

# The State of Research in Social Sciences at the University of Prishtina

Roundtable Discussion: April 2013

On 5 October 2012, the Centre for Political Courage (CPC) organised an international conference on *The Role of Social Science in Societies in Transition, with Particular Emphasis in Kosovo*. The conference was supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, within the framework of the Regional Research Promotion Programme in the Western Balkans (RRPP). Around 50 university professors, local and international researchers and civil society representatives contributed to identifying issues and outlining a number of recommendations for the University of Prishtina (UP), private colleges and research organisations in Kosovo. In February 2013, the CPC published an analysis entitled *Social Science Research in Kosovo*.

On 19 April 2013, the CPC organised a roundtable to discuss follow-up actions that should be undertaken to implement the recommendations deriving from the *Social Science Research in Kosovo* analysis.<sup>1</sup> This roundtable discussed specific steps already underway and those yet to be taken to upgrade research capacities and increase motivation and stimulation of the UP's academic staff.

Three documents were addressed in this roundtable: *Social Science in Kosovo* (CPC); *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016* (UP); and *Information Report on Social Sciences and Humanities in Kosovo* (prepared for the WBC-INCO.NET project).

The content of this report is a summary of views expressed by the majority of participants in the roundtable and meetings, and not necessarily of institutions represented at this roundtable.

<sup>1</sup> On 5 April 2013 the CPC created a Working Group consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Rectorate of the UP, professors of the Department of Political Science, Department of Sociology and of the Faculty of Law, and representatives of civil society. This Working Group will attend meetings organised by the CPC and contribute to concrete steps to be taken on the subject of the roundtable held. Adem Beha, Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, is the Coordinator of the group.

## Social Science Research in the UP

The February 2012 analysis of *Social Science Research in Kosovo* found research lacking promise at the UP. Among the challenges outlined regarding research, this analysis found obstacles via a lack of funding, inadequate capacities for research, too few research centres, a multitude of dysfunctional research centres, ineffective project management structures, inadequate and outdated book journal collections in university libraries, homogenous courses offered, inadequate staffing and courses on research methods and finally a lack of MA and PhD programmes.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the international conference on *The Role of Social Science in Societies in Transition*, with Particular Emphasis in Kosovo, the CPC summed up 12 recommendations aimed at improving research and upgrading social studies and humanities at the UP.

In addition to tackling recommendations of the analysis on *Social Science Research in Kosovo*, Prof. Arben Hajrullahu also addressed several dilemmas: “First of all, to what extent are we prepared to relate study programmes with research, and, secondly, to what extent are we progressing or regressing when it comes to real internationalization of the University of Prishtina – not only in terms of signing bilateral agreements with Western universities, but also in terms of implementation of joint research programmes with such universities.”

## Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016

The *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016* is an important document creating clear objectives and measures for the advancement of research in the UP.<sup>3</sup> The strategy is based on the *National Science Programme 2010–2015*,<sup>4</sup> which identified four main objectives: Human resources, infrastructure, international cooperation and relation of research within the economy and society. Moreover, the strategy also includes its budget and action plans. According to estimates of the expert team that drafted the strategy, the budget amount required for its implementation is “1 to 3.5 % of the annual budget of the UP, without including [its] own income from the academic and economic activity.”<sup>5</sup> However, the gap between 1% and 3.5% is huge, leading one to question the clarity in estimated expenditures for implementation of the strategy. The anticipated or required presence of donor contributions also requires diagnosis.

The UP Research Vice-Rector, Prof. Avdullah Alija, presented the *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities*

2013–2016 and stressed the UP’s current commitment made by its management for research capacity-building. “Recently there were significant improvements in this regard. We have increased our activities on information sharing and research projects in Kosovo and the region by continuously updating the UP website and we have established a ‘Core Group’ to provide technical assistance in designing research projects in the University Prishtina,” said Vice-Rector Alija.<sup>6</sup>

Although the strategy regulates a wide range of areas in the sphere of research, this report presents only some aspects of the strategy that are related to recommendations derived from the CPC’s analysis that are also formulated as objectives of the strategy itself.

Each of the strategy’s objectives set out specific measures to achieve the expected results. Some of these measures are as follows: UP will support the development of at least five PhD study programmes in various disciplines and at least one interdisciplinary PhD programme; UP will provide financial support to at least 20 mobility grants per year for the most active UP researchers; adoption of a regulation on incentives for the staff involved in research/artistic work; establishment of at least five centres of excellence (research institutes) in the UP; access to at least two electronic platforms; creation of a ‘Core Group’ of 5–7 persons who will provide technical assistance for planning at least five research projects per year in the UP; allocation of at least 1% of the total budget of the UP to support implementation of international projects; and distribution of relevant information on international cooperation opportunities through the university’s electronic platform, etc.<sup>7</sup>

2 See *Social Science Research in Kosovo*, [http://www.rppp-westernbalkans.net/en/policy-dialogue/Kosovo/mainColumnParagraphs/00/text\\_files/file1/Policy\\_Brief\\_English.pdf](http://www.rppp-westernbalkans.net/en/policy-dialogue/Kosovo/mainColumnParagraphs/00/text_files/file1/Policy_Brief_English.pdf) (accessed on 24 April 2013).

3 See *Strategjia për Veprimtari Kërkimore Shkencore/Artistike dhe Zhvillimore 2013–2016 (Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016)*, <http://www.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/4fc95f03-b53f-4e7c-a2a0-c0056b9c43e4/Strategjia-per-veprimtari-kerkimore-shkencore-arti.aspx> (accessed on 23 April 2013).

4 *Programi Kombëtar i Shkencës i Republikës së Kosovës 2010-2015 (National Science Programme of the Republic of Kosovo 2010-2015)*, <http://www.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/21dfd45e-cd3e-47da-ad78-a2fe060ec1e9/Programi-Kombetar-i-Shkences-i-Republikes-se-Kosov.aspx> (accessed on 22 April 2013).

5 See *Strategjia për Veprimtari Kërkimore Shkencore/Artistike dhe Zhvillimore 2013–2016 (Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016)*, <http://www.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/4fc95f03-b53f-4e7c-a2a0-c0056b9c43e4/Strategjia-per-veprimtari-kerkimore-shkencore-arti.aspx> (accessed on 23 April 2013).

6 The ‘Core Group’ consists of: Prof. Dukagjin Pupovci, Chairman; Prof. Lule Ahmed, member; Prof. Qerim Qerimi, member; Prof. Avni Hajdari, member; Prof. But Dedaj, member; Prof. Hysen Bytyqi, member; Besnik Fetahu, member. See <http://www.uni-pr.edu/Kerkime-Shkencore/Grupi-Berthame.aspx> (accessed on 22 April 2013).

7 See *Strategjia për Veprimtari Kërkimore Shkencore/Artistike dhe Zhvillimore 2013–2016 (Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016)*, <http://www.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/4fc95f03-b53f-4e7c-a2a0-c0056b9c43e4/Strategjia-per-veprimtari-kerkimore-shkencore-arti.aspx> (accessed on 23 April 2013).

## Challenges and Actions

Challenges facing the UP are numerous. At the roundtable, participants, professors and the UP management identified some of the challenges and actions as follows.

### Challenges:

1. A small number of research projects compared to the needs of Kosovan society;
2. Insufficient capacities to absorb international funds for research projects;
3. Lack of teamwork. Research is carried out mainly on an individual basis;
4. The UP is relatively centralised and the *Law on Higher Education* does not create enough room, failing to regulate the financial autonomy of academic units and institutes within the UP;<sup>8</sup>
5. Lack of functionality of existing institutes within the UP that should be dealing with research;
6. Lack of flexibility by the UP in relation to research institutes within the university itself;
7. Legislation and contracts signed between the UP and academic staff does not contractually regulate research work of the academic staff. The majority of academic staff spends most of their time in teaching activities;
8. The UP adopted the *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016*, but there is no mechanism in place to monitor its implementation as of this time.

### Actions:

Despite the UP's research issues, its current management is undertaking a number of promising measures. For instance, in March 2013, through a special decision (no. 646), the UP created a 'Core Group' consisting of seven members in charge of providing technical assistance in developing research projects at the university. The 'Core Group' was created in accordance with the *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016*. In addition, the current UP management is taking certain steps in cooperation with new management from the faculties in order to re-functionalise existing research institutes. There are currently five institutes and one centre of excellence for teaching: The Social and Humanistic Studies Institute; the Institute for Examination of Materials; Media Institute; the Legal Research Institute; the MMGT (Mining, Metallurgy, Geology and Technology) Institute; and the Centre of Excellence for Teaching.<sup>9</sup> According to Prof. Avdullah Alija, the UP Board has recently approved requests for the establishment of three new institutions, two within the Faculty of Mathematics and Science and one within the Faculty of Economics.<sup>10</sup>

One of the problems facing university academic staff interested in research remains the lack of general information. However, dissemination of information by the UP on research and research projects has increased over the recent months. The UP's website is updated with new information on legislation, the *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016*, the National Science Plan and other documents related to research. The UP also recently distributed information on adopted projects funded by TEMPUS and other donors, summarising the current management staff in writing.

## Recommendations

### General:

- All stakeholders should fully implement the *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016*;
- All stakeholders should implement recommendations derived from the international conference on The Role of Social Science in Societies in Transition, with Particular Emphasis in Kosovo, as summarised in the policy brief Social Science Research in Kosovo, published in February 2013 by the CPC.

### Specific:

- Create monitoring mechanisms for implementing the *Strategy on Research/Artistic and Development Activities 2013–2016*. The mechanisms would involve all relevant stakeholders;
- UP must re-functionalise and provide full financial support to research institutes within its structures;
- UP and all other stakeholders should advocate for amending the *Law on Higher Education in Kosovo* in order to ensure financial autonomy of research institutes within the UP;
- UP should streamline bureaucratic procedures on the use of funds by research institutes and increase its flexibility in relation to research institutes;
- UP management should continue to strengthen and support the UP's 'Core Group';
- UP must adopt a regulation on personnel stimulation involved in research/artistic work, as set out by the strategy;

<sup>8</sup> Ligji Nr.04/L-037, Ligji për Arsimin e Lartë në Republikën e Kosovës, Neni 13 (Law No. 04/L-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo, Article 13). See <http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/ligjet/Ligji%20per%20arsimin%20e%20larte.pdf> (accessed on 21 May 2013).

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.uni-pr.edu/Kerkime-Shkencore/Institetet-Qendrat-kerkimore.aspx> (accessed on 23 April 2013).

<sup>10</sup> This information was sent as a comment while the drafting of this report was under construction by Prof. Avdullah Alija, Vice-Rector for Research of the University of Prishtina (accessed on 13 May 2013).

- UP should guarantee financial support covering at least 20 mobility grants each year for active researchers, as set out by the strategy;
- UP should develop at least five PhD programmes in various disciplines and at least one interdisciplinary PhD programme, as set out by the strategy;
- UP must allocate at least 1 % of its total budget to support implementation of international projects, as set out by the strategy.