

Systemic Failures in the linkage between the SSRS and policy making

(Taken from: Systemic Analysis and Definition of Entry Points and Intervention Strategies in the Social Science and Research Sectors (SSRS) of Albania and Serbia. Zurich 2013/2014)

Serbia

Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities ¹
Scientific Community Building, Recognition & Position in Society in general	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“We are not used to co-operate. We do not see the benefits of cooperation. That’s why there is no association of the scientific community. In addition, there is no reliable data base for serious social research.”</i> ▪ There is no coordinating body and no comprehensive research strategy. Learning and knowledge-management are underestimated. ▪ There is no strong association with voice and media presence. A powerful scientific organisation would oblige to listen. ▪ The existing SSRS resources are not visible: researchers, expertise, projects are not well known in politics and with the public. ▪ Research quality has increased, but there is still a lot to do, mainly through exposure to international research processes. ▪ Funding is not the core problem, as funds are available from international and also national research programmes as well as donors. ▪ The initiative is with EU projects, public social sciences institutes are out of the game, change is mainly expected from EU. At the same time, while the EU’s research funding clearly has an impressive array of funds (notably the FP-7 with 8.1 bn EUR overall), the call procedures are complicated; only a handful of projects (among which one by the Institute for Economic Studies, which is also the RRPP’s LCU) have so far been founded in Serbia under FP-7. ▪ Due to historical legacies, the SSRS is sensitive to gender issues according to researchers, research topics and institutional policies. The situation is good in terms of the percentage of female researchers, with a female under-representation, however, at the highest level of research management (in rural Serbia, the gender issue continues to be present). ▪ Young researchers consider exposure and exchange with the outer world as decisive in overcoming resistance to change. ▪ Young researchers prefer individual training choices; there are no courses that fit all demands simultaneously. ▪ Time for communicating and applying research-generated knowledge is limited. Young researchers are under pressure to publish, compete for quotations, and to 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create and strengthen the research community; fostering dialogue on association-building; keeping distance to government, private sector and CSOs, but involving them as representatives of demand. ▪ Open discussion on possible functions of an association: National research programmes, open access to data, national research award, international contacts and exchange, media presence, scientific journal with international board, research-partnering, broader access to funds, recognition and mutual support, CoPs and further training based on actual demands of the SSRS, etc. ▪ Nurture knowledge-sharing on key issue such as: fabric and patterns of policy-making, policy incidence, media presence of results. ▪ Create and use different forms of continuous training: courses, peer reviews, CoPs, search groups. <p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get more visibility and establish a communication plan with media representatives. ▪ Create spaces and places for exchange with relevant reform actors from politics, private sector and CSOs. ▪ Create spaces and places for meetings with media. Participate in media talks on current political reforms.

¹ The term *opportunity* refers here to possible action lines which may contribute to overcome the systemic failures.

<p>lecture. Once employed, they are not eligible for scholarships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a critical mass of qualified researchers (around 2,000), but they need to speak out. Additionally, the sector is staffed with old, pre-1990s researchers and young researchers still move abroad for better opportunities, so the sector is fragile in terms of its human capital. ▪ It is important to connect the SSRS both with other SSRS systems in the region, but also at the international level (to avoid the region functioning as a cocoon coming back to specific regional problems). 	
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Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
Behavioural patterns, values and attitudes in the SSRS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“The academic community is very closed, informal, and more punishing than encouraging. It should be cracked up. When they appear in media, it’s a shame, they are all bought.”</i> ▪ Researchers are working isolated and on their own. They are furthermore immersed in a very confrontational culture in which the state is still expected to resolve all problems. ▪ Research and teaching are disconnected. ▪ The knowledge on and training in research methods is underdeveloped, which translates into poor research quality. ▪ A lot of researchers are disgusted from politics which sees knowledge as a danger for the institutions and the inner power circles behind them. This is coupled with a lack of constructive understanding of politics. ▪ People are very suspicious. The general pattern of a low trust society is well reflected in the SSRS. ▪ Because of the legacy and misuse of social sciences for national political purposes, social science research is not well looked upon. ▪ Serious scientific work is associated with natural sciences. ▪ There is a generation gap in behavioural patterns and values: the older generation is still tied to national ideologies, while the younger one is oriented towards the EU and towards impacting societal and political reflection processes. ▪ There is a lack of culture of open debate. ▪ Lack of interdisciplinary approach to research and education (e.g. for PhDs). ▪ No strategy for cultivating experts in fields where Serbia currently disposes of no expertise. ▪ <i>“We know that something is wrong, but we don’t say it, because we don’t trust each other.”</i> 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify common interests and benefits for concerted action. ▪ Share good practice of in-country research and from researchers coming home from foreign countries. ▪ Take up the issue of behavioural patterns and values. Start a discussion on a code of conduct. <p>SSRS Framework in society-at-large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote a general constructive debate on politics/societal reflection and the possible contribution of social sciences. ▪ Increase exposure to regional and international research to change patterns. ▪ Ask for funding mechanisms that promote cooperative work and knowledge- sharing.

Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
Relevance of research fields and topics for public policy reforms and transition process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“The academic and scientific world is disconnected from politics and society. We don’t know the potentials of research in political reforms and don’t even know our blind spots.”</i> ▪ Although there is a good amount of publications, there is no market between research offer and demand. There is no link between decision-makers and research, and academic events are done in an autonomous manner without regards for demand. ▪ There is no strategy to get closer to demand. Basic fields such as poverty reduction strategies and social inclusion possible research areas (some young researchers have cooperated on the topic with the government’s Poverty Reduction Unit), but are not worked on continuously. On-demand research, mostly by NGOs, is done heavily on an on-demand basis, in which funding entities (the EU being the major financier) come in with predefined projects, plans, and experts. ▪ Policies emerge rather from bureaucratic rule and processes than from knowledge; the system is not used to negotiation processes. Personal relations and backstage networking still prevail over institutional linkages. Neither government nor Parliament dispose of research structures of their own. ▪ Independent opinions from research are not well appreciated and understood by government; government has very low impact on research fields and priorities. Research is scarcely called to participate in the formulation of sector policies. ▪ On the other side of the coin, access to public data (e.g. on health, education, youth, minorities) is often restricted or obstructed. ▪ There is no discussion about research priorities, e.g. an understanding of the present situation as transition accompanied by a profound value change towards a competitive democratic and market society, with an achievement-oriented investment in human capital. ▪ There are examples of sporadic good practice: some ministries work together with state universities or research institutes for research tasks, e.g. Min. of Education with the Institute of Psychology. ▪ Transitions is still not seen as a fundamental change process, accompanied by uncertainties and value disorder. Social sciences do not nearly contribute as much as they could and should enough to this process. ▪ <i>“Politicians don’t ask for recommendations. Research is mainly seen as a processor and provider of data, and when the data doesn’t fit, it is ignored.”</i> 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect, document and share good practice of linking scientific work with policy dialogue. ▪ Start an open consultation process on research priorities. ▪ <p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visualize and promote the understanding of research results as a contribution to the transition process. ▪ Link major research issues with questions and debate relevant for the transition process (as determined by national demand and reflection).

Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
Linkages to private sector, CSOs and NGOs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>"We would like to work with you, but you should then deliver."</i> ▪ The private sector is asking for basic applied research (e.g. on access to markets, required capacities in companies, enabling legal environment, labour market, HR) and is even ready to pay for it. ▪ International cooperation has rather pushed private NGOs than public university institutes; there are around 100 NGOs implementing EU funds. For economic reasons as well as bureaucratic barriers, state-employed academics often also work in NGOs. ▪ Party NGOs, which are not necessarily prone to a quest for objectivity, are an importance source of research funding. ▪ EU funding has contributed to a proliferation of research among NGOs; results are often not published. There is a strong competition for funding among these NGOs. ▪ While the EU's research funding clearly has an impressive array of funds, the call procedures are complicated; no project has been so far founded in Albania under FP-7. ▪ A lot of NGOs are linked up to political parties, and perform bad work which gives social sciences a bad image. ▪ In a young civil society, there is very low demand for research from CSOs such as consumers, professional or environmental associations, unions or political parties. ▪ Social sciences are not perceived as reliable providers of knowledge and evidence-based arguments of reforms. ▪ <i>"You have to be very careful with government."</i> 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the demand of the private sector and CSOs. ▪ Create research groups able to respond to demand, integrating well-performing research NGOs. ▪ Achieved regional linkages among six economics institutes ("Association of Southeast European Institutes of Economic Sciences"). <p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish strong relations with the private sector (chambers, sector and professional organisations) and CSOs. Organize common events. ▪ Use experiences from regional and global cooperation to improve research on demand. ▪ Create mixed or combined funds for research.

Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
Linkages to media and public debate on public policy reforms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>"In media the populist and juicy tabloid format prevails. There is no serious journal with a scientific board in Serbia."</i> ▪ There is few to none explicit and qualified demand for research from the political system. Social sciences tend to be used by political parties. Young researchers claim that politics are interested in social sciences, but there are no spaces for continuous dialogue. ▪ With some exceptions (such as <i>Hard Talk</i>, RTVojvodina), social sciences are not present in debate. Media tend to be tabloids and social sciences speak a different language. ▪ Media ownership is absolutely opaque and often linked to political interest groups. Culture of favouritism and political interferences in media are common. ▪ Exposure to international contacts and standards is important for SSRS to see its own work in wider perspective and on its own role in society. ▪ Research results should be linked with policy 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish good practices of linkages between research and policy recommendation. ▪ Link research priorities with political reform agenda. <p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share the research agenda and research methodologies with media. ▪ Open space for meetings between media and social research on a regular basis. ▪ Pack research results into clear messages and policy recommendations. ▪ Discuss with politicians and parties the possibility of national research programs along the reform agenda. ▪ Incorporate social sciences into school curricula and teachers training.

<p>recommendations. There are some good practice, e.g. in labour market research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education reform partly was good practice: different studies were elaborated (e.g. on training effectiveness, youth and labour market, use of leisure time), although only a few were taken into account at the end. <i>“Parliamentary commissions are not used to call for expertise from research.”</i> 	
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Albania

Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
<p align="center">Scientific Community Building, Recognition & Position in Society in general</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers act isolated, stuck in competition for funds, eager to hide results, afraid of disclosing their own results and from exposure to public debate. Lack of recognition of results. Lack of professional organisation and absence of a common strategy. It is not clear what researchers can expect from an association. No funding for professional advancement of researchers. Exposure to regional and international research is easier than exchange on national level. NGOs are more adapted to and more flexible regarding research demands and requirements than universities and institutes. Lack of link between research and teaching: professors are no researchers (currently there is no researcher status). <i>“Whenever we have a problem, we use to call the donors to provide a solution.”</i> 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an association for social sciences to promote cooperative, interdisciplinary research; to create open access to data; and to foster the voice of the scientific community in the public sphere. Provide wider access to professional training for researchers. Association should support career-building. Especially young researchers are interested in exposure and knowledge sharing on regional and global level. Scientific community-building needs to be linked strongly with short-term benefits and incentives (“quick wins”). <p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen legal and professional recognition of SSRS. Shape participatory strategy process with major stakeholders.

Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
<p align="center">Behavioural patterns, values and attitudes in the SSRS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Only sporadic cooperation and knowledge-sharing between universities, institutes and NGOs.”</i> Knowledge is not disclosed, thus kept instead of shared. Strong persisting competition between public and private universities, and NGOs. Personal networks, traducing into strong personal favouritism and paternalistic behaviour, are more important than functional, performance-oriented cooperation. There is a generational gap between young researchers (which bring in new experience and dynamics based on their experiences abroad) and the “old boys’ club”. Exposure to regional and international research is easier than exchange on national level. Vertical and script-related teaching methods. 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social sciences should be independent, but relevant for government and the society. Create spaces for constructive debate and dialogue on the role of social sciences in society. Create awareness for transparency regarding methods and results, in particular for publicly-funded research. Funding mechanisms should foster cooperative work and knowledge-sharing. Community-intern reflection on developing and guaranteeing quality standards (incl. work conditions) in research and publication. Elaborate an ethical code of conduct.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negative attitude towards criticism and suspicion of open dialogue. ▪ Running after an individual title is more important than research. ▪ <i>"What comes from outside is good."</i> 	<p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Validate exposure to regional and international research as access to open dialogue and new forms of cooperation in research groups. ▪ Explain the role of social science & research in education and public at large.
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Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
Relevance of research fields and topics for public policy reforms and transition process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>"Sensitive questions cannot be openly discussed."</i> ▪ Absent discussion on public goods and legitimate private interests. ▪ Persisting (generational) conflict on priority setting: Lack of trust and space for debate and negotiation. ▪ Lack of access to data base and integration of data from different sources: Universities, institutes and NGOs. ▪ State research programs do not pick up relevant questions. ▪ <i>"How much it does it cost to make wrong decisions?"</i> 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start an open process on research priorities and financing mechanisms. ▪ Ask for open access to data and improvement of data quality from official sources. <p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Link state funding with reform agenda of transitions process. ▪ Contribute to public debate on the reform agenda and the anticipated effects of different reform options. ▪ Stay visible as research community in the public sphere.

Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
Linkages to private sector, CSOs and NGOs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>"We don't know each other, and our prejudices do not help us getting closer."</i> ▪ In the eyes of business, social sciences (public and private) should become useful as providers of knowledge. Given high competition on the regional CEFTA markets and investments (e.g. in real estate) being currently done based on intuition and not on facts (with potentially high risks), business is willing to pay for research ▪ There is a strong demand for policies shaping enabling environments, allowing access to external markets (e.g. textile industries), and management development. ▪ Policy negotiations (e.g. on tourism, SME) are often uncoordinated and overlapping, lacking professional process management and reliable knowledge base. ▪ Business associations and companies say they are prepared to pay for research services, but research does not have the capacity to respond to their demand. ▪ Weak sporadic links to the private sector, e.g. in the fields of applied research on export opportunities, product, certification, HR development, marketing surveys. 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contribute to shifting the formal grade-related education system to demand. ▪ Shift the mindset to constructive cooperation with the private sector, run a survey on demand. ▪ Apply a pro-active approach to business associations, chambers, export sectors, etc. ▪ Meet the demand of companies for research, e.g. research of fitting education and training to demand; lack of technicians in food industries, needs assessments, training design. ▪ Link poverty reduction issues with business development and job generation. ▪ Elaborate performance-oriented HR research methods and proved management tools to offer to the private sector. ▪ Prepare social researchers for the demand of applied research of the private sector.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited practical problem-solving capacity of research. ▪ Private sector and business community are not seen as an opportunity; prejudices prevail. ▪ Research is unable to provide knowledge for the creation of an enabling business environment. ▪ No research being carried out on the effectiveness of public expenditure. ▪ Lack of sector research on business and trade opportunities as well as access to markets. ▪ <i>"We are very far away from each other. We don't know each other."</i> 	<p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pro-active networking, e.g. with political parties, chambers of commerce, sector company groups, consumers associations, environmental organizations. ▪ Document good practices with regards to the facilitation of cooperation and results. ▪ Present palpable results to business people, unions and CSOs.
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Systems failures of the SSRS	Opportunities
Linkages to media and public debate on public policy reforms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>"Some well-known economists are the only ones present as experts in media discussions. But who is willing to listen?"</i> ▪ Albania is divided into a family-driven hierarchical and conservative fabric of personal relationships and a disconnected dynamic new economic sector. ▪ There is a constant fear to speak out. This is due to political pressures, but also due to the fact that people cannot deal with constructive criticism and thus shy away from damaging personal relationships. ▪ Media ethics are very low. ▪ The linkages to the media are vital, but only donors are interested in media coverage of their (research) reports. ▪ High fragmentation and prevailing of tabloid press: 86 TV& radio stations, 24 daily newspapers with a total of 70.000 prints. ▪ Media should become a subject of research. ▪ Lacking bridge between research and public debate. ▪ <i>"The past is still very present. You better don't risk losing favours."</i> 	<p>Core research system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify media, individual editors, and journalists with some inclination to social research. ▪ Organize meetings, workshops, and brown bag lunches with media. <p>SSRS Framework in society at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disseminate understandable policy briefs of research results. ▪ Organize meetings and workshops with social sciences and representatives of media (editors, journalists). ▪ Establish a communication strategy. ▪ Participate actively in public talks and media interviews.

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