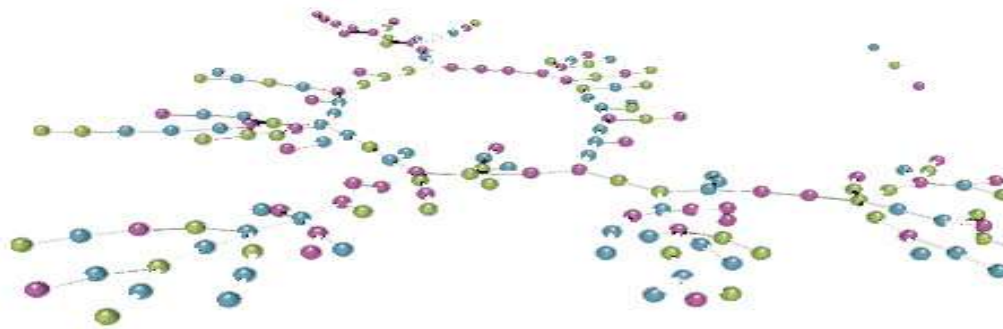odcp

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Regional (Western Balkans)
Performing and Responsible Social Sciences (PERFORM)

Draft Programme Document
Phase 1: 2014 - 2018

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Executive Summary

Science and research generally, and social sciences in particular, are facing manifold challenges in the Western Balkans. The most relevant limitation of the Social Science and Research Sector (SSRS) can be seen in its weak contribution to evidence-based policy-making processes. The relevance of the SSRS continues to be limited because the system is not fully developed to provide evidence-based knowledge that can be fed into political decision-making and public debate on reform processes.

In order to support the development of a holistic SSRS in Albania and Serbia with a true impact on public policies and society at large, SDC's intention is to focus its cooperation support more on the systemic framework shaped by public and private research institutions, their interactions and their linkages to the society, through the new systemic programme entitled PERFORM (*Performing and Responsible Social Sciences Research).* The overall goal is focusing on the linkage between a well-performing SSRS and its potential effects on the political reform processes:

> A strong, confident and publicly positioned social sciences research community is meaningfully contributing to socio-economic and political reform processes.

The overall goal can be achieved through contributions to three change vectors translated as follows into outcomes:

- **Outcome 1 – Strengthened social science community**: Horizontal links within the (national) core social sciences research community are strengthened; the social sciences' research community formulates its research agenda aligned to political reforms and is capacitated to perform independent high-quality social and economic research.
  Working hypothesis: A diverse, strong and highly productive SSRS is able to generate evidence-based knowledge as a relevant contribution to political decision-making and public debate.
- **Outcome 2 – Systemic linkages to political reform processes, civil society organizations, private sector and media**: The social sciences research findings provide relevant scientific evidence for political reforms and policy debates in the country and contribute to transparent political decision-making.
  Working hypothesis: Improved linkages between the social science community and the political sphere, SCOs, private business associations and the media leads to the full validation of the SSRS.
- **Outcome 3 - Favourable frame conditions and financial mechanisms**: State institutions provide favourable frame conditions (policy framework and financial envelopes) for well-performing social sciences and research sector.
  Working hypothesis: A recognized social science community that is responding to current political issues and well articulated with important public and private stakeholders and the media is able to get the necessary funding and an enabling regulatory framework.

The three outcomes correspond with three **programme components**, which need to be seen as interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

- Component A (strengthening the social science community) strengthens the research community by several means, e.g. by open debate on the relevance of a research agenda, by networking between universities and research institutes, by peer learning and multi-disciplinary cooperation in the research area; further, the building of national associations of social sciences and research are envisaged. Cooperation partners would be social research entities, but also national bodies such as line ministries or national planning commissions.
- Component B (systemic linkages to political reform processes and to society in general) contributes to establishing structured dialogue processes with a range of stakeholders both from public and private sectors, including line ministries, civil society and media, to identify and respond to reform-relevant research fields, complying increasingly with the demand expressed by public and private sector.
- Component C (favourable frame conditions and financial mechanisms) looks at the existing national strategies, finances, laws, and action plans as a basis for maintaining a policy-dialogue and advocating for enhanced frame conditions for research, in particular social sciences, all aligned to EU standards.

The three interlinked components contribute to the following **end of programme vision**:

> Social sciences and research deliver socially and politically relevant research findings that are reflected in political decision-making and contribute to political and social reforms and the formation of a gradually more informed democratic society. Policy-makers are in a position to make evidence-based decisions. Networking within both the national and the international research community contribute to more effective research.

The ProDoc is envisioning the first phase of four years a cooperation programme that is thought to have three phases. SDC expects this new programme to address current national research systems of Albania and Serbia in a first step, with a potential to be extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia latest in the second phase. The preparation work for this outreach will be undertaken at the end of the first phase.

The first phase will be started by September 2014 after completion of a tender process for identifying the implementing organisations. The present ProDoc will serve as basis for this tender process. It is foreseen to start the first phase with an inception phase of 3 to 4 months. During this inception phase, the Swiss coordinating organization will develop
- Definition of institutional hosting and organisational set-up;
- Recruitment of staff;
- Plan of operation of first year with detailed cost frame;
- Proposal for an M&E system incl. risk measurements and risk management measures

1. Context

1.1 Social sciences and research: A potential driver for transition

Science and research generally, and social sciences in particular, are facing manifold challenges in the Western Balkans, for example with regards to adequate public funding, improving research methodologies, the quality of higher academic education, and the access to regional and international knowledge-sharing.[1] However, the most relevant limitation of the Social Science and Research Sector (SSRS) can be seen in its weak contribution to evidence-based policy-making processes.[2] The relevance of the SSRS continues to be limited because the system is not fully developed to provide evidence-based knowledge that can be fed into political decision-making and public debate on reform processes.

The SSRS plays a paramount role in the critical exploration of and analysis of problems related to reforms. Social sciences are able to draw attention to alternative policy options, reinforce the necessity of certain political reforms, and nurture public debate. They impact the identification and perception of burning issues, and help to identify possible solutions. In the context of transition countries, an active SSRS contributes to building a more open democratic society. In light of these reflections, the persisting limitations of the SSRS in Serbia and Albania can be summarized as follows: First, the community of social scientists and researchers does not dispose of the public recognition and voice of a well-performing scientific community. Second, the link between the research agendas and topics on the one hand, and current political issues on the other hand, is rather weak. Consequently, results from social sciences are hardly taken up in the political debate. Finally, the institutional framework conditions and funding mechanisms for the SSRS are inadequate.

Since the 1990s, the countries in the Balkan region have been on a deep-going social and institutional reform process towards the creation of genuine democratic institutional frameworks, based on political participation combined with a market economy. As social sciences and research results have evidenced, the history of the Balkans is shaped by a pattern of social integration, nation-state-building and citizenship which is less characterized by the struggle for political reform and gradual institutional modernisation processes than by deeply rooted, extended family ties, dominant coalitions of elite groups and ethnic boundaries, the three coined by the continuous battle against the Ottoman empire and – in more recent times – the legacy of the political and administrative domination of the Habsburgs.[3] Against this historical background, the promise of EU accession is the strongest and most substantial driver of change: the obligation to introduce the EU *acquis communautaire* into national law compels candidate countries to precisely follow down the aforementioned path.

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[1] In the field of social sciences and higher education, most cooperation programmes of the EU and WB address these issues. Only the SDC-funded RRPP in its last phase has so far taken up the missing link between social sciences as a producer of evidence and policy-making.

[2] See: SDC Research Concept 2013-2016, p.9: The main purposes of research: The production of knowledge and concepts contributing to: solve development, transition and global problems and establish evidence-based policies and engage in policy debate on specific themes.

[3] See: Clewing, Konrad; Schmitt, Oliver Jens: Geschichte Südosteuropas. Vom frühen Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Verlag Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg 2012

In 2012, SDC had a comprehensive external study on social sciences and research sectors carried out in Serbia and Albania[4]. Those countries were selected based on a relatively stable political and social situation combined with the potential of developing their national social science research agenda and link it up closer with political transition processes. The research sector in the Western Balkans is characterized by lagging scientific performance, resulting from the insufficient supply of inputs – human resources, research funding, and facilities – and a regulatory regime that does not encourage performance. While scientific performance has been improving, it still lags behind the EU-27 and Eastern Europe in both quantity (in absolute and relative terms, per inhabitant or gross domestic product) and quality (normalized impact of publications, number of citations, and h-index). It is to be noted that the number of scientific publications during recent years increased significantly, led by a sharp surge in the performance of Serbia (and Croatia).[5]

The report characterized both the Albanian and the Serbian as controlled by relatively small elite coalitions, with citizens being removed or even cut off from political and economic decision-making. Independent research is thus a potential threat for the interests of dominant coalitions; a more evidence-based political debate may prepare the pathway to a more open democratic society and to a more equal access to rights, resources and participation.[6] The report further states that public funding of social research projects remains low and is hardly linked to relevant contributions to transition, and that strong competition for the limited public research funds leads to cases of clientelism. The major insights of the report can be summarized as follows:

- In both countries, the relevance of social research for evidence-based policy-making and a meaningful public debate is below its potential. The SSRS is only loosely linked up to the current political reform processes. The contribution of social research to these processes can be qualified as below the palpable potential of the SSRS. Research fields, questions and topics lack focus and political relevance. They are detached from the political agenda.

- Public research funding is low and centres on higher education infrastructure[7]. However, there is some funding available through regional and international programmes (in the case of Serbia, also through project-based funding in National Research Programme). The strong competition for the limited public research funds leads to cases of clientelism, as it incites using personal networks and favours to obtain funding. Transparency regarding criteria and funding is missing. Within the research community, there is no open discussion about funding mechanisms.

- Research agendas are not necessarily adapted to national policy priorities and tend to fluctuate. Cherry-picking researchers and NGOs as well as unsystematic donor funding have had a negative impact on the SSRS as they drive its fragmentation and prolong the lack of sustainable community-building (via research clusters). Significant policy

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[4] odcp consult gmbh: Systemic Analysis and Definition of Entry Points and Intervention Strategies in the Social Science and Research Sectors (SSRS) of Albania and Serbia. Zurich 2013

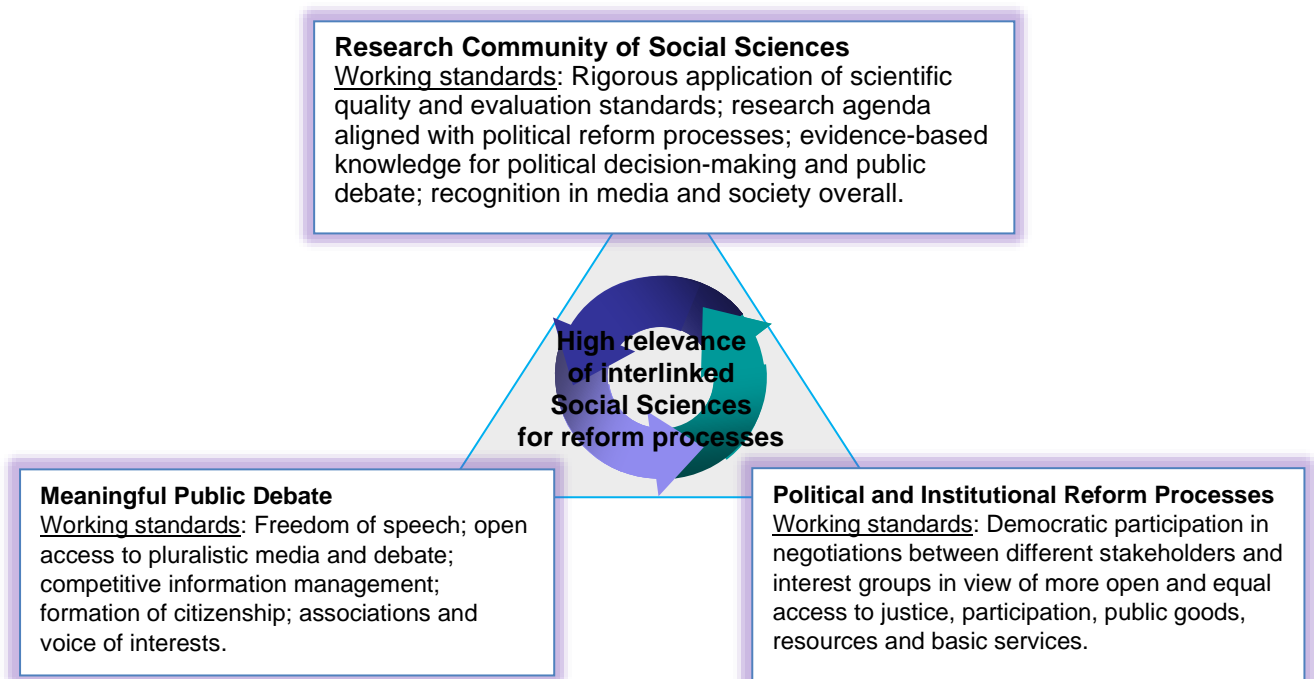[5] World Bank: Overview of the research and innovation sector. Project P123211, October 2013

[6] This observation refers to the institutional view of: Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, Barry R. Weingast: Violence and Social Orders. A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History. Cambridge University Press, New York 2009

[7] The study team's previous literature review revealed that in 2011, public science and research funding stood at 0.33 % of GDP in Serbia and at 0.2% in Albania. In regional comparison, Croatia and Slovenia invested more than 1.00% in science and research, and the EU wants to raise R&D efforts in Europe to a total of 3% of GDP (out of which 1% is to be publically and 2% privately funded).

research has even been externalized to international researchers and consultants, which tend to apply a one-size-fits-all approach and leave the countries with the accumulated knowledge once their projects have come to an end. Think Tanks or NGOs providing research services are mainly dependent on donor funding; however, even when they work for the government, they act in an opportunistic way which does not critically engage politics and society: "They simply don't ask questions and do a well-paid job."[8]

- Many social sciences researchers are under economic pressure. They teach in parallel at universities and conduct research in NGOs (e.g. for donors). This is due both to a necessity to improve their economic situation and to institutional barriers for public universities accepting third-party funding (note that in Serbia, education laws at present do not envision the possibility of private universities). In some cases, social scientists are working – at the same time – for up to three universities and three NGOs.
- A significant part of the described systemic shift is the need to institutionalize a culture of knowledge-sharing and mutual trust, cooperation and peer-reviewing among the actors of the inner SSRS circle (universities, institutes, academies, research NGOs). This also applies to modernizing teaching methods and work culture, moving away from an excessive focus on formal structures and from academic reputation being heavily determined only through the number of journals quotations.

In a nutshell, the following graph shows an effective SSRS as a provider of evidence to political decision-making and public debate. It points out the basic interactions between three interdependent spheres, each shaped by a set of different dominant groups, institutional rule, quality standards, and languages.

Research Community of Social Sciences
Working standards: Rigorous application of scientific quality and evaluation standards; research agenda aligned with political reform processes; evidence-based knowledge for political decision-making and public debate; recognition in media and society overall.

High relevance of interlinked Social Sciences for reform processes

Meaningful Public Debate
Working standards: Freedom of speech; open access to pluralistic media and debate; competitive information management; formation of citizenship; associations and voice of interests.

Political and Institutional Reform Processes
Working standards: Democratic participation in negotiations between different stakeholders and interest groups in view of more open and equal access to justice, participation, public goods, resources and basic services.

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[8] Quotes from relevant actors, see: Annex 3: Systems Failures. In: Systemic Analysis and Definition of Entry Points and Intervention Strategies in the Social Science and Research Sectors (SSRS) of Albania and Serbia. Zurich 2013

1.2 Serbia: Specific framework conditions at a glance[9]

The October 2013 EU Progress Report for Serbia is generally viewed as one of the most positive reports to date. This clearly indicates the inclination of the European Commission towards the opening of EU accession negotiations with Serbia in 2014. In the reporting period (10.2012 to 09.2013), Serbia has continued to build a satisfactory track record in implementing the political criteria, including with regards to the normalization of relations with Kosovo. Concerning the economy, the report criticises the slow progress on economic and social reforms. Finally, the analysis of the ability to take on the obligations from the EU membership shows an uneven progress in the adoption of the EU's acquis for the period 2013-2016.

Because of the long period of economic and political crisis in Serbia during the 1990s, investments in R&D – in particular in social sciences – were poor; furthermore, the UN sanctions cut off all institutional channels of international cooperation. The research in social sciences entered a continuous decline: the total number of research organizations dropped from 297 to 189, and there were no investments into new research infrastructure, let alone into organizing the sector. This, together with the brain-drain, resulted in a reduced research capacity at universities and research institutions.

In the last twelve years, Serbia has been working intensively on becoming an EU member state and made steps to join the EHEA and ERA.[10] But, until recently, there was no comprehensive development strategy in Serbia. This changed in last two years with the adoption of the Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development for the period 2010-2015, and the preparation of the so-called 'Serbia 2020' concept for the socio-economic development of the country until 2020. 'Serbia 2020' mentions R&D as one of the five main areas of development. The concept's main strategic aim is to increase investment in R&D to 2% of the national GDP (at present it stands at 0.3%). 50% of which is to be covered by the private sector. *The Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development 2010-2015* defines Serbia at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century as a country of innovations, with researchers reaching European standards and advancing the technological development of the economy. The rationalization of the network of research organizations; linking science and industry; and establishing a fund for supporting innovations (directly linked to the development of new products, processes and services) are underlined.

The main actors in the process of policy-making in the areas of HE and research are: National Parliament, MESTD, and HEIs (universities, faculties, institutes, higher schools). Regarding external line governance, a number of participatory bodies have been established: National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA), National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (NCSTD), among others.

The current situation of the Serbian SSRS can be summarized as follows:

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[9] See: Annex 3: Systems Failures. Idem.
[10] In 2007 Republic of Serbia has signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the EU, becoming associated country to the EU FP7, with 118 projects in progress by 2013. Serbia is also one of the leading partner countries in the EU Tempus program, playing a vital role in bringing the academic community into the European network of higher education institutions, mainly by supporting, re-training and upgrading the skills of the academic staff.

(A) Status of social sciences and linkages to policy-making

Due to the legacy of previous political systems, social sciences are not expected to provide evidence-based inputs for policy negotiation processes; the research agendas do not fit with political issues at stake. Social sciences are not well recognized as providers of evidence and knowledge on political reforms, and their benefits are not clearly demonstrated.

A chronic lack of young academics jeopardizes the future sustainability of social sciences in Serbia; experienced researchers are retiring, while the institutes lack young researchers to replace them; and the brain drain to foreign countries continues. Instead of a scientific career, researches expect to get a position in a government ministry, a commission, or a political party. Structure and management of the research institutes does not enable the linkage to policy-making, innovative methodologies, group research, and knowledge-sharing. Research projects are lacking adequate and effective evaluation measures, based on scientific criteria and societal benefits of the research. Criteria for the publishing of results are insufficiently clear and differentiated.

The lack of funding and other incentives for scientific work as well as the lack of strategies linked to the political agenda tends to lead to general passivity and apathy among the institutes' staff. As a result, the institutes limit themselves to their exclusive academic role, keeping their distance from an active engagement in policy research related to transition processes. Research fields and questions are only loosely linked to the current and changing political reform agenda.

Research projects do hardly translate research results into policy recommendations. Ministries, political parties and civil society organisations are usually not targeted in the dissemination of results and recommendations. This said, faculties and institutes of Economics maintain strong connections with related ministries and the business sector and thus achieve a stronger influence on decision-making processes.

(B) Institutional setting of the SSRS

Most research institutes perceive the Ministry as a spoiler of innovation in the SSRS. Compared to technological research projects, social sciences remains a low priority, and developing social science capacities and using the results in policy-making may endanger interests of dominant stakeholders. The majority of high officials in the MESTD belong to natural sciences; the SSRS would need more representatives from their research field.

The lack of communication and coordination among different Ministries and with faculties and institutes, inadequate organizational structures of research institutes and inefficient administration lead to parallel processes and blockages. Research projects are lacking a clear strategic orientation and purpose, including a clear understanding of the benefits for policy-making.

(C) Funding mechanisms

Financial resources provided by the MSTD are low and inadequate, and thus continuously lacking for projects in the social sciences, particularly for empiric research. The funds from international donors are decreasing while applications for international funds are demanding – for example, researchers are not adequately skilled for successfully applying for the EU FP7

funds. With the exception of research institutes related to economics, the interest of the business sector and SCOs in applied social research is very low.

(D) Regional and international cooperation

After the academic isolation in the 1990s, the situation is improving. Contacts and exchange with institutions abroad are increasing. Researchers of all social sciences express a strong interest to work on joint regional projects. Several universities and institutes maintain bilateral agreements with universities in the region and abroad. Common projects in different fields of social sciences are arising.

Many universities and institutes have problems applying for EU FP7 and other international funds. In their perception, procedures are too complicated and time-consuming. The lack of effective administrative support generates additional pitfalls.

(E) Potentials

This rather sober picture of the SSRS notwithstanding, there is – to some extent – good practice in the field of relevant social sciences and research linked up to the political transitions processes, mainly with the support of EU- and SDC-funded research projects (such as FP7 and RRPP). In Serbia, the links between these research projects and political changes were intensive, for example in the move towards a more inclusive education system, in the introduction of mandatory gender policies, and in relevant issues related to improved integration of Roma (protection of rights, political participation, access to education, and strategies of economic empowerment).

Without doubt, the most relevant potential is the lively interest of the researcher community to overcome isolation and to strengthen its capacity to deliver reliable evidence-based results which may improve and accelerate the transition processes and the quality of public debate. On the demand side, the current political agenda of the government (Country Needs Assessment Document 2014 – 2020) and the agenda of the on-going EU integration process emphasises several fields of priority and topics which will need a deeper and more comprehensive access to evidence-based knowledge from social sciences:
- Education: Further steps towards a more inclusive system, practice-oriented skills development adapted to labour market requirements.
- Economic development: Employability of youth, economic empowerment of vulnerable groups, economics of rural areas, regional politics and management of regional disparities.
- Social development: Strengthening of compliance with human rights, social inclusion of vulnerable age groups.
- Governance: Rule of law, justice reforms, transparency and accountability.

On these topics, the Swiss Cooperation Strategy in Serbia is well positioned and can practically demonstrate how social sciences can contribute to evidence-based programme planning and implementation.

(F) Strategic orientation

In the area of research and innovation policy, the level of investment in research stagnated at around 0.5% of GDP, below the national target specified in the strategy for scientific and technological development for the period 2010-2015 and well below the EU 2020 target of 3%.

The action plan to implement the national strategy still has not been adopted. Concerning Serbia's participation in several research programmes (FP7, Sklodowska-Curie Grants, EUEKA, Horizon 2020, RRPP) the country continues to be successful, but further efforts are necessary in particular to involve more universities and institutes as well as the private sector.

With regard to the SSRS, the above-mentioned reform issues of the Country Needs Assessment Document 2014 – 2020 provide evidence that the progress in the area of social sciences and research need a strategic orientation that combine different purposes: the access to funding sources combined with improved research quality; the standing of social sciences in politics and society overall combined with strengthening the research community; systemic linkages to different public and private actors; and improved frame conditions, including funding mechanisms.

1.3 Albania: Specific framework conditions at a glance

Albania started reforming its scientific research system in 2006 with the integration of the former institutes of the Academy of Sciences into the major public universities. The role of the Academy now consists, as in most European countries, of representation and advice. The research institutes under the line ministries were also restructured and merged into 12 newly-created technology transfer centres and agencies. Currently, the institutions conducting R&D activities in Albania are universities (public and private), national research centres, public centres/agencies of development and technology transfer; centres/agencies/institutes and other private enterprises dealing with research, development, technology and knowledge transfer fields.[11] According to the MoES data, there are four academies, research centres or agencies under the supervision of competent ministries and related research / innovation units (as part of the various ministries). The available data on research institutions indicate that in 2012 there were a total of 47 universities: 12 state-funded research institutes and 35 private ones. The social science research community is estimated to involve about 150 academics with MA degree or higher.

The number of total R&D staff, in particular in social sciences, is rather modest. Research in social sciences in Albania is relatively new and mainly developed after the 1990s. This means that the transition period that the Albanian society underwent has created the need for social research, but at the same time has also impacted the quantity and quality of research. There is an increasing trend among universities, as well as NGOs and private research institutes, to involve as many qualified staff as possible. The third sector consists mainly of the growing will of the NGO representatives to hire academics as staff and for related research activities. For instance, besides the full-time staff, most NGOs also dispose of their pool of experts, mainly consisting of MA or PhD academics that can provide qualified expertise on specific issues. This is becoming a common practice especially in the NGO sector, which – given the impossibility to have a full-time staff of academics – has chosen to outsource to external experts. However, NGOs do have highly qualified members within their staff as well. Related to social research capacities, apart from the overall identified need for more intensive research activity related to policy processes, other additional problems identified by representatives of universities and NGOs are currently:

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[11] However, the data on the total number of units within universities is not available.

- Nearly absent cooperation with the government and central public institutions: the small SSRS remains detached from the political transition process.
- Little cooperation between universities, NGOs and scientific associations: benefits from horizontal cooperation remain untapped.
- As a consequence of the weak research community, lack of or limited public funds for the development of scientific research activities: insufficient attention by the government in terms of recognition and support.
- Chaotic market of researchers in the field of social sciences and overdependence on priorities and funds of international organizations and research programmes.
- Fragmentation of social research projects (fields, topics, research questions, approaches). Lack of platforms for knowledge-sharing.
- Insufficient infrastructure, mainly in public universities, to conduct social research and access to reliable data; lack of indispensable basic technical equipment such as computers, printers, projectors.
- Shortage in the number of full-time academic personnel, as a result of the refusal of the Ministry of Education to endorse the required additional academic personnel. Additional social sciences university professors have been mainly engaged in establishing new branches and designing new programmes, curricula and classes in the field of social sciences.
- Low salaries of the professors (at the public universities) and the fact that research was not considered part of their contribution to the university (only teaching was) has led many of them to conduct independent social research in cooperation with local and/or international NGOs and not as a part of the university system.
- Limited opportunities for further qualification of the academic staff, especially with regards to advanced studies, PhD programmes, and the exchange of experiences with similar universities abroad.

The current situation of the Albanian SSRS can be summarized as follows:

(A) Status of social sciences and linkages to policy-making
Representatives of the MoES and ARTI recognize explicitly that the link between social sciences and policy-making ought to be strengthened and that the capacity of the SSRS to provide evidence on reform options should be better capitalized. The Albanian government acknowledges that reforms in all sectors should systematically benefit from the results of effective, accountable and professional social research, including the integration of the gender dimension into all research areas.

As regards research and innovation policy, the EU progress reports conclude that relevant actions to stimulate the SSRS and to strengthen human capital building have been taken. Particularly, the Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI) has increased its promotion of participation in EU research programmes. However, to name the FP7, while ARTI has increased the promotion efforts and support for the scientific community, the overall level of participation and success rate remains low. Due to budgetary constraints, ARTI's participation in regional and international networking events has decreased. However, the voice of the SSRS community remains weak and the detachment of research fields and topics from the policy reforms is persisting.

(B) Institutional setting of the SSRS

The implementation of the National Strategy of Science, Technology and Innovation 2009-2015 intends to establish a set of harmonized indicators for each implementing SSRS public institution. The research institution system has inherited many small and fragmented units in which isolated research activities remain detached from the economic and social reform processes. The strategy emphasises quality standards of research and determines that research centres at universities will specify their research profile and funding schemes. The Albanian government is willing to strengthen the coordination with international donors to ensure long-term social research projects.

The strategy also defines the creation of a network of research institutions to strengthen the SSRS community and the establishment of a national centre for social research. This centre should become a model of social sciences research in Albania. It will define standards and scientific criteria in undertaking social research, and coordinate efforts in addressing different social issues, avoiding overlaps in the research area. The establishment of a gender-disaggregated database would foster a gender-sensitive approach in social research, addressing social issues from women and men perspectives. The institutional support for developing research in social sciences also addresses the enhanced funding of research projects and the capacity-building of the young researchers through workshops and awards.

Besides the MoES, the Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI) plays a crucial institutional role for the future development of the SSRS. ARTI is a public institution under the competences of the Council of Ministers and attached directly to the office of the Prime Minister. Its role is to support, monitor and evaluate programs and projects in the fields of science, technology and innovation in the country.

(C) Funding mechanisms

Government funding of research is carried out through a number of ministries and public organisations, directly or indirectly involved in research and innovation policies or activities, or both. The national budget for research slightly increased, but the overall level of investment in R&D continues to be low. The level of public investment in research in 2012 was an estimated 0.2% of GDP, which is considered very low by the EU standards with which Albania is striving to align. At the same time, compared with the data from the previous two years, the 0.2% indicate an increase, even if it is not possible to estimate the amount private investment in R&D due to the lack of systemic monitoring of the SSRS. In line with its EU accession, Albania has been eligible to participate in the FP7 since 2008.

Increased financial resources are required in particular to strengthen the capacities and to modernise infrastructure for social research activities at all universities, in particular at all social research centres. Beyond the financing of research projects, it should include scientific publications, conferences, participation in (regional) working groups, further development of research methodology, and curricula at all faculties focusing on applied social sciences.

The selection procedure for projects is carried out through open competition for all programmes included in the National Programme of Research and Development (NPRD) in the public and private sectors. The evaluation of project-proposals occurs anonymously, with at least 2 experts selected from the Directory of High Education and Science and approved by the MoES in the evaluation committee.

(D) Regional and international cooperation

Social problems that Albanian society is facing are very similar to the issues that societies in the region and beyond are facing. In this context, establishing regional and international networks in sharing experiences and learning from each other's experience might be an efficient approach to research social issues. Joint programs, initiatives and projects are helping to further the development of social research in respective countries. Conferences, study visits, training and qualifications with research institutions in foreign countries are strengthening the capacities of research in social studies in Albania.

There are a growing number of project proposals submitted by Albanian research institutions to Community and international programmes, and larger public support (Research Infrastructure Fund) for infrastructure investment and new specializations. The Albanian government mobilised state funds to open new jobs and support PhD candidates through the Brain Gain programme and Excellence Fund. Challenges ahead include: (i) increasing and widening the quality of research in Albania, based on OECD indicators; (ii) integration of the Albanian scientific research into the ERA through active participation in European programs and (iii) improving the relevance of the research to match public policy needs and market needs.

(E) Potentials

A very committed community of rather young social scientists is undoubtedly the most relevant potential to overcome isolation and to strengthen the systemic linkages of the SSRS. Second, in line with the National Strategy for Integration and Development 2014-2020[12],:and the Strategy of Science, Technology and Innovation 2009-2015, and in the light of the above mentioned shortages and performance limitations of the SSRS, the strengthening of a strong community of Albanian social scientists and their articulation with the political sphere is of paramount relevance. Public universities and institutes as well as NGOs and the private sector show a lively interest in this endeavour.

Also, good practice indicates the potentials that can be tapped with a fully developed social research sector. It might be interesting to mention at least some examples where social sciences informed policy processes in fields where SDC is engaged:

- Comparative research of waste management schemes triggered access to new technology and management systems.
- In local government reforms and decentralisation, social scientist contributed to the definition of innovative action lines that were picked up and integrated into the new law.
- In public administration reforms, the design of data collection and processing led to a new set of performance indicators which were integrated in the civil servants law.

Further good practice is mentioned by the World Bank on the topic of poverty monitoring, which included strengthening the regular Household Budget Surveys to cover additional indicators of living conditions without making the surveys too cumbersome to conduct. Such a system allows the monitoring of detailed indicators on topics, such as social assistance reform. The introduction of a regular poverty monitoring system was accompanied by valuable discussions among Albanian independent social scientists and the Albanian National Statistical Agency INSTAT, e.g. on the protection of the respondents' privacy, while fostering a climate of greater

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[12] Council of Ministers: National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020. Tirana 2013

transparency and accountability on statistical data production and leading to a better-informed policy debate.

(F) Strategic orientation

The National Strategy for Integration and Development 2014-2020[13] and the Strategy of Science, Technology and Innovation 2009-2015 state that mechanisms should be established for integrating social sciences into society and policy-making at local and central level, generating relevant information among policy-makers and businesses alike. Gradual improvements have been achieved in the legal and institutional framework with the adoption of the Law on Higher Education and the revision of the Law on the Academy of Sciences. Reforming the Academy of Sciences enabled the integration of its research institutes and of the ones of line ministries into public universities. The higher education system was integrated with the research system by creating a modern institutional framework for rapid development of research and technology and knowledge transfer. Significant progress has also been made in strategic and operational management of research and technological development programmes through the establishment of the National Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI).

The government strategy puts an emphasis on the following issues:

- Improvement of the institutional capacity of the research and innovation system: Strengthening current structures and enhance cooperation among advisory, policy-making and executive or coordinating institutions. Establish the National Council for Science and Innovation as an advisory body to Government and Parliament. Increase funds for research through National Programmes and International Programmes for Research and Development, (bilateral and multilateral), so that funding for this sector accounts for 1% of GDP in 2020.
- Establishing the *Albanian Award of Excellence in Social Sciences*: Contribute significantly to the encouragement and support of the social sciences research development in Albania. The best research conducted by an individual and/or institution should be awarded annually.
- Quality of research in the public sector: Improvement through promotion programmes such as the *Excellence Fund* and *Brain Gain* for periodic and short-term secondment of Albanian lecturers and scientist engaged in international universities. Training of young researchers in postgraduate studies and training of PhD candidates. Enhancing the access of researchers to research programmes (FP7, ERA, etc.) via the creation of Excellency Centres with a regional standing in the time period 2016-2020. Strengthening the autonomy and accountability of research institutions in order to improve working conditions for researchers and the competitiveness of Albanian researchers, through the modification of the legislative framework regarding science. Establish an evaluation system in line with the Research Evaluation Platform in Albania, employing OECD standard indicators for research evaluation.

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[13] Council of Ministers: National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020. Tirana 2013

1.4 System characteristics of the SSRS: Drivers and spoilers[14]

From a political economy perspective, the SSRS that is meant to be a source of much-needed evidence-based knowledge and informed public debate is still not delivering its full potential. Therefore, the underlying key question of the systemic analysis is to unfold and understand the basic systemic functions of the SSRS in both countries with regards to effective reforms and to identify cooperation strategies embedded in the existing country systems, fostering transparency and accountability, promoting interaction and enhancing the key capacities of the relevant stakeholders. In this systemic perspective, the SSRS plays an eminent role in societal change management, shaping new institutions and the distribution of power and resources.

Integrating the insights of the literature review, the discussion with Focus Groups in both countries and further discussions, the system of the SSRS in both countries can be evaluated against six typical system characteristics which might be observed on the pathway to a full-fledged SSRS. The characteristics also serve to examine possible driving or restraining factors towards a fully developed SSRS system.

Integration
To what degree does the system achieve to integrate its members? What are the incentives to become a member? By what means do the already involved members strengthen integration? How far do the members identify themselves with the SSRS and its main purpose? What are they ready to invest? What makes the difference to be a member of the network compared to an actor outside of the network? How does the network system define its boundaries? (Membership conditions, contributions, performance profile, etc.) What are the benefits produced by the articulated system? How is the cooperation rent shared among the members?

The SSRS system can be seen as two concentric circles. In both countries, the inner circle is defined by the social scientists engaged in research, public research centres (universities, institutes, academies) funded by the national government, government bodies such as ministries (MESTD, MoES), and related public agencies such as NCHE (Serbia), ARTI (Albania). The outer circle contains the broad spectrum of NGOs and CSOs (such as citizen's initiatives, unions, traditional ethnic associations) as well as the organisations of the private sector and professional organisations. Media and international cooperation agencies also belong to this outer circle.

In both countries, researchers act as competitors in relative isolation and define themselves more through the research work they carry out than the relevance of their results for policy reforms. The contribution of social sciences to public debate is nearly absent.

In both countries, the system is only loosely articulated, thus the reflection on the purpose and shape of a SSRS community remains at its initial stage and system boundaries are not yet clearly defined. However, it seems that Serbia is having a more integrated system than Albania, if only for historical reasons – Serbia already had an existing SSRS before the transition began, whereas Albania's was close to inexistent.

Structural barriers against a more articulated system persist to this day in Serbia among the competing public and private universities. In both countries, restraining forces of powerful stakeholders will show up when research results and public comments do not underpin their

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[14] See also: Chapter 3.3 The political economy of SSRS, in: odcp consult gmbh: Systemic Analysis and Definition of Entry Points and Intervention Strategies in the Social Science and Research Sectors (SSRS) of Albania and Serbia. Zurich 2013

political interests or do not fulfil their political expectations. A strong community of social scientist and related institutions certainly generates identity and also provides – to a certain extent – protection against very strong resistance, such as attempts to influence media, manipulate public debate, or even obstruct open knowledge-sharing.

In some cases, arbitrary administrative rules and unequal access to funds is controlled by informal power coalitions between stakeholders of the inner and the outer circle. In both countries, a strengthened SSRS community demanding more transparent funding and more relevance of research fields and topics will probably meet with resistance of decision-makers of funding bodies and particular politicians. According to explicit policies and strategies, in both countries the government is willing to foster the community-building of the SSRS, so the possibilities to further develop the framework conditions for social research are favourable in both countries.

Relations

How do the involved actors shape relationships and interactions? To what degree are they aware of how to shape loose/tight relationships inside the system, based on functional purposes? By what means do the members strengthen exchange and interaction? How does the SSRS shape relations to external stakeholders? (government, private sector, CSOs, international cooperation)

Relations in the inner circle and to relevant actors of the outer circle are weak. To some extent, regional research funding has enabled and strengthened some relations, e.g. though joint research projects, working groups and conferences. Competition for project funding prevails over cooperation and there is a deep gap between public and private universities and institutes. Also, the linkages to government, civil society organisations and the private sector are rare and marked by the dependencies from funding sources. However, in both countries, the research community is currently under construction.

The example of a working group on political relevance of social sciences – undertaken by RRPP – represents a good example. Formed by representatives of different universities and the recognized Institute of Economic Sciences, with the participation of the MESTD, it elaborated over one year a series of interesting recommendations on topics like research evaluation, researchers association, and cooperation with policy-makers. Such reflection processes have shown that outreach and strengthening linkages should observe the principle of open door and participation. When stakeholders perceive themselves as marginalized, discriminated and excluded, they tend to become opponents of all changes towards a more articulated research community.

Centrality

To what degree is the system organized around a single or a few central powerful actors? Are there tendencies to monopolize and control information flows and interactions? Are the members aware of the pitfalls of a centralized system? What kind of work organisation can balance out centrality trends?

Both countries share a rather strong vertical administrative tradition, deeply rooted in bureaucracy. Personal relations and influential groups still overshadow and prevail against institutional rules. In this context, personal autocratic leadership and competition between different stakeholders may impede an open dialogue necessary for a community-building process. To some extent, the appearance of a new generation of researchers and external funding mechanisms led to a weakening of old power groups, favouring achievement-oriented incentives.

In its initial setup phase, the SSRS in both countries certainly needs a core coordination unit (secretariat), hosted by a government institution. The governance structure of the SSRS community should be discussed and agreed upon. In fact, these necessary steps produce a certain tendency to centrality with driving and restraining forces in favour and against participatory processes. Horizontal networking, trust creation, and dialogue become real challenges and need careful facilitation.

Contingency

To what extent are the members able to develop and debate different options of action? Are there incentives to explore alternatives to the present state of the network system and its products? To what degree is dissent and deviating behaviour accepted? How do the involved actors deal with critical voice and exit?

The Albanian SSRS, while starting from a much lower starting point at the beginning of the 1990s, seems to have embraced more the international opening in its way of thinking. In both countries, different resource persons emphasized the existence of informal control by influential and powerful masterminds over critical debate and on the quality, outreach and relevance of social research. Isolated working conditions and lack of knowledge-sharing foster a rather conservative and conventional behavioural pattern.

However, in both countries the willingness to and possibilities for an engagement in critical analysis require trust-building and a clear purpose. The creation of a SSRS community and the outreach to stakeholders beyond it should be based on a strong foundation of inclusive result-oriented group work, as at present researchers rather compete than cooperate. The climate of trust is not a quick fix, but indispensable for a sustainable SSRS.

Currently, in both countries the main incentives for the research community are the learning in an international environment and the access to funding. Critical voices and the search for new opportunities are more likely to occur in the younger generation. In both countries, the line ministries (MESTD, MoES) are often criticised for their bureaucratic procedures and lack of creativity. This explains the prevailing role of international cooperation programmes in the SSRS. In both countries, social scientists are rarely prepared to expose and debate their results in politics and media, thus feedback from the world beyond the sciences is very rare.

Governance

How participative are decision-making and steering in the system? How do the members ensure equality of access to information and participation in decision-making? Is there a functional coordination mechanism in place? Is coordination perceived as a service to the overall system? To what degree decisions are accepted and implemented?

A participatory and transparent governance of the SSRS underpins its voice with legitimacy. Proposals and demands of the SSRS get political weight. It seems that Serbia and Albania are on the same low par on this aspect. The SSRS in both countries is characterized by silence, isolation, loosely and limited relations, and fragmentation. Researchers do not yet identify themselves with the SSRS, but with one research project.

Over time this absence of governance of the SSRS system was partly substituted by the support of international programmes, somehow taking up the leading role in the sector through their power to allocate funds. Competition for these scarce resources resulted in individual favour-seeking which, in fact, for now to some extent inhibits the emergence of a new, more networked way of thinking, needed for building the research community. The different attempts of organisation (academies, associations) have not yet reached the critical mass and presence

in society. Therefore, governance of the SSRS system is absent and needs to be built from scratch with a core group of researchers and institutes. When defining the governance structure of an articulated SSRS, the balance between public and private actors is critical. In both countries, strong NGOs and private universities keep a certain distance to government, and at the same time their integration in a prosperous SSRS is indispensable.

There are no palpable signs of resistance against this endeavour; in particular researchers, universities and institutes as well as the relevant line ministries favour the idea of strengthening the SSRS system.

Auto-reflexivity

To what degree do the involved actors analyse and reflect upon the development of the SSRS system? Is there enough time and opportunity for debate on systems development? Are there mechanisms in place for periodic reflection on systems development and the changing environment of the system?

Given that there is more critical SSRS mass in Serbia, and also that a part of the Serbian SSRS was a driving force for the emergence of an opposition to Milosevic during the 1990s and thus has experienced immediate contact with politics, there might exist some more capacity for critical auto-reflection processes in the Serbian SSRS than in Albania. However, it should be noted that in both countries the available space is limited due to the atomization of the researchers, and SSRS actors are not actively seizing opportunities or creating mechanisms for debate; for example, only few translate their research results into policy briefs. Critical reflection emerges automatically with the strengthening of the SSRS community and the setup of spaces for participation and dialogue in this process. In both countries, there is explicit, high interest for national conferences, for participation in thematic working groups, and for contact and exchange with politics and media.
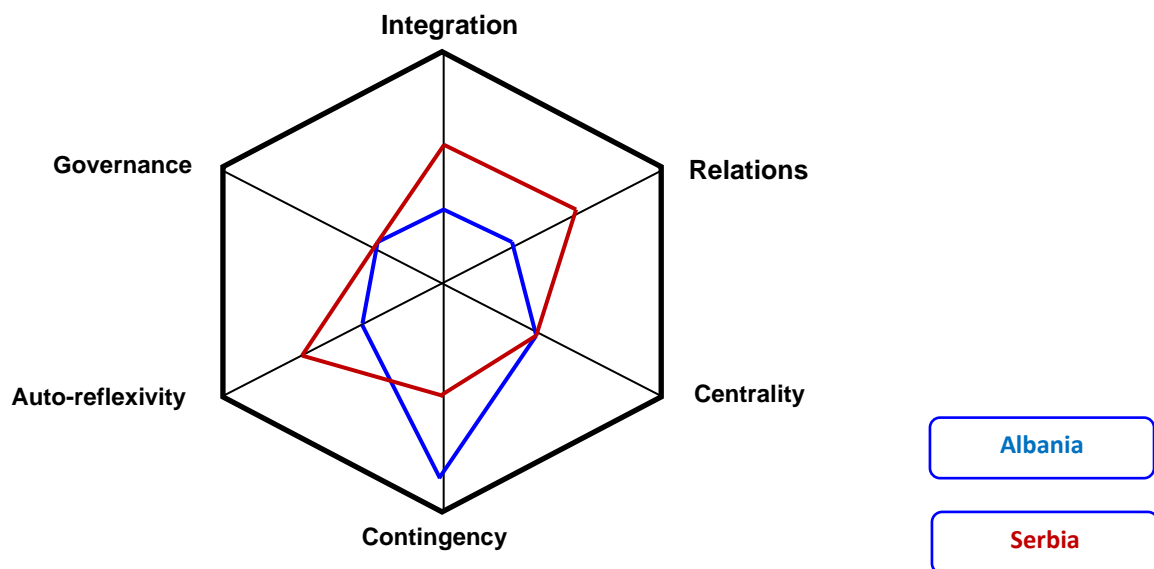
1.5 SDC's framework and support to research in the Western Balkans

SDC considers social sciences to be of major importance as regards fostering socio-economic and political reform processes in the Western Balkans. The Dispatch 2013-2016 requires regional programmes to be complementary to bilateral programmes[15]. The Western Balkans Division considers linking up research to reforms in transition countries as highly relevant for the region. The perspective of this project is regional insofar as similar approaches would be developed for all partner countries, with regional platforms of researchers and possibly also policy-makers, contributing to regionalization of expertise.

The SDC Research Concept 2013-2016 emphasizes that the use of research findings in policy and practice is equally important as quality and evaluation standards, interdisciplinary approaches and cooperation partnerships. Research fields and topics should be focused on innovation that can be potentially scaled up, thus being relevant for political decision- making. The basic principles for future investment in research of the SDC Research Concept 2013-2016 indicate that support to scientific research should
  ▪ be related to the long-term strategic objectives, i.e. relevant for current political reforms,
  ▪ respect the freedom of research in terms of research questions and methods, i.e. preserved by an independent research community,
  ▪ provide scientific evidence and facilitate using research findings in policy and practice, i.e. systemic linkages between scientific research and the spheres of politics, media and society at large are necessary.

At present, SDC is supporting two research programmes in the Western Balkans and beyond: SCOPES (Scientific Cooperation between Eastern Europe and Switzerland, since 1990) and RRPP[16] (Regional Research Promotion Programme, since 2008). Both are implemented by Swiss partners[17], with steering and expertise based mainly in Switzerland. RRPP's main programme focus lies on strengthening individual research capacities in social sciences[18]. SCOPES, implemented by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), covers a broad thematic and geographical field via the financing of joint initiatives (which always include a Swiss partner university). Both programmes are in the last phase of their current approaches and are scheduled to come to an end by 2016.

The RRPP is being implemented by the University of Fribourg and targets young researchers, mainly MA and PhD candidates. The programme also targets decision-makers at academic institutions in their supporting role for young researchers and as advocates for a more prominent role of SSRS in higher education and in the priorities of national policy-makers. In the programme first phase (2008-2011), its overall objective was for "sustainable transition-

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[15] Dispatch 2013-2016: „Als Beitrag zur Entwicklung eines gemeinsamen Wirtschaftsraums und zur Teilnahme des Westbalkans an der europäischen Rechts- und Wertegemeinschaft ergänzt die Schweiz die bilateralen Projekte mit regionalen Programmen in der Forschung, der Polizeizusammenarbeit (DEZA) sowie bei der Reform der Öffentlichen Finanzen und der Finanzinfrastruktur (SECO)"

[16] www.rrpp-westernbalkans.net

[17] SCOPES by the Swiss National Science Foundation; RRPP by the University of Fribourg.

[18] 'Sustainable transition-relevant social 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' (RRPP, Credit Proposal, 01.08.13-31.12.16).

relevant social research capacities in the Western Balkans region [to] contribute to social, economic and institutional reforms in the individual countries as well as to their regional integration".

Regarding the question of political relevance of social sciences, the RRPP has created the trail for the new PERFORM programme. In a Policy Brief[19] on social sciences in Serbia, the participating representatives of research institutes identified major shortcomings in capacities and practices of researchers to be the underestimated recognition of the value of international publications as compared to domestic ones as well as limited research funding (with 18% of the national research budget allocated to social sciences). Social sciences lack fulfilling basic functions such as articulating problems to influence political decision-making processes, forecasting future tendencies, and working out options for policy-makers even as those represent important functions for countries in transition. In a participatory evaluation (Stricker, P. and Wigger, F. (2010), RRPP's stakeholders were asked to rate the programme's biggest impacts. Here are the major insights:

- The highest programme impact is seen in the contribution to inter-regional (Western Balkans) communication and cooperation, as there previously seemed to be a nearly complete "lack of international cooperation in research".
- The second important impact is the contribution to national communication and cooperation. RRPP stakeholders consider the RRPP to make a substantial contribution to the building-up and creation of a previously non-existent national network in the social sciences research sector (SSRS) and the launch of a platform for exchange and interchange at national level.
- Development of advocacy and lobbying for social research is ranked as the weakest part of the RRPP's impact, as this is a field that was not supposed to be focused on. To address this challenge, a working group on policy dialogue was set up in Serbia in 2012 and 2013. It came up with detailed recommendations in 2013, focusing on systemic changes that would lead to a more sustained relevance of the SSRS for political reforms.

Since September 2013, and until December 2016, RRPP has entered a consolidation phase, the purpose of which is "to contribute to the development of regional social research capacities which are transition-relevant and correspond to scientific standards of their international partners". The strategies for each of the individual countries shall consider and make use of the results from the SSRS Final Report.[20] The consolidation phase consists of three pillars – research on transition-relevant topics; capacity-building and networking on specific issues; and policy dialogues. For the latter, the objective is for Western Balkan countries to "dispose of 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."[21] This objective is very much in line with the new PERFORM programme, thus preparing the ground for a

19 RRPP Western Balkans, Local Coordination Unit Serbia, 2013: Policy Dialogue in Serbia.
20 odcp consult gmbh: Systemic Analysis and Definition of Entry Points and Intervention Strategies in the Social Science and Research Sectors (SSRS) of Albania and Serbia. Zurich 2013
21 RRPP Programme Document, Consolidation Phase September 2013 - December 2016. Fribourg, 05.11.2013.

systemic approach to strengthening the SSRS community and creating a culture of knowledge-sharing as a precondition to becoming relevant for policy-making and inform reform processes.

Consequently, the new PERFORM programme in its first phase will closely coordinate with the consolidation phase of RRPP for three reasons: first, to capitalize and use experiences and results of RRPP, second, to join and use the regional knowledge-sharing platforms created by RRPP; and third, to ensure smooth coordination on operational level, e.g. in carrying out joint initiatives in Albania and Serbia to foster the SSRS community and to strengthen linkages to other stakeholders.

2. Objectives

2.1 Overall goal and impact hypothesis

So far, SDC's contribution to the SSRS in Albania and Serbia via the RRPP has mainly facilitated research funding for young researchers through regional calls, research quality measures and exchange on research issues. SDC's systemic analysis highlighted the need to institutionalize a culture of knowledge-sharing and community-building as a precondition of becoming relevant for policy-making and informing public debate on reforms. In order to support the development of a holistic SSRS in Albania and Serbia with a true impact on public policies and society at large, SDC's intention is to focus its cooperation support more on the systemic framework shaped by public and private research institutions, their interactions and their linkages to the society, through the new systemic programme entitled PERFORM (*Performing and Responsible Social Sciences Research).*

The core issue of the new programme is the relevance of social science for political reforms. By its nature, strengthening research systems has to be approached at a national level first as strategic planning is primarily a national (and not a regional) agenda. SDC expects this new programme to address national research systems in Albania and Serbia first, with a potential to be extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia at the latest in a second phase.

The overall goal is focusing on the linkage between a well-performing SSRS and its potential effects on the political reform processes:

> A strong, confident and publicly positioned social sciences research community is meaningfully contributing to socio-economic and political reform processes.

This overall goal is based on two underlying **working hypotheses**:
(i) The relevance of the social sciences for on-going political reform processes, i.e. in political decision-making as well as informed public debate, will increase when the SSRS community (composed by universities, research institutes, social science associations, funding organisations) is strengthened in its capacity to align their research agenda to the political issues at stake, to deliver and communicate research results on current issues, and to articulate with government, private sector and civil society organisations. While maintaining the necessary level of independence, social sciences achieve to respond to thematic priorities

of society and politics and thus become able to contribute in a meaningful way to political reforms.

(ii) By addressing different institutional partners such as universities, research institutes, social science associations, CSOs, business associations, and related state institutions, the programme allows strengthening interlinkages between social sciences research, politics and society at large, thus answering to fill systemic gaps.

These working hypotheses have been developed and discussed thoroughly in Focus Groups and with concerned national partners, i.e. ministries, universities and institutes, and in these discussions these stakeholders have demonstrated high interest in this systemic development process of the SSRS.

In addition to the systemic development and looking at the present performance of the SSRS, improved framework conditions (including established rules, regulations and financing) for public and private research institutions will play a crucial role. Working under clear funding criteria and being enabled to better connect with the research community at national and international level, researchers are expected to be less exposed to arbitrariness and more engaged in contributing to political reform issues.

2.2 Outcomes and components

Based on the above outlined context and challenges to develop a full-fledged SSRS, the overall goal can be achieved through contributions to three change vectors translated as follows into outcomes:

Outcome 1 – Strengthened social science community: Horizontal links within the (national) core social sciences research community are strengthened; the social sciences' research community formulates its research agenda aligned to political reforms and is capacitated to perform independent high-quality social and economic research.
Working hypothesis: A diverse, strong and highly productive SSRS is able to generate evidence-based knowledge as a relevant contribution to political decision-making and public debate.

Outcome 2 – Systemic linkages to political reform processes, civil society organizations, private sector and media: The social sciences research findings provide relevant scientific evidence for political reforms and policy debates in the country and contribute to transparent political decision-making.
Working hypothesis: Improved linkages between the social science community and the political sphere, SCOs, private business associations and the media leads to the full validation of the SSRS.

Outcome 3 - Favourable frame conditions and financial mechanisms: State institutions provide favourable frame conditions (policy framework and financial envelopes) for well-performing social sciences and research sector.
Working hypothesis: A recognized social science community that is responding to current political issues and well articulated with important public and private stakeholders and the media is able to get the necessary funding and an enabling regulatory framework.

The three outcomes correspond with three **programme components**, which need to be seen as interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For example, the strengthening of the social science community (Outcome 1) is – to some extent – a pre-requisite for linkages to politics, outreach and effective communication of research results (Outcome 2) and also for the negotiation of favourable frame conditions (Outcome 3). Therefore, it is advisable to first work intensively on component 1 (Strengthening the social science community) to afterwards progressively add the two other components.

2.3 Prior and secondary beneficiaries

As this project addresses structural inefficiencies with the aim to improve the social sciences research system, it will ultimately benefit the sector's researchers. The core target group in terms of the programme's direct beneficiaries is the community of social scientists. It shall in particular benefit young researchers to find interesting and relevant fields of research in their country of origin and senior researchers to be linked to international know-how and research topics. Equal access to the programme for female and male researchers shall be a guiding principle of implementation.

By addressing relevance and policy incidence of social research, policy-makers and stakeholders in political decision-making, as users of improved relevant research results, are secondary beneficiaries. In a broader perspective of the overall goal, the new programme serves the whole population of both countries contributing to a more evidence-based and democratic decision-making process. Thus ultimately, society at large will be also a secondary beneficiary.

Strengthening the research systems of Serbia and Albania has to be approached at a national level first, yet it remains important to ensure participation of subnational entities such as regional universities and institutes, planning authorities on different levels, regional interest groups, subnational SCOs and business associations and media.

2.4 Action lines

The following action lines were developed in both countries with Focus Groups; they refer to the above mentioned systemic characteristics such as *integration, relations* or *auto-reflexivity*. The specific contexts and stakeholders in both countries will certainly influence the implementation of these action lines – e.g. a strengthened social science community (Component 1) will emerge upon existing nucleus of associations and thematic working groups – and the speed of integration will certainly depend on opportunities, interests of stakeholders as well as push/pull factors. Thus, the action lines need to be adjusted and amplified during the implementation of the programme.

Component A: Strengthening the social science community

Relevance
- Horizontal linkages within the core research system between universities, research institutes, and ministries of education & science strengthen the capacity of the SSRS
  - to reflect its role in society,

- o to establish horizontal communication and knowledge management,
- o to induce cooperative and interdisciplinary research, and
- o to develop a clear profile and voice of social sciences in society.
- Consequently, a recognized social science community based on transparent professional standards, known for the quality of its results, positioned in the public sphere, is able to organize itself, and formulates a research agenda to provide evidence based research results of high quality to the society.

Feasibility factors
- ➚ The high demand and demonstrated interest in a structured well-performing scientific community in social sciences is a driving force.
- ➚ Young researchers especially are pushing for a profound change to the way the SSRS currently works, in particular: Use of internationally recognized research methods, merit-based promotion, societally relevant research topics, and professional development possibilities.
- ➚ Scientific community-building can be linked with short-term benefits and incentives (*quick wins*), e.g. regarding knowledge-sharing and access to data.
- ➚ Knowledge-sharing and scientific community-building helps to overcome isolated action.

A-1 Networking

Mainly working on the systems characteristics of integration, internal relations and auto-reflexivity, the social science community defines its own shape.
- o Strengthen the existing efforts and resources of scientific community-building through continuous communication, meetings, conferences around fields, current issues and topics, e.g. economics of small enterprises, inclusive education, equal access to health services, public goods. - Apply an open-door policy for participation: Pay attention to the balance between different stakeholders (public, CSO, private, national, regional, international including diaspora researchers from abroad).
- o Strengthen the community-internal reflection on developing and guaranteeing quality standards (incl. career building, working conditions) in social science research and publication; create awareness for transparency regarding methods and results, in particular for publicly-funded research.
- o Visualize and review the current research agenda on a yearly basis, discuss and define issues that need more public attention, e.g. citizen culture, gender and generation, minorities, public goods, accountability, equal access to rights and public services.
- o Formulate and implement a communication strategy to strengthen existing publications, journals, conferences, media relations.
- o Organise conferences, workshops and round tables across the subjects of social sciences to maintain a sustained constructive dialogue on the role of social sciences in society.
- o Contribute to the setup of a periodic national conference on social sciences.
- o Establish / strengthen an open virtual platform on social science research: projects, results, methodologies, policy briefs, access to funds and scholarships.

A-2 Social science researchers association

Based on the existing working groups, associations, academies (at present organised as professional associations around one topic, i.e. education, economics, health), building /

strengthening a national association / academy of social sciences and research of an interdisciplinary character.

- o Form a core group of public-private social science research stakeholders and facilitate the formulation of a practical strategy towards a full-fledged SSRS.
- o Create a space for reflection on the basic issues of association building, such as: purpose, membership and boundaries, main functions and products, governance.
- o Consult the ideas and develop further elements for the research association: research agenda, communication and sharing on regional and international level, conferences and seminars, promotion of publishing, keeping the research community informed, participation in public debates, etc.
- o Discuss, consult and define the governance structure of the social science researchers association.
- o Based on existing publishing opportunities, create a national journal for social science research with a board of national and international editors.
- o Strengthen open access to data from official sources (keep in mind the statistic offices' key role regarding data provision and accessibility and the actual challenges therewith).
- o Foster the discussion on quality standards and transparent evaluation systems for scientific research, including the debate on communication and use of results.
- o Develop a medium-term strategy for the association with sustainable funding mechanisms.
- o Set up a yearly national conference and a national award for social science research.
- o Establish and administrate a useful virtual platform on social science research that provides spaces for working groups as well as access to useful information on projects, results, methodologies, policy briefs, access to funds and scholarships.

A-3 Learning (in connection with social science community-building)

First of all, the community demonstrates its usefulness by providing learning opportunities to its members and gaining voice with the institutions and the public in general.

- o Facilitate knowledge-sharing in open communities of practice (virtual and F2F meetings) and promote cooperation opportunities between young researchers and (national, international) senior researchers; facilitate knowledge transfer between in-country research and researchers coming back from foreign countries.
- o Foster interdisciplinary and consortium research, integrating well-performing research NGOs, national planning commissions, planning and research units of line ministries, key resource persons from CSO.
- o Explore specific training needs for social science researchers and identify the most effective means to address them, e.g. organise workshops and seminars on research management, research methodology, project proposal writing, and statistical data processing.
- o Link up with research of diaspora researchers, funding for on-site research.
- o Develop and nurture knowledge-sharing on highly relevant key issues that facilitate the articulation between social sciences and politics, such as: Political economy of reforms, fabric and negotiation patterns of policy-making processes, applied strategies and political incidence of stakeholders, role of media for informed public debate.
- o Provide concrete learning opportunities through exemplary interdisciplinary and consortium research projects aligned with political issues at stake.
- o Strengthen research twinning, peer reviews, and coaching among different ministries, universities, institutes, NGOs, etc.

Main cooperation partners
- Individual researchers and social science research entities: Universities and research institutes, academies, specialized NGOs, publishing houses and media
- Existing efforts and core groups of associations of social sciences, e.g. in economy
- Ministry of Education & Science, ARTI (Albania) / Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, NCHE (Serbia)
- National and subnational planning commissions, planning and research units of line ministries and local/regional authorities
- International cooperation agencies

Component B: Systemic linkages to political reform processes, civil society organizations, private sector and media

Relevance
- The social science community produces evidence-based contributions to political reforms and informed policy debates, and participates actively in those debates by
    - aligning research fields and topics to the key topics of current political and social reforms, i.e. sector reforms in social security, taxes and inclusive education, public support to small and medium business development, etc.
    - considering and integrating concrete and interdisciplinary research questions regarding societally and politically relevant realities and challenges,
    - developing political economy capacity to provide relevant contributions to the discussion on reform options and the distributive effects of reforms,
    - strengthening the linkages and services to civil society (e.g. consumers organizations, unions) and private sector organizations,
    - preserving its recognized independence and autonomy to the political sphere,
    - strengthening the communication of results and the relations to media.
- A well performing and recognized social science community is able to provide applied research services to civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector. This demand oriented services strengthen the position of social sciences in the society.

Feasibility factors
- ↗ High interest towards the linkage of social research to current political reforms, in particular of young researchers.
- ↗ At minimum a relevant number of politicians is explicitly in favour of evidence-based contributions from social sciences.
- ↗ High potential to link social research with other sciences and with internationally recognized research results.
- ↗ In the context of on-going reform processes, CSOs will become more important and will ask for research on their topics. Explicit interest of CSOs in studies and applied social science, e.g. on equal access to public services, social security, local government and decentralization.
- ↗ Palpable expression of interest of business associations in services from social research groups and existing unsatisfied demand from private sector for applied social sciences research, e.g. in topics like HR management, organizational development, market access.
- ↗ The media are generally more interested in sensationalism, but could be won over with more targeted communication.

B-1 Linkages between social science research community and policy processes

Providing evidence-based knowledge to the political negotiation process contributes to the formation of a gradually more informed democratic society and transparent political decision-making.

- o Dialogue within the SSRS and with stakeholders of all societal sectors (public, private sector, civil society, e.g. citizen initiatives, consumer organisations, environment and human rights organisations, business associations and private companies) to debate the role of social sciences and to identify research fields and questions relevant for political reform processes.
- o Strive to harmonize the research agenda with that of agenda of political reforms. Consult with government ministries, parties and parliament commissions the current political reform agenda; establish periodically a shortlist of research questions that could inform the policy process.
- o Organise open thematic conferences and facilitate open debate on current relevant policy issues and research questions, and establish policy briefs on results.
- o Develop a set of practical instruments and visible good practice for political economy assessments, i.e. institutional analysis, ex-ante evaluations of political reform options.
- o Establish relations to media and become visible through participation in public debate on reform issues.

B-2 Outreach: Linkages to civil society and private sector organizations

The setup of relations and cooperation linkages between the SSRS and civil society organisations as well as the private sector and the media lead to greater recognition of the social sciences.

- o Establish continuous relations with CSO stakeholders (e.g. citizen initiatives, consumer organisations, environment and human rights organisations) and business associations and private companies in order to identify research fields and questions.
- o Organise meetings with CSOs and private sector representatives to identify their demand for research, e.g. access to new markets, management training, gender sensitive HRD, dealing with the past, technology and environment, marketing issues.
- o Organise meetings with CSOs and private sector to identify their demand for research, e.g. dealing with the past, access to new markets, research of fitting education and training to demand, gender sensitive HRD, management tools, technology and environment, marketing issues.
- o Identify demand for social science research of international cooperation agencies and get acquainted with current instruments used in cooperation programmes.
- o Organise regional and international conferences to review specific research fields, and compare methodologies, review results; get the media on board.
- o Facilitate exposure to regional and international research, support for broader access to international and regional conferences and funds.
- o Develop presentations and offers that match the demand and facilitate the formation of research in consortiums.
- o Work both the national and the regional level: build up linkages and knowledge- sharing on regional level, strengthen regional cooperation through Ph.D. training and regional trainings and conferences.
- o Strengthen comparative research and disseminate internationally recognized research results.

B-3 Communication on results

To maintain and strengthen the systemic linkages, continuous effective communication is a pre-requisite, which is way the social science community should invest time and get resources for this purpose.

- o Bring research results to the public: publish understandable abstracts and policy briefs; participate in public debates, support translation of research into publicly- and policy-relevant language (policy briefs, articles and interviews for media); include a section regarding communication in every project proposal.
- o Organise at least one yearly conference on applied research services to civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector concerning approaches and results.
- o Support translation of research results into the language of the clients; provide publication opportunities of results; translate results into policy briefs.
- o Establish a communication plan with media representatives, individual editors, and journalists with inclination to social science research; create spaces and places for regular meetings with media.
- o Facilitate publishing in renowned international journals; promote the research journals to get on the SCI and SSCI lists.

Main cooperation partners

- Social science research entities: universities and research institutes, academies, research NGOs
- Ministry of Education & Science / Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, national planning commissions, planning and research units of line ministries
- Parliament and its thematic commissions
- Key resource persons of CSOs, professional organisations, unions and business associations, and international cooperation agencies
- Key representatives of high quality media, editors, journalists and media associations, publishers, journalism schools

Component C - Favourable frame conditions and financial mechanisms

Relevance

- The sustainability of the social science community and the recognition of its contribution to reform processes need a favourable institutional framework.
- The public and political recognition of the social science community is best reflected in adequate funding mechanisms for social sciences research.

Feasibility factors

- ↗ In both countries, explicit interest of concerned ministries.
- ↗ Government strategies with explicit intension to increase research funding and quality of higher academic education.
- ↗ Readiness to review the regulatory framework and the funding mechanisms for social sciences.
- ↗ Applied participatory approaches (in terms of hearings, consultations, negotiations with stakeholders) to the development of legal regulatory conditions.
- ↗ Acceptable level of effectiveness and efficiency of administrative procedures.

C-1 Regulatory framework

- o Identify and analyse main constraints for lack of recognition and scarce public financing of the SSRS.
- o Facilitate access to different regulatory legal frameworks of other countries and establish a comparative study.
- o Facilitate periodic meetings and talks between social science researchers and public authorities of different line ministries and members of the parliament and parties on specific current issues of interest.
- o Support for a critical reflection on regulatory requirements for the SSRS in line with EU requirements (in cooperation with EU-funded research programmes) and best practice of meaningfully contributing to socio-economic and political reform processes.
- o Ensure that the quality of statistical data collection and reliable processing as well as the timely access to this data base is part of the regulatory framework.
- o Set up a comprehensive scheme of incentives for quality in social science research (salary increase, reduced teaching, and grants for participation in conferences, publishing and study visits abroad).
- o Get engaged in a lively public debate with government, media and possibly parliament on the role of SSRS in policy-making.
- o Simplify the recognition of foreign degrees, particularly for those who have obtained degrees at recognized foreign universities.

C-2 Funding mechanisms for social science research

- o On the basis of a national social science research agenda, facilitate a multi-stakeholder reflection and establish a comparative study on funding mechanisms.
- o Establish and negotiate for increased funding and transparent fund management which fosters community-building, continuous capacity-development, mobility of social scientists and researchers, and publishing.
- o Encourage the creation of mixed funding pools for research from public and private sources and combine them with funds from international cooperation.
- o Identify incentives and strategies to increase the investment of the private sector and CSOs in social science research.
- o Facilitate the reflection on designing and implementing funding mechanisms such as Swiss National Research Programs. Discuss with politicians and parties the possibility of national research programmes coordinated with the political reform agenda.
- o Provide learning opportunities through study tours to the Swiss National Research Fund and Swiss social science research associations / academies, and similar bodies in other European countries such as German DFG and Max Planck institutes.

Main cooperation partners

- Social science research entities: Universities, Institutes, Academies, Associations, research NGOs, publishers, media
- Ministry of Higher Education & Science / Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
- National Council for Scientific Development and Technological Development and Scientific Board for Social Sciences
- National planning commissions
- Ministry of Finance
- Planning and research units of line ministries

- Parliament and its thematic commissions
- Decision-makers and stakeholders of all sectors (public, private, CSOs)
- Swiss National Research Fund and similar bodies in other European countries such as German DFG and Max Planck institutes

3. Implementing strategy

3.1 Three interlinked components

The systemic analysis of the SSRS identified the three components being considered as mutually reinforcing, even though the first component (strengthening the social science community) should become the lead component of the first phase. The best-fit mix between the three components will arise according to country's needs and capacities.

- Component A (strengthening the social science community) strengthens the research community by several means, e.g. by open debate on the relevance of a research agenda, by networking between universities and research institutes, by peer learning and multi-disciplinary cooperation in the research area; further, the building of national associations of social sciences and research are envisaged. Cooperation partners would be social research entities, but also national bodies such as line ministries or national planning commissions.
- Component B (systemic linkages to political reform processes and to society in general) contributes to establishing structured dialogue processes with a range of stakeholders both from public and private sectors, including line ministries, civil society and media, to identify and respond to reform-relevant research fields, complying increasingly with the demand expressed by public and private sector.
- Component C (favourable frame conditions and financial mechanisms) looks at the existing national strategies, finances, laws, and action plans as a basis for maintaining a policy-dialogue and advocating for enhanced frame conditions for research, in particular social sciences, all aligned to EU standards.

The three interlinked components contribute to the following **end of programme vision**:
Social sciences and research deliver socially and politically relevant research findings that are reflected in political decision-making and contribute to political and social reforms and the formation of a gradually more informed democratic society. Policy-makers are in a position to make evidence-based decisions. Networking within both the national and the international research community contribute to more effective research.

3.2 Core elements of approach

Organizational and network development: The basic characteristics of the new PERFORM programme require a comprehensive approach of strengthening the social science community, fostering linkages, and negotiating an enabling institutional environment for social sciences. These processes of organizational and network development should be seen from a governance perspective, i.e. from the enhanced role of the SSRS for evidence-based policy-making. The organizational and network development should first validate and use existing

competencies to reflect on the role and function of social sciences in the society and to shape their organization based on existing forms of research associations.

Modes of delivery: Besides some limited contributions to office functioning and web administration, SDC's contribution – provided through an implementing organization and backstopping – consists mainly in advisory services tailored to the partners' needs, facilitating meetings and workshops, organizing knowledge-sharing, providing coaching and process consultations, organizing leadership retreats and study visits, coordination of communities of practice, organizing peer-to-peer-learning and thematic focus groups.

Shifting focus over time: According to progress, during the first phase, the activities will concentrate on component A (strengthening the social science community), thus preparing the ground for outreach and institutional negotiations. Consequently, the activities and initiatives of component B and C should be taken up with an already strengthened community.

Regional exchange and learning: The programme starts in both countries at the same time. Differences in context, processes, priorities and progress will be a desirable source for experience-based learning. Continuous learning will provide a sound basis for the outreach to other countries in the Western Balkans during the second phase (2018-2022). In addition to this continuous regional exchange, the programme will execute activities which can be implemented jointly, e.g. study tours to learn from SNF and similar bodies engaged in social sciences research.

Guiding principles: It is advisable to develop some key principles and guidelines that orient joint work with the partners. Among these guidelines may appear:
- The programme ensures equal access to information and rights for all members of the research community.
- The work shall be guided by the principles of openness, transparency, inclusiveness and consensus.
- The programme facilitates participation in the activities and the programme steering.
- The members of the research community maintain their own identity and autonomy and decide on outreach and activities of component B and C.
- Criteria for membership, rights and obligations of members as well as the governance structure and decision-making process of the research community is consulted and agreed by the members of the community.
- The programme creates a culture of periodic monitoring and evaluation.
- Reporting and recommendations by consensus, reflecting different options, if necessary.

3.3 Main national partners

It belongs to the vision of this programme to increasingly build on the capacities of the national partners; this includes associating national partners for the implementation. Based on the above reflection, the main cooperation partners for this new programme will be social research (public and private universities, research institutes, academies and associations, research NGOs, etc.), government (ministries of Education & Science, line ministries, national and subnational planning commissions) and selected national entities.

Western Balkan countries are on their path to EU accession, with Serbia starting negotiations in 2014, and Albania possibly getting the candidate status by mid-2014. With the EU as key cooperation partner in the region, coordinating with the EU research agenda will be essential. By its nature, strengthening research systems has to be approached at a national level first, aligned with national strategic planning, but taking into consideration subnational stakeholders and their interests. In both countries a national **key partner** was identified that matches with the requirements and challenges of a systemic SSRS development. In each country, this main partner will play an important role as a coordinating and facilitating actor of the programme and will also host the programme secretariat composed by a small operational coordination unit.

Albania: The Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI)

ARTI is a public, legal institution under the competences of the Council of Ministers, recently directly attached to the office of the Prime Minister. Its role is to support, monitor and evaluate programs and projects in the fields of science, technology and innovation in the country. The Agency has started its activity in March 2010, aiming to build a modern system of science, strengthen of research and technology, as well as their integration inside the higher education system. ARTI facilitates the exchanging of knowledge, mutual activities and partnership within and outside the country.

As a coordinating and guiding structure which cooperates with institutions in the field of science and technology for sustainable development of the country, in line with national priorities and policies. The agency supports, monitors and evaluates programs and projects in the fields of science, technology and innovation in the country, and acts as a coordinating body for several EU and international programmes. Along with the implementation of its mission, ARTI accomplishes, among others, the following tasks:

- To cooperate with ministries and other institutions in implementing the strategy of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and to promote research in this field;
- To give financial support to programs and projects of STI, in accordance with the priorities defined by the Council of Ministers, based on the assessment made by the relevant commissions;
- To develop application procedures for the preliminary evaluation, monitoring, and final assessment of the programs and projects of STI;
- To create and enrich continuously, the database of the analysis and documentation of the STI system;
- To offer technical assistance to all of the institutions in regard to investments in the field of STI;
- To promote the cooperation with the private sector in the fields of STI;
- To promote, give expertise, coordinate and monitor the bilateral and multilateral cooperation with EU, foreign countries and international organizations in the field of STI;
- To implement governmental policies which have on focus the qualified scientists, research teams and centres of excellence, in the field of STI;
- To implement governmental policies on brain gain and the engagement of the Albanian intellectual Diaspora in the development of education, science, public administration and the private sector;
- To offer technical support for the executive and legislative institutions, in improving the fulfilment of the necessary legal framework and legal acts in the field of STI.

Serbia: National Council of Higher Education (NCHE)

At the central level, the main responsibilities for sciences, research and higher education lies with the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Council for Higher Education, which came into existence in 2005. The Council is an independent body, consisting mainly of academicians proposed by the Conference of Serbian Universities (CSU) and appointed by decision of the National Assembly. It is a 21-member body appointed by the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia based on the proposal coming from: (i) The Conference of Universities in Serbia (12 members of NCHE), (ii) The Conference of non-university higher education institutions (2 members), (iii) the Government (7). The final list of candidates from which these bodies nominate candidates to the Parliament is formed based on the results of the open call for the individual candidates willing to be members of the NCHE. The mandate of the NCHE members lasts for four years and members can be re-elected once.

The NCHE has a leading role in Serbia as a professional organization representing the academic community. According to the Law on Higher Education, it is the highest institution in Serbia with regards to the development and improvement of the quality science and of higher education. The NCHE determines scientific, artistic and vocational areas of education, based on the proposal of the University Conference of Serbia (UCS) and the Conference of high school principals.

The NCHE has broad competences. It is
  ▪ to follow the development of higher education and propose policies which would bring Serbian higher education in line with European and international developments,
  ▪ to decide and/or give recommendations about various issues including degrees and professional titles, criteria for appointment of academic staff, enrolment and access policy for higher education, and
  ▪ to play a crucial role in accreditation, including the definition of quality standards.

The NCHE has overall responsibility for strategic planning and decisions about main issues relevant for the coherence of the academic system, such as setting standards for the internal assessment and quality evaluation of academic institutions and establishing standards for the issuance of work permits.

3.3 Coordination

The programme coordinates the activities in the three components jointly with the main national partners upon functional criteria. The coordination task differentiates between different levels of intensity from periodic exchanges of information to coordinated action, from joint strategies to co-production. The coordination covers the following actor groups:
  ▪ **Core research system**: Individual social scientists, social science research entities such as universities, institutes, academies, associations, research NGOs, consultants.
  ▪ **Government actors**: Ministry of Higher Education & Science / Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, National Council for Scientific Development and Technological Development and Scientific Board for Social Sciences, planning commissions, line ministries and their research and planning units, national and subnational planning commissions, commissions of the parliament.
  ▪ **Civil society and private sector**: Chambers of commerce, unions, business associations, political parties.

- **Media**: The voice of a strengthened social science community will be heard when their attention is attracted to research issues and results. Contact management and relations to the media (editors, publishers, journalists, media associations, journalism schools) play also a crucial role to open access to the political sphere.
- **International cooperation**: RRPP, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), EU programmes, Swiss National Research Fund and similar bodies in other European countries. Coordination with international research programmes (mainly EU-related) is vital to achieving system-wide results. Cooperation with the RCC in strengthening social science research is desired. In addition, the programme will aim for synergies in Serbia and Albania by collaborating with the UNDP Brain Gain Program.
- **Coordination with SDC Cooperation Office**: In each country the cooperation office is represented in the respective Steering Committee. In addition, a gradually more dynamic SSRS may play a major role as service provider for the Swiss cooperation programs in both countries, e.g. research on different reform options or on specific topics such as decentralization and local governance. It is desirable that SDC links up the current portfolio of SDC programmes with research topics that are defined in the context of the PERFORM programme.
- **Coordination with RRPP**: Until the end of RRPP in 2016, this coordination needs special attention and should be organized on two levels: (i) General coordination and information-sharing: Periodic biannual meetings between the programmes on management level, including one representative of the coordination units of both countries. (ii) Operational coordination of joint activities: According to agreed joint activities – e.g. working with a thematic focus group, study visit to the SNF – the programmes agree on an effective coordination mechanism reporting on progress and results to biannual meetings at management level.

4. Organization, Management and Administration

4.1 Time frame and inception phase

The first 4-years-phase of the programme is envisaged to start in September 2014 in both countries, after finalizing the open tender process and contracting of the Swiss coordinating organisation[22]. The overall programme will cover three phases. SDC expects this new programme to address current national research systems of Albania and Serbia in a first step, with a potential to be extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia latest in the second phase. The preparation work for this outreach will be undertaken at the end of the first phase.

The first phase of the programme will start with an inception phase of 3 to 4 months. Upon the draft Programme Document, this inception phase serves to fine-tune the organisational setup, including recruitment of staff of the coordination units in both countries. In addition, the inception phase covers the following tasks:

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[22] According to the outlined tasks this Coordinating Organisation will presumably consist of two complementary organisations, i.e. a consortium of a Swiss university institute with a record in social sciences and politics, and a consultant specialized in organisational and network development.

- To establish working relations with the national key partners CNHE resp. ARTI, Ministries and the SDC Cooperation Offices.
- To agree on terms of institutional hosting in CNHE resp. ARTI.
- To define professional profiles and tasks of staff of coordination units.
- To further fine-tune and agree on organisational setup and coordination measures.
- To agree on principle rules of procedure and relevant practices that will guide the implementation of the programme.
- To elaborate a proposal of the programme governance (rules and regulations) to be agreed with the Steering Committee.
- To agree on M&E procedures and reporting on the progress of work.
- To formulate the Plan of Operation for the first year, including a detailed cost frame.

The inception phase report the drafted by the coordinating organisation shall provide evidence of the progress achieved in the above mentioned points and if necessary fine-tune the present programme document.

4.2 Organizational structure and management process

Due to its nature, the organizational structure of the programme emphasizes participatory decision-making and the necessary ownership of the national partners from the start on. The management process and the functions of the different units rely on the below outlined structure.
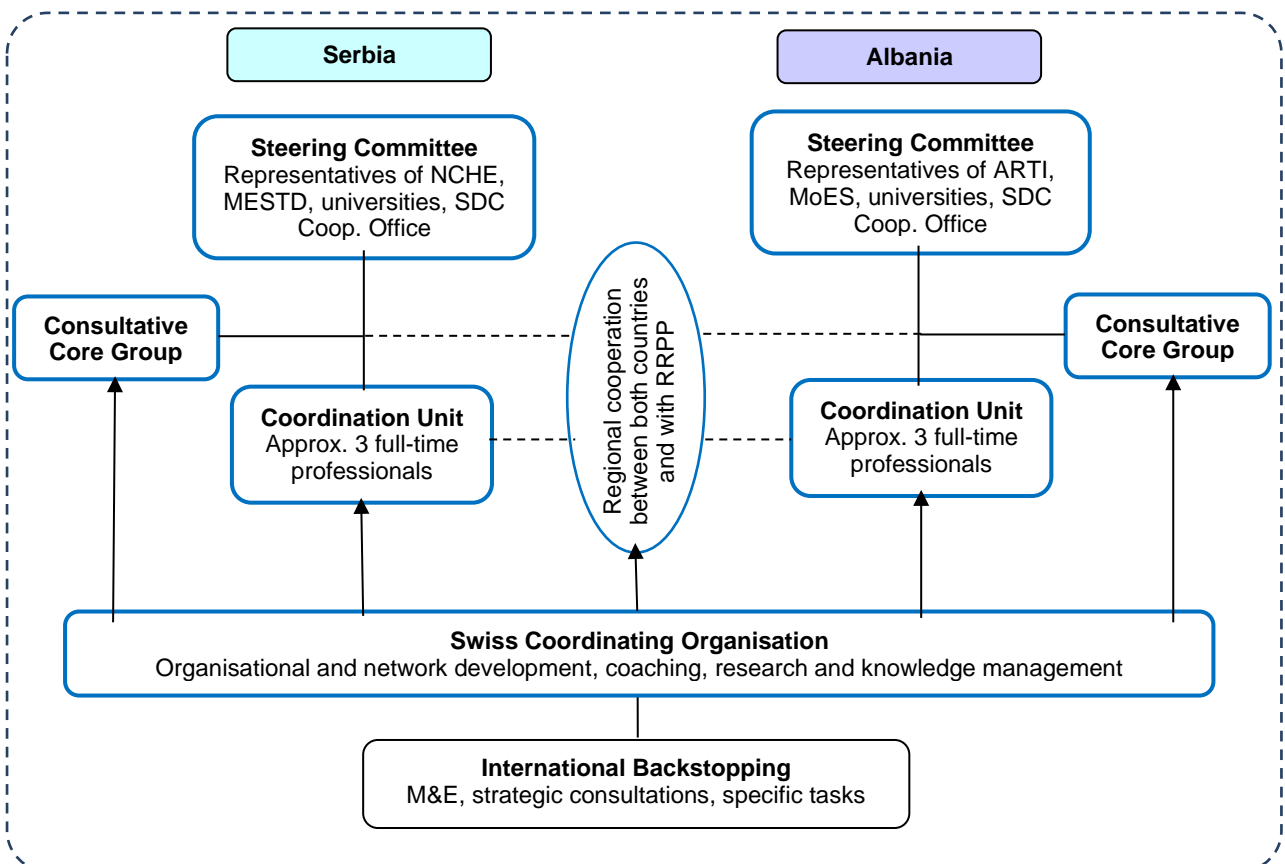
Steering Committee

Composition: Representatives of NCHE / ARTI, MESTD / MoES, universities and institutes, SDC Cooperation Office. The members are assigned on a permanent, but potentially rotating basis with duration of one programme phase.

Key Functions: The Committee provides strategic orientation, agrees on the governance structure of the programme and decides on reports and planning on a yearly basis. It also approves the composition and profiles of the Coordination Unit.

The Committee is chaired by the respective national partner organisation (ARTI / NCE). During the first year of implementation, the Committee is supposed to agree on a set of rules and regulations for the programme management upon a proposal provided by the Swiss coordinating organisation.

Consultative Core Group

Composition: Social scientists / researchers from between up to 8 institutions and organizations – be they research institutes of universities or research-oriented civil society organizations. According to the stage of development it is also advisable to incorporate other major actors, e.g. a member of a national planning commission or a representative of a business association.

Key Functions: The Consultative Core Group serves as a sounding board, in particular in the following functions:
- To reflect different strategic options and action lines.
- To provide feedback on programme activities, such as outreach and policy development, workshops, conferences, study tours.
- To comment on work plans and progress reporting.

Coordination Unit

Composition: In each country, around three full-time professionals with complementary profiles.

Key Functions: The Coordinating Unit, hosted by the national partners ARTI resp. NCHE, would probably consist of two programme officers (one of which would have a management function, the second for specific tasks according to work plans) and an administrative officer (for documentation, communication and the administration of the virtual platform).

The Coordination Unit will be permanently supported and advised by the Swiss coordinating organisation – knowledgeable in SSRS development – with a focus on organizational and network development working in parallel in both countries.

The three professionals of the Coordination Unit team combine the following competency framework:
- **Programme management**: Basic knowledge and experience in results-oriented PCM and M&E procedures.
- **Research systems**: Knowledge of the SSRS of the country and funding systems; knowledge of studies on quality issues of social sciences and the most relevant cooperation partners of the SSRS.
- **Managing complex cooperation systems**: Analytic judgement and knowledge of the SSRS composed by different public and private stakeholders; identifying priorities and action steps for achieving overall objectives; basic experience in organizing and coordinating of multi-stakeholder systems; allocating realistic timescales for activities and set achievable target dates for programme stages; where deviations from plan

occurs, swiftly adapts priorities / activities; looking for common ground upon which to build a relationship; superior negotiation capacities and flexible decision-making; revising strategy and work plans as circumstances change; prioritizing activities in light of strategic perspective(s) and available resources;

- **Managing relations**: Building and maintaining relationships; establishing an effective network of links across a wide range of public and private organisations and to media; community-building of social sciences researchers; striving to build effective relationships and seeking to understand the priorities, interests, mandates and concerns of others; effective use and administration of ICT tools; workshop facilitation.

- **Commitment to teamwork**: Promoting a sense of team spirit by encouraging collaboration, cooperation and communication among all the members of the Unit; delegating responsibilities to members of the team, as appropriate, in order to encourage buy-in and a sense of shared responsibility; encouraging colleagues to think of themselves as a team; sharing information widely with others; encouraging an open communication style throughout the Unit; taking action to understand and managing conflict timely and in a participatory style.

- **Leadership**: Demonstrating in-depth and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the programme and the strategic action lines; taking the lead in creation of a country-specific vision in collaboration with different stakeholders; articulating the programme vision clearly and persuasively; providing clear direction for the effective implementation of the programme; challenging and questioning common practices to ensure meeting the changing needs of the SSRS; considering and evaluating trends, opportunities, alternatives and contingencies as they relate to the programme vision; demonstrating awareness of a very broad range of issues related to own work; supporting and coaching team colleagues; showing passion and enthusiasm in motivating others to get things done.

- **Core values**: Integrity and commitment to work, fairness and equality, managing cultural diversity, demonstrating an ability to see issues from the point of view of others and showing respect for cultural differences; striving to build and support a team diversity; commitment to learning, identifying needs for capacity development, seeking feedback on own performance; encouraging an atmosphere of learning, promoting the development of knowledge management and sharing systems.

Swiss Coordinating Organisation

Composition: Swiss university institute with a sound record in social sciences research, and a consultant specialized in organisational and network development, policy development, community-building, media relations.

The support services of the Swiss Coordinating Organisation are not only based on funding, but also on a continuous cooperation partnership with the operational Coordination Unit, the Consultative Core Group and the Steering Committee in both countries. A broad spectrum of modalities - from financial support, workshops, conferences and peer reviews to organizational and network development – will be needed to develop the SSRS to its full potential.

Key Functions: Experienced in the use of PCM tools and results-orientated management, elaboration of yearly work plans jointly with the Coordination Unit and the Consultative Group, advisory services in the three components, in particular:

- Providing practical advisory services tailored to the partner's needs, facilitating meetings and workshops, organizing knowledge-sharing, providing coaching and

process consultations, organizing leadership retreats and study visits, facilitating communities of practice, organizing peer-to-peer-learning and thematic focus groups.

- Supporting the Coordinating Unit, research institutes and policy-makers in institutional development, networking, community-building and governance issues, including: division of roles and responsibilities, strategies and tools for capacity development, ICT solutions, building multi-stakeholder networks and partnerships with government, civil society and the private sector.
- Applying a comprehensive approach of strengthening the social science community, fostering linkages, and negotiating an enabling institutional environment for social sciences. Broad experience in organizational and network development, building on existing capacities.
- Teamleadership and teambuilding, continuous support to Coordination Unit, coaching and workshop facilitation, definition of performance contracts and result oriented management, open dialogue and participatory decision-making with Coordination Unit.
- Financial controlling and elaboration of implementation arrangements; management and coordination of operations assuring smooth delivery of services.
- Periodic concise reporting to the Steering Committee, SDC Cooperation Office and Head Office, based on M&E procedures and joint progress reviews; proactive communication enhancing the profile of the programme in the country and the region.

In coordination with the two Coordination Units and in consultation with the two Consultative Core Groups, the Swiss Coordinating Organisation also manages – in coordination with RRPP - the regional activities such as: knowledge-sharing, bilateral research co-operation and study tours to Switzerland and neighbouring countries. This regional approach provides added value in the three components with regards to regional knowledge-sharing and research cooperation.

Backstopping
Composition: Due to special needs and to complement the Swiss coordinating organisation.
Key Functions: Support to M&E, strategic consultations, specific tasks such as systems development and political economy of reforms.

5. Resources

The programme PERFORM is supposed to start for a first phase of 4 years by September 2014, after completion of the tender process that is to identify the Swiss coordinating organisation. The tender process will already show a more detailed cost frame. The elaboration of the detailed budget of the first phase will then take place in the inception phase. Resources on the level of action lines will be specified autonomously by the respective bidders so as to give them a certain degree of autonomy concerning their proposal for programme implementation. The cost frame for Albania will possibly remain somewhat below the one of Serbia, but at this stage of planning the difference is not relevant.

The tentative cost frame (in 1000 CHF) of the first phase 2014-2018 for both countries:

Year Pos.	Item	09.2014	2015	2016	2017	09.2018	Total

01	Steering Committee and Consultative Group	10	15	15	15	15	70
02	Coordination Unit	50	220	220	220	170	880
03	Logistics and office	10	20	20	20	10	80
04	Costs Component A	100	200	200	100	100	700
05	Costs Component B	50	100	150	150	150	600
06	Costs Component C	50	50	50	100	50	300
07	Regional activities	10	10	10	10	10	50
08	Preparation outreach	0	0	0	0	50	50
09	Swiss Coord. Org.[23]	150	250	250	250	210	1110
10	Backstopping	40	40	40	40	40	200
11	Evaluation	0	0	60	0	0	60
	Total						**4100**

6. Risks and risk management

Both Albania and Serbia can be characterized as countries with extractive institutions[24] that are a substantial factor in explaining SSRS shortcomings. Such institutions (rules and norms) protect the political and economic power of a small but dominant elite group inside the SSRS as well as in society at large. Under such a perspective, a winner-takes-it-all reality of power struggles also means that incumbents will cling to power in order to protect their stakes and power transitions tend to happen in erratic, potentially arbitrary ways. While the latter is currently less the case (as opposed to the Milosevic era in Serbia or the melt-down of institutionality in Albania at the end of the 1990s), it is clear that an independent and effective SSRS runs counter to status quo interests.

The systemic analysis performed in 2012 identified a lack of sustainable and transparent national funding mechanisms, with the risk of resulting in competition and rivalry among researchers, and closed political circles opposing influence of social sciences. Loss of power might threaten patronage networks, and strong influence of powerful conservative academic groups may hamper the process of community-building or concerted actions between different stakeholders. Frustration and continuous brain drain of young researchers can put into question interventions targeted for this particular group.[25] These risks strongly depend on power structures within each country. The overarching definition of risks shall be supplemented by country-based risk definition and by formulating mitigation measures for the first phase.

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[23] Including inception phase

[24] The notion of *extractive institutions* is part of a framework developed by the political economists D.C. North, J.J. Wallis and B.R. Weingast (Violence and Social Orders. A conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history. Cambridge University Press. New York 2009). The authors argue that so-called Limited Access Order (LAO) societies are characterized by the control of a small elite which cuts off most citizens of political and economic rights. In contrast to LAOs, open access orders (OAO) enable large numbers of their citizens to create organizations and to have access to rights, true political participation, and resources. The basic transformation pattern thus concerns the transition from LAOs to OAOs.

[25] E.g. in Albania, according to a survey of over 40 research institutions and 10 public universities, more than 50 percent of all lecturers and research workers emigrated during the period 1991–2005. In Serbia, an estimated 30,000 graduates left the country in 1990–2000, while 2,000 graduates went abroad in the following decade (most of them are professionals in information and communication technology and natural sciences).

The SSRS in Albania and in Serbia – and the actors it interacts with – are not monolithic structures, but heterogeneous ones consisting of young, open-minded young researchers; groups of older researchers that might find the status quo or nationalistic ideas appealing; politicians distrustful of social sciences (sometimes for legitimate reasons) or not willing to have their interpretative power challenges; media that often can be more sensationalist than fact-based; and so on. The SSRS and their interlinkages are thus a reflection of the transitioning and evolving societies they are a part of. Therefore, the setup of the programme PERFORM should be built up in a systemic view and with a broad participation approach. Open and equal access to information and facilitation in this process are paramount.

The RRPP (i.e. working groups on recognition of social research in society) has shown that the strengthening of communication flows and density leads to spill-over and quick wins. The RRPP has an excellent image in terms of its impact – interviewees spoke of it as a (positive) earthquake that opened up, for the first time, funding opportunities for young researchers, and on relevant topics. Finally, there is a positive image of Switzerland as an honest broker / facilitator respecting the partner's agenda and being transparent, which would give a systemic cooperation support additional leverage.

There is a strong demand – in particular in Albania – for the outlined support modalities. Young researchers have cut their teeth in graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral programmes abroad – again, particularly in Albania – and in both countries this new generation is hoping for a more open, evidence-based approach to the products of social science research. The SDC-mandated study in 2012 also met state officials and politicians, some of which were very vocal about the need for the social sciences to provide more evidence on decision-relevant topics – i.e. the challenge is not just about opening social sciences ways towards decision-makers, but also to help them coming up with quality research that meets demand. This increased leverage for high-quality knowledge might be a challenge to decision-makers whose interests are vested in maintaining the status quo, but it is in line with the EU-accession orientations that both countries have decided upon in their parliaments and at the top of their executives.

It would also go in line with the aspirations of reform-minded civil society organizations that have so far – for both political and administrative reasons – to a considerable extent taken over the introduction of evidence-based knowledge into policy-making, as it would strengthen their case and widen coalitions for effective and efficient reforms. The different public and private stakeholders have thus to be functionally incorporated into the different work levels (working groups, communities of practice, focus groups, etc.).

In this scenario, the major risks to monitor are:

Component A
- Dividing and competing forces between different universities, academies, institutes, and individual researchers may inhibit the concerted action.
- Strong influence of powerful conservative academic groups that may hamper the process of community-building process in the SSRS.
- Frustration and continuous brain drain of young researchers.

Component B

- Closed political circles rejecting any cooperation and refusal of politicians to the potential influence of social sciences.
- Politically contentious: knowledge-based decision-making means that conservative groups may lose their grip on power, given that the grip is based on ideological positions and patronage networks.
- Conflicts by dealing with the past: Cautious and weak participation due to the burden of historical precedence of some groups of social researchers.
- Political incorrect and taboo topics to be monitored along the process: In Serbia, resource persons mentioned frequently religion respectively the role of the Orthodox Church in politics as well as nationalism and the historical national mission of Serbia. In Albania, a politically difficult topic seems to be the persisting influence of power groups of the past.

Component C
- Resistance from government institutions to increase funding for social sciences; persisting lack of sustainable and transparent national funding mechanisms.
- Research groups and institutions get trapped in dependencies from the demand side.
- Client orientation and access to private resources damage research quality.

Concrete risk management approach
- Prior to activities, conduct a mapping of key actors, whether they are drivers/spoilers of change, and how the activities should be structured to foster/limit them (cf. the analytical tools developed by the SDC Political Economy and Development network on this)
- Discuss activities on a regular basis with the Consultative Group to get informed feed-back. Make sure the composition of the Consultative Group is multi-stakeholder and also gives a voice to open-minded status quo representatives.
- Open and timely information and consultations on plans and activities: ensure an early buy-in in order to have the responsibility for the activities' success on a broad number of shoulders.
- Incorporate risk management into work of coordination unit: bi-monthly update regarding the state of the risks identified in the M&E system (unchanged/better/worse) and recommendations for adaptation of activities.
- Active risk mitigation: Swiss Coordinating Institution and backstopper conduct semi-structured reviews on information received from coordination unit and, in coordination with political partner and Consultative Group, determine immediate risk mitigation measures.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

A comprehensive M&E plan will be elaborated during the inception phase. This includes a proposal for a results-oriented reporting system that delivers yearly reporting on programme outcomes and impacts. The OECD criteria give the basic orientation for M&E procedures:

Relevance: Are we doing the right thing?
The extent to which the overall objectives and outcomes of match the needs of the target groups and the policies of the partner institutions.
Effectiveness: Is the programme achieving the planned outcomes?

The extent to which the intended direct results are being achieved.

Overarching development results: Is the programme contributing to the achievement of the end of programme vision?

The progress of the programme in contributing to achieve the intended over-arching results.

Efficiency: Is the programme achieved its objectives cost-effectively?

The degree to which the resources invested are appropriate compared to the outcomes and results achieved.

Sustainability: Are the positive results durable?

A measure of the probability that the positive results will continue beyond the end of assistance.

By the end of 2016 and in view of the second programme phase with outreach to further countries, an external evaluation will take place that would also formulate a proposal for outcomes and indicators for the second phase.

odcp.2014/2015