



Kosovo Erasmus+ Office

Higher education Reform Experts (HERE) Round table
report

Research and innovation in Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo

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Introduction:

The role of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) has changed significantly over time. Initially, the university was focused on the spread of knowledge coming from Philosophy. The second generation of universities used research activities for receiving, transmitting and knowledge integration. In this generation, research expands among the disciplines with reliable methods, providing scholars with participation in the creation of knowledge (Etzkowitz 2013). In addition, to the two traditional teaching and research missions of the university, Cunningham et al. (2019) incorporated a “third mission” in the role of the entrepreneurial university with the focus on contributing to economic and social development. According to Guerrero-Cano, Kirby and Urbano (2006) an Entrepreneurial University has the capacity to innovate, recognize and create opportunities. The entrepreneurship and higher education literatures suggest that universities cannot generate significant knowledge spillovers unless knowledge creation is followed by knowledge.

Compared to other countries, scientific research in Kosovo is in the early stages of development, dominated by ad-hoc approach to planning the development of research facilities. Despite these circumstances, the number of scientific researches is ever increasing.

The experiences discussed and the given suggestions by HEIs in Kosovo and all stakeholders that participated in this roundtable are summarized in this report will be achievable serving as policy recommendations and as a basis for further research.

The Round Table Format

On 03 December 2021, Prishtina, Kosovo, The Erasmus+ Office in Kosovo, convened a roundtable discussion in the Swiss Hotel, to explore the current situation concerning Research and innovation in HEIs in Kosovo.

The roundtable was moderated by Jehona Lushaku, the Erasmus + Office coordinator. The discussion was led by four keynote remarks from Rozafa Koliqi, Ajtene Avdullahi and Dashamir Bërçulli and followed by contributions of invited teaching staff in HEI in Kosovo and students.

Opening Speech

Initially the Erasmus + Office coordinator gave the floor to Mr. Stergios Tragoudas, EU Office in Kosovo and Mr. Dukagjin Pupovci, Deputy Minister, MESTI.

Mr Stergios Tragoudas facilitated HEI for the achievements so far in the field of scientific research. He pointed out that in recent years' remarkable progress has been achieved in Kosovo, as the number of publications indexed in Scopus, of the academic staff from the University of Prishtina has increased, while the number of professors without prestigious scientific publications has highly decreased. In this regard, a range of activities from the EU Office in Kosovo has been undertaken. There will be an increase in the scientific research fund, and within this will be built two facilities, one of which will be the well-equipped research laboratory at the Faculty of Mathematical and Natural Sciences.

Mr Dukagjin Pupovci presented the role of MESTI and the Government in science. He stated that it is the Research Institutions that conduct scientific research, while the Government and MESTI create conditions for the Research Institutions to have funding. Mr Pupovci stated that with the opening of Europe to us on Horizon Europe, we are also opening to Europe, so our research programs are now open to other European countries. This will enable us to have an equal right to apply for grants as the other Institutions in Europe. On the other hand, our grant applications

will face competition from European Institutions with extended experience in applications and with a considerable number of approved applications for funding.

Research and Innovation (R&I) - Importance and Stakeholders

To continue the stage, Ms. Avdullahi outlined R&I importance and the main stakeholders. She stressed that R&I besides being important in driving the development of new products/services and processes, they are also essential in resolving major global challenges, such as: climate change, food supply, health and wellbeing. Whereas, the main R&I stakeholders are academia, government, research institutes, entrepreneurs and society.

Current policies and legislation for research and innovation (R&I) in Kosovo

Mr. Bërxulli focused on the policies for R&I in Kosovo. He pointed out that the legal and policy framework for the R&D policy management in Kosovo is established.

The legal framework for the science and research activities in Kosovo are defined by the Law on Scientific Research Activities (Law No. 04/L-135). According to the Law, eligible entities for scientific research in Kosovo are:

- Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo;
- Higher Education Institutions
- Institute of Albanology;
- Institute of History

At the national level, the higher education institutions are all teaching oriented institutions, which means that no higher education institution prioritizes scientific research. This represents one of the biggest challenges on scientific research. Accepting the fact that a component of every university's work must be necessarily science, having a clear scientific orientation and profile would help the universities in undertaking managerial structural changes and adopting proper internal regulations in order to put the academic staff in optimal position to perform mainly, and why not

exclusively in the R&I activities. The government can certainly help the universities by giving specific yearly budget based on their scientific performance, which must be connected mainly with the national science strategy. The government should also ensure that the funds dedicated for science are not reduced. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education should necessarily follow a policy of “put the money where the mouth is” when it comes to the scientific projects financed with government money in a transparent, merit-based, and competitive process. On the operational university level, academic staff with excellent performance in publishing high quality research should be encouraged and awarded, including freeing them for the teaching activities.

Challenges of HEIs in Kosovo in the field of scientific research and innovation (R&I)

In this regard Ms. Avdullahi stressed that given the fact that most of the budget funds are allocated for teaching, practically R&I do not present the priority for universities yet. In addition, she listed some of the challenges as follows:

- Lack of motivation of academic staff for engaging in scientific research activities,
- Lack of data,
- Insufficient capacity of academic staff for drafting and implementation of international research projects,
- Inadequate infrastructure,
- Lack of special budget line for R&I in Universities and others.

Ms. Avdullahi strongly believes that the informative campaigns regarding the research funding opportunities in MESTI, Horizon Europe as well as the having a special budget line for R&I at the University level will have a positive impact on improving the research culture and the number of research publications in HEI in Kosovo. The same opinion shared the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation at the University of Gjilan, Mr Dukagjin Leka, who stated that giving incentives to the University of Gjilan

significantly increase the number of publications in Scopus and the Web of Science.

Advancing research and innovation capacity (R&I) - government priority towards increasing the quality of education and social and economic development.

In this part the discussion was continued by Ms. Koliqi. She pointed out that based on the EU Progress Report (2020), limited progress was made during the reporting period and that the key recommendations provided by the Progress report were the following:

- develop a strategic approach to the development, prioritization and promotion of scientific research and innovation and ensure higher government spending on research;
- seek to stimulate investment from the private sector by completing a Smart Specialisation Strategy;
- continue efforts on increasing participation in the EU's Horizon 2020 programme;
- provide statistical data on numbers of researchers, percentage of GDP spent on research and innovation, and performance related to the European Research Area priorities.

Ms. Koliqi point also the recommendations of international accreditation experts:

- Develop separate strategies with clear strategic objectives of research work,
- To set an institutional budget for scientific research, including equipment and space for scientific research
- Improve collaboration with local / regional businesses to facilitate opportunities for knowledge transfer and applied research - Increase institutional efforts and provide relevant support to staff so that

research, together with other important field research developments, is more integrated into the teaching process

- Request and formalize different types of incentives to encourage scientific research among academic staff (sabbatical year, reduction of teaching load, etc.).

In this regard, Ms Koliqi stressed that the advancement of scientific research capacities is a priority of the Government and a series of activities are currently underway to achieve this. She also stressed that in addition to the Government, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency is taking measures in relation to this issue in order to improve the quality of scientific research but also membership in ENQA and EQAR.

The Deputy Minister informed the HEIs participants that the Smart Specializations Strategy is being drafted which will enable a higher degree of mobilization within the country in those areas in which we are more prepared, especially in the field of research. As a continuation of these developments is the recent establishment of the National Council of Science, which according to Mr. Pupovci, represents the main political institution in the field of scientific research in Kosovo and the main task of this Council is to draft and then monitor the national science program.

The first centralized system of systematic data collection of research activities, as per Austrian and Croatian best practices and European Frameworks for data collection was launched in 2021, in Kosovo. With this system will benefit by having the ownership the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation – MESTI, Universities and Research Entities. The Deputy Minister mentioned that we will benefit from this system by having more information about the data on research work, research assets and improved statistics. Special attention should be paid to innovation, whereas a good opportunity may be doctoral studies and applications in Horizon Europe.

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