

Regional Research Promotion Programme | **Western Balkans**

For excellent social science research in the
Balkans

www.rrpp-westernbalkans.net

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SEEDS Workshop II

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Overall objective:

*Sustainable transition-relevant **social science research capacities** in the Western Balkans region contribute to social, economic and institutional reforms in the individual countries as well as to their regional integration.*

*The programme is fully funded by the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by the University of Fribourg in cooperation with institutions in **Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia.***



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3 Pillars of Support



**Research
funding &
promotion**



**Capacity
building &
networking**



**Policy
dialogues**



Results 2008-2015

RESEARCH

- Under the umbrella topic “**Political, Social and Economic Change in the Western Balkans**”, we have supported **71 research projects** (47 regional and 24 national);
- The projects deal with topics relevant to transformation processes such as: Migration, social disparities and welfare state, governance and decentralisation, corruption, informality, media, gender, youth;
- One **regional pilot project** “State Capacities-Dealing with Floods in the Balkans” till October 2016;

Results 2008-2015

RESEARCH

The leading institutions within regional (and national) projects:

- Projects with the leading Albanian institution: 11
- Macedonian lead: 18
- Serbian lead: 23
- BiH lead: 15
- Kosovo lead: 3
- Montenegro lead: 1

Research outcomes range from monographs, edited volumes, scientific papers to policy briefs, documentaries, websites;

All research results available under: rrpp-westernbalkans.net/en/research.html

Results 2008-2015

CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

- By the end of 2015, **27 regional trainings** organised and conducted by international specialists for research methods and management, gathering over 400 participants;
- **4 annual scientific conferences** organised, **involving 600 regional and international scholars**. Aside from the benefits gained via networking, such conferences provide researchers an opportunity to present their work, exposing it to critical review.
- **Research Academy** for young scholars, April 2016, Sarajevo

Results 2008-2015

POLICY DIALOGUES

- National Policy Dialogues aiming at improvement of the status of social sciences and social scientist implemented in all countries;
- By 2016, RRPP wants to establish **functional mechanisms advocating for improvement of the status of social sciences** and linking relevant research and policy-making processes through **involvement of major actors of the core research process**: Researchers, universities, ministries, parliaments, academies, think-tanks, CSOs, media & publishing houses and other relevant stakeholders:

e.g. Serbia: Working Group on Young Researchers; Working Group on Social Science for the Benefit of the Society;

e.g. Albania: The National Conference “Fostering Evidence - Informed Policymaking Practices in Albania”; Young Researchers’ Club

e.g. BiH: **Policy Hub**, a web platform dedicated to the development of social research, with a focus on policy-relevant and applied research in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans <http://www.policyhub.net/en>.

- Special attention has been paid to **the young researchers’ community!**



RRPP 2014-2016

- **Institutional Research Partnerships** – Academic Mentoring;
- **21 Regional Projects;**
- **Policy Bridging Initiative** designed and conducted by International Center for Policy Advocacy ICPA.



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7 projects already accomplished

- ✓ RS_212: Are regulatory agencies in Serbia and Macedonia transparent and accountable?
- ✓ RS_214 Performance Audit and Policy Evaluation: On the Same or Parallel Tracks? (by the end of October)
- ✓ RS_225: Representation of Gender Minority Groups in Media: Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia
- ✓ MK_211 Creative work in post-communist countries: Exploration of experiences of work and work-related inequality in creative industries and creative labour markets in Macedonia & Albania
- ✓ MK_217: The impact of socio-economic structure of rural population on success of rural development policy
- ✓ MK_226: Migration of health care workers from Western Balkans - Analysing causes, consequences and policies
- ✓ RS_232: Informal Practices of Capturing Economic Resources by Political Elites: Exploring Party Patronage in Kosovo and Serbia

- ❖ Online journal “Comparative Balkan Politics”: <http://www.balkanelectoralstudies.org/>
(RRPP Project: “Balkan Electoral Comparative Study: Impact of Personal Vote on Internal Party Democracy”)

- ❖ Documentaries: <http://www.genderminoritygroups.org/media-archive/documentaries/#>
(RRPP Project: “Representation of Gender Minority Groups in Media: Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia”)



Institutional Research Partnerships



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International Academic Mentoring

- **20 top-class universities** from Europe and beyond act as international mentoring institutions.
- Main lesson learned: mentoring through institutions produce better results with regard to inclusion into consortia and development of networks, than engagement of individual mentors.

Academic Mentoring and H2020

KS_205 Mapping Clientelism and its Causes: Rents, Rent-seeking and Democracy in Kosovo and Albania (1998-2013)

Mentoring Institution: Staffordshire University , Prof. Geoffrey Pugh

- Drini Imami (team Albania) joined Staffordshire University and the CASE Network as a partner on an **EU H2020** project bid – TRANSFORM-WBC
- Professor Geoff Pugh is now cooperating with Drini Imami to help establish a “**West Balkan Association for Economic Policy**” (working title).

RS_214 Performance Audit and Policy Evaluation: On the Same or Parallel Tracks?

Mentoring Institution: Hertie School of Governance, Berlin (Prof. Gerhard Hammerschmid

- CEP (European Policy Center, Serbia), EPI (European Policy Institute, Macedonia) and IA (Institute Alternativa, Montenegro) have established close cooperation at the institutional level by creating regional network called TEN;
- HSoG and TEN, together with the University of Nottingham lead the formation of a consortium for a **Horizon 2020** bid;

Academic Mentoring and EU Marie Curie Fellowship 2015

BA_212 Social capital, migration and entrepreneurship – evidence from a post-conflict environment

Mentoring Institution: Aston University Business School (Prof. Mickiewicz, dr Rebmann).

- They managed to create a huge database (6,000 households – 40 per municipality, 246 established and 174 nascent entrepreneurs, plus all available municipal data)
- Based on the data they submitted an application for **EU Marie Curie Fellowship 2015**;

Academic Mentoring and Creation of Regional Networks of Excellence

RS_213: Impact of Fiscal Decentralisation on Local Economic Development in Serbia and Montenegro

Mentoring institution: LSE (Dr William Bartlett)

- Dr Bartlett appointed Sanja Kmezic (project leader) to be a coordinator of the newly-established working group on decentralisation within the LSEE Research Network on Social Cohesion.

MK_231 The challenges and Opportunities for Employment of marginalized Groups by Social Enterprises

Mentoring institution: Glasgow Caledonian University, Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health (Prof Simone Baglioni)

- International Colloquium “Solidarity in Transition? Researching Social Enterprise in Post-Communist Societies”, 21-22 April in Tirana, Albania



Fostering regional approach



Overcoming political and ethnic antagonisms

Figuring Out the Enemy: Re-imagining Serbian-Albanian Relations

- Workshop at the University of Prishtina was held in may 2015. This was one of the first official meetings and initiatives for academic collaboration of scholars from the University of Belgrade and University of Prishtina since the late 1990s;
- Round Table on RRPP project “**Gender that Matters: Poverty and Social Inclusion – Social Protection Status in Rural Kosovo and Serbia**” took place in October 2015 in **Kosovska Mitrovica** (project leader: Jelena Ceriman), Center for Ethics, Law and Applied Philosophy (CELAP) from Belgrade and Center for Community Development (CRZ).
- **Government representatives from Serbia and Kosovo participated in this event.**

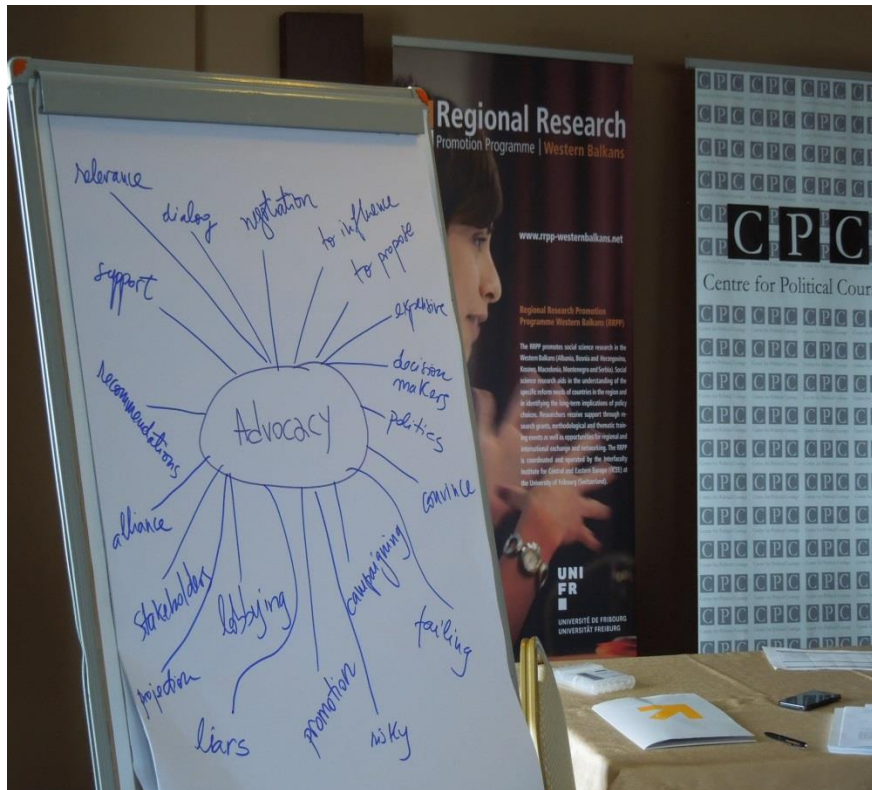
Joint panel on Migration

AL_225 Industrial Citizenship and Migration from the Western Balkans: Migration from Albania and Kosovo towards Greece, Germany and Switzerland, Erka Caro, together with the mentoring institution, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

- Research panel proposal “Migration and Crisis: Challenges for Western Balkans”
in the upcoming IMISCOE 13th Annual Conference on Migration and Development to be held in Prague
- Together with another RRPP project: **Migration of Health Care Workers from the Western Balkans- Analysing Causes, Consequences and Policies**



Policy Bridging Initiative



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Bridging the gap

RS_214 Performance Audit and Policy Evaluation: On the Same or Parallel Tracks?

- They have engaged with the **Serbian Public Policy Secretariat** to make sure that the results and recommendation of their study are integrated into the policy proposals with regards to the overall policy planning and management system.

RS_213: Impact of Fiscal Decentralisation on Local Economic Development in Serbia and Montenegro

- Ministry of Finance's Working Group (new Law on Local Government Financing);
- Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government;
- Director of the State Secretariat for Public Policies;
- A direct input on draft law (on the Planning System) will be provided, as well as on two accompanying Government decrees (on the Methodology for Mid-term Planning and on the Methodology for Managing Public Policies, Public Policy Analysis and Regulatory Impact Analysis).

Policy advocacy: Visualising research findings

RS_219: Gender that matters: Poverty and Social Inclusion - Social Protection Status in Rural Kosovo and Serbia

- Empowerment/advocacy approach to activate **interviewed female partners from rural areas**;
- The intention was to give them a camera and ask to make a series of photographs on:
 - surroundings where they live but they feel uncomfortable in; problems in their local community and barriers that they experience or come across (visible or invisible).
- To communicate the message with the larger audience and to give a human face to the examined problems.
- Invitation from the International Centre for Policy Advocacy (ICPA) to organize the **photo exhibition in Berlin**.



Challenges in gathering data and documentation from researchers



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Media Discourse Analysis: Large Files, no Separate Data Base

Project leader, Jelena Kleut:

“Media Discourse of Poverty and Social Exclusion” (2010-2011 and 2011-2012)

“Europe, Here and There, Europe, Here and There: Analysis of Europeanization Discourse in the Western Balkans Media” (2012-2013)

- **“Our primary material were TV and radio news bulletins and newspapers, plus online user comments (in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 projects) and one focus group (2010-2011).”**
- **“Since we did not have any software for data analysis, this material was never grouped in one software accessible and searchable data base. Second, radio and television news bulletins are very large files - they cannot be transferred to you online and sending them by mail would be rather costly. For all projects we have excel data bases with coding results. Perhaps this would be most convenient for storing.”**

Agreement on (not) sharing data

Jelena Zarkovic-Rakic, project leader: RRPP Project **“Making Work Pay in Western Balkan Countries: the Case of Serbia and Macedonia”**

- “All our data for Serbia have been obtained from the Statistical Office of Serbia, such as Labour Force Survey Data and Survey on Income and Living Conditions. **Statistical Office does not allow to share them, that's their policy. Data can be used for these particular projects only.** Since last year this is written in the agreement with the Statistical Office. For previous years we don't have written agreements, but know what their general policy is.
- For Macedonia, we never got data, we had to go there and work in their offices. For Montenegro, we have a written agreement that data cannot be shared.”

Guarantee of anonymity

Edin Hodzic: “**Courts as Policy Makers? Examining the Role of Constitutional Courts as Agents of Change in the Western Balkans**”

- “As for data, we will only have interview transcripts. The problem is that they are produced **in local language only**.
- The bigger problem is that we conducted **elite interviews** and that transcripts are almost impossible to be anonymized – it is clear who said what, which is a problem, as **we provided the interviewees with a guarantee of anonymity**.

Ana Alacovska “**Creative Work in Post-communist Countries: Exploration of Experiences of Work and Work-related Inequality in Creative Industries and Creative Labour Markets in Macedonia and Albania**”

- “Who will guarantee safety to our respondents once their stories are made publicly available? In small countries with strong kinship ties, like the Balkan countries, the risk of informants' identity revelation even after strenuous work at anonymization is very high.”

Balkandata.net

Nermin Oruc, **Linking Rural Entrepreneurs & Diaspora in Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina**

- “I have already submitted data from previous projects and they are available at **balkandata.net**. Do I need to resend them?”

Thank you!