social sciences in societies in transition, with special emphasis on Kosovo” held at the Department of Political Science, University of Prishtina (UP) on 5 October 2012. The conference, organized by the Centre for Political Courage and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Regional Research Promotion Programme, served as a constructive platform for around 50 university professors, local and international researchers, civil society representatives, and students to exchange their views and experiences regarding research in the social sciences in Kosovo. In line with this, the conference aimed to both identify the best practices for strengthening research capacities and to increase cooperation between public and private higher education providers and think-tanks in Kosovo. The following sections outline issues and challenges addressed during this conference.

The state of research at the University of Prishtina

The UP faces numerous challenges including lack of funding, inadequate research capacities, few research centres, ineffective governance structures, insufficient and out-dated collections of books and journals at the university libraries, a limited number of scientific publications, and a lack of diversity of courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as out-dated teaching methods. Parallel to this there is little analysis as to what study programmes would be relevant and contribute meaningfully to social, economic and political change.

What are the main problems?

- There is no connection between teaching and recent scientific research.
- The university is only minimally exposed to international cooperation and new experiences and expertise.
- There is a lack of inter-institutional coordination facilitating the application for international funds. Nor do Faculties and Departments develop joint programmes, projects or grant applications.
- UP lacks the necessary human capacity to apply for international projects and absorb international funds.
- Research is sporadic, uncoordinated, individual- and not institutionally based.
- There is no applied social science research that would contribute to the design and implementation of public policies.
- UP lacks a budget and initiatives supporting research and new MA and PhD programmes.
- There is a low level of mobility (e.g. travel limitations due to a restrictive visa regime, and lack of funds) among academic staff and students.
- There is no implementation of the Lisbon Agenda, the Bologna Process, and the European Strategy 2020, according to which entrepreneurship, innovation, and research should be inextricably related to one another.
- There is a lack of research institutes and partnerships with other universities and academic institutions in the region.

State of research at private higher education providers

Private institutions of higher education appeared for the first time in Kosovo in 2004. Currently, there are 17 accredited private colleges and 4 private higher schools, but there are no private universities, as defined by the 2011 Law on Higher Education. There is little analysis as to what study programmes would be relevant and contribute meaningfully to social and economic change. The quality of research undertaken at private higher education establishments in Kosovo is poor.

What are the main problems?

- There is lack of adequate policies promoting the development of in-house research capacities. With the exception of some private colleges, such as Riinvest College, most of Kosovo's private higher education providers do not allocate funds for research.

State of research in the civil society sector

Civil society is mostly identified with Non-Governmental Organizations. Think tanks, which only recently emerged in the public sphere, are oriented towards the provision of alternative expertise on government policies. Though the number of civil society organizations registered since 1999 has reached 5000, only a minimal number actually conducts research. Further, the research capacities of think tanks in Kosovo are limited and the quality of research outputs remains lower than in other South-eastern European countries or those of the European Union.

What are the main problems?

- There is lack of knowledge on what think tanks are, how they operate, and what products (intellectual, analytical, research, advocacy, policy) they create.
- Due to the deteriorating quality of higher education in general, the level of analysis and research in think tanks is weak.
- The quality of research in the think tank sector is often above the average level produced by public and private higher education establishments.
- There is a lack of cooperation between think tanks, public universities and private higher education providers.
- There is a lack of interaction and cooperation among think tanks, media and public institutions on research and scientific matters.
- Though more than 5000 non-governmental organizations are registered, only a small number of them can be classified as research driven think tank organizations. Moreover only seven think tank organizations are operational.¹
- Only a minimal number of people in Kosovo work as researchers.²
- Though the majority of researchers in Kosovo have completed their education abroad, the number of researchers with

¹ Agron Demi, "Research and analysis in the context of think tank organizations in Kosovo and the need for deeper cooperation between universities and think tanks", GAP Institute, 2012. According to Agron Demi, Executive Director of GAP Institute, these are the following think tank organizations in Kosovo: GAP Institute, Riinvest Institute, KIPRED, INDEP, Law and Political Studies Group, Kosovo Security Studies Centre, and D4D.

² From 208,454 employees, only 141 of them work in the research sector, or approximately 0.05% of people employed. Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 'Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011: Main Data', 2012.

a PhD degree is very low; only 2 PhDs are involved in think tanks.³

- Not a single think tank in Kosovo is ranked among the best thirty think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe and Europe in general.⁴
- Think tanks are constrained in their application of quantitative methods, for two reasons: first, their value is not understood or appreciated, and second, there is a lack of financial and human capacities to conduct such research.⁵
- Think tanks are largely donor-oriented and, as a result, to the extent that they do research, they tend to work on similar topics and largely reproduce each other's work.

Recommendations

To the Assembly of Kosovo:

- Pass the Law on Research and Scientific Activity in Kosovo. According to the existing draft law, Kosovo would allocate 0.7% of its budget to science, which would translate into about 11 million Euros annually for scientific research, while the EU member states target in research and science is 3% of Growth Domestic Product (GDP).⁶

To the Government of Kosovo:

- Significantly increase investment in science and research. The proportion of GDP for scientific research and innovation in Kosovo should be increased to 0.03% of GDP in 2014. Kosovo currently allocates 0.01% of its GDP to scientific research, while the average GDP allocation to scientific research in the 27 European Union member states is 1.85%, almost 200 times as much. This investment in science and research would have a direct impact on sustainable economic development and export growth in Kosovo.

To the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo:

- Allocate sufficient funds for effective implementation of the National Science Programme. The planned financial need for implementing the National Science Programme during 2012 was 3.4 million Euros, while Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo (MEST) allocated only 48 thousand Euros for the implementation of the programme.
- Formalize mechanisms of dialogue and exchange of information with the academic community, scientific research institutions, public and private higher education institutions, and think tank organizations to inform them about funds allocated by MEST, and funding programmes such as the FP7 programme, Europe 2020, and Horizon 2020.

- Facilitate a permanent dialogue between political elites, academic community, media, NGO sector and broader public on the significance of investments in scientific research.

To the University of Prishtina:

- Establish research based MA and PhD study programmes, and thematic scientific conferences.
- Invest in research infrastructure and trainings and make it available to teaching staff and students e.g. statistical software programmes and access to electronic libraries as well as increase of computing capacities, and training in survey design and analysis.
- Reduce the teaching hours of teaching assistants from 10 to 6 in order to allow time for research and further academic development.
- Recruit PhD candidates studying abroad and those who have shown outstanding results during their studies at UP.
- Expand the current physical infrastructure, currently the space is insufficient and there are academic staff members who have no office to work.
- Encourage and stimulate the academic staff to publish in foreign academic journals that are internationally recognized and have an impact in their fields.
- Observe selection criteria for faculty members more stringently. Appointments and tenure should be awarded based not only on the quantity but also the quality of the research produced.
- Establish and financially support the publication of academic journals in the Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Economy and Faculty of Law.
- Build strategic partnerships with universities, and research institutes in the region and Europe for developing and implementing of joint research based MA and PhD programmes.
- Set up mobility programmes for academic staff and students, and make use of programmes such as TEMPUS for curricula development or CEEPUS for mobility.
- Set up a special office to support inter-institutional coordination among faculties and departments and with sufficient capacities to support the application for and absorption of EU funds, such as from the forthcoming financial framework for scientific research 'Horizon 2020'.

3 Agron Demi, "Research and analysis in the context of think tank organizations in Kosovo and the need for deeper cooperation between universities and think tanks", GAP Institute, 2012.

4 James G. McGann, "2011 Global Go To Think Tanks Report and Policy Advice", Think Tank and Civil Societies Program – University of Pennsylvania USA. Available at http://www.gotthinktank.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/2011-Global-Go-To-Think-Tanks-Report_FINAL-VERSION.pdf (Accessed 13 November 2012)

5 Florian Qehaja, "The role of think tanks as an alternative expertise in Kosovo: data collection, methodological development and ethics", KCSS, 2012.

6 See more, *The Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration, 2007–2013*. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/reaching-the-goals/targets/index_en.htm (Accessed 13 November 2012)

- Recruit sufficient academic staff to implement the Lisbon Agenda, the Bologna Process, and the European Strategy 2020 where entrepreneurship, innovation and research are inextricably connected to one another.

To private higher education providers:

- Increase competitiveness, and develop BA and MA programmes in social sciences to complement, and not only replicate, existing BA and MA programmes in public universities.
- Establish academic journals in social sciences, and allocate funds for conducting research in their respective institutions.

To think tank organizations:

- Increase the level and quality of analysis and research to the level of think tanks elsewhere in the region.
- Increase cooperation among think tanks, public universities, and private higher education providers in Kosovo.
- Increase public awareness through establishing a stronger presence in the media, or through a targeted campaign, of

what think tanks are, what their profile is, and what type of research studies they offer.

- Employ more researchers with MAs, and in particular with PhDs, as the total number of people working in the research sector is only 0.05 % of the employed population.
- Create a more positive communicative environment between think tanks, the public university, and decision-making institutions in Kosovo, in order that the research findings of these organizations have a larger impact on the development of well-informed public policies.

To international donors:

- Support institutional development, policy development and development of social sciences in particular.
- Support joint MA and PhD programmes between UP and universities abroad.
- Support UP and private providers of higher education in Kosovo to strengthen their capacities in project writing and methodology and to absorb funds from the forthcoming financial framework 'Horizon 2020'.

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