

THE SITUATION OF RESEARCH IN KOSOVO



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List of Abbreviations

ASHAK	Kosovo Academy of Science and Arts
CEEPUS	Central European Exchange Program for University Studies
COST	European Cooperation in Science and Technology
EU	European Union
FP9	Framework Program 9
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NCP	National Contact Points
NRC	National Research Council
NRP	National Research Program
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
UP	University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”

1. Executive Summary

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the extent to which research work is integrated into the regular activities of different stakeholders in higher education institutions in Kosovo and evaluate the impact of the current framework (legislative, regulative, and cultural) in ensuring the development of research culture in Kosovo's higher education institutions.

This study used a qualitative research approach. The first phase of the research consists of a content analysis of policy documents, law(s), administrative regulations, statutes, strategies, program documents, and syllabuses. Content analyzes was paired with 14 semi-structured interviews conducted with higher education experts, representatives from MEST Department of Science and Technology, former members of the National Research Council, MEST research grant beneficiaries, former Vice Rectors for Research and Teaching Affairs at a HEI, NCP for Horizon 2020, and academic staff in higher education institutions.

The study examined the situation both at national and higher education institutions level and identified numerous challenges regarding scientific research activity that have prevented the development of research culture in Kosovo's HEIs.

The study identifies several challenges that characterize the organization of research work at national level. While the main responsibility of the government (MEST) is to facilitate a research-friendly environment, the outcomes of the study indicate that Kosovo deals with basic problems pertaining to the lack of properly defined national regulations regarding research. Kosovo lacks national research council and there is a lack of implementation and updated national research program. Moreover, there is a limited national budget designated for research and the research fund alone cannot meet the needs of the entire research community in the country. In addition, the findings have shown that there is a lack of interest for the international program for research - Horizon 2020 and there is lack of coordination between research and the private sector. Hence, the results at the national level have enforced the conclusion that research is not considered a national priority.

A similar situation persists at higher education institutions level. The study found that research is not an integral part of higher education institutions operations. Teaching is emphasized as the main activity of academic staff, while research work is conducted on an ad-hoc basis with no platform(s) for discussing scientific research. The results have indicated that research work is isolated and has hampered collaborative research work. Moreover, findings suggest that academic staff lack integrity and there are reoccurring cases of plagiarism. In addition, higher education institutions lack proper strategies for research, have limited funding, and reflect poor capacities to engage in international cooperation. The study also found that universities have poor

research infrastructure and lack access to electronic libraries, and identified issues with PhD programs and student thesis mentoring. Last but not least, the way the current system is organized detaches academic staff from research work that can contribute to fostering economic and social development in Kosovo.

The study provides numerous recommendations to address problems at national and higher education institutions level. Main recommendations directed to national level organs involve 1) prioritizing research, innovation, and development, by increasing the investments in science and research, as well as, appointing the National Research Council and drafting the National Research Program, and 2) allocating sufficient funds for effective implementation of the National Research Program. While, the main recommendations directed to HEIs indicate 1) making scientific research work an integral part of academic staff's work, starting from teaching assistant position, 2) academic appointment and promotion should go beyond article publication, and 3) establishing research platforms/centers where the academic staff is expected to present and discuss their research. The recommendations directed to national and HEIs level aim at developing a research culture in Kosovo's higher education.

2. Introduction

University research has undergone profound transformation over the past two decades.¹ The research function of academia remains a prime source of knowledge and innovation at national, regional, and international levels. Research in higher education institutions is defined through frameworks of norms, rules, legislation and routines which are grounded in institutional culture.² The framework conditions (legal, regulatory, and cultural) evolve historically and (at least some of them) are not easily changed e.g. values and attitudes towards conducting and communicating research.³ Every day, higher education institutions are challenged to continue triangulating both operational (legislative, regulative, and procedural) and normative (values, attitudes, and beliefs) frameworks to enhance their research production and communication.⁴ This challenge that higher education institutions face highly depends on the research culture that institutions embrace.⁵

While, it is difficult to recognize a uniformly satisfying definition of a “culture of research,” it is characterized by a system of widely shared and strongly held values towards conducting and communicating research.⁶ Furthermore, in an institutional context, culture of research is not simply a group of scholars who see the importance of quality research. A culture of research provides a supportive context in which research is uniformly expected, discussed, produced, and valued. Faculty at major research institutions have traditionally been expected to maintain scholarly activities, including conducting research and publishing quality scholarly work.⁷

In addition to conducting and communicating basic scientific research, in recent years, higher education institutions have been pressured to engage in applied research projects.⁸ The aim of this discourse was to translate basic scientific research to improve the needs of the society and economy.⁹ This engagement necessitates more

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- 1 Zgaga, P., Teichler, U., & Brennan, J. (Eds.) (2012). *The Globalization Challenge for European Higher Education Convergence and Diversity, Centers and Peripheries*. Higher Education Research and Policy; Vol. 4. Peter Lang Publishing Group. DOI: 10.3726/978-3-653-06508-4.
 - 2 Meek, V. L., Teichler, U., & Kearney, M. (2009). *Higher education, research and innovation: Changing dynamics: Report on the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, 2001-2009*. Kassel, Germany: International Centre for Higher Education Research.
 - 3 Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The New Production of Knowledge: the dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. London: Sage.
 - 4 Jongbloed, B., Enders, J., & Salerno, C. (2007). Higher education and its communities: Interconnections, interdependencies and a research agenda. *Higher Education*, 56(3), 303-324.
 - 5 Curaj, A., Matei, L., Pricopie, R., Salmi, J., & Scott, P. (2015). *The European Higher Education Area: Between critical reflections and future policies*. Cham: Springer.
 - 6 Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The New Production of Knowledge: the dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. London: Sage.
 - 7 Meek, V. L., Teichler, U., & Kearney, M. (2009). *Higher education, research and innovation: Changing dynamics: Report on the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, 2001-2009*. Kassel, Germany: International Centre for Higher Education Research.
 - 8 Zgaga, P., Teichler, U., Schuetze, H. G., & Wolter, A. (2015). *Higher education reform: Looking back - looking forward*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. Huisman, J., Boer, H., Dill, D., & Souto-Otero, M. (2015). *The Palgrave international handbook of higher education policy and governance*. Houndmills (etc.): Palgrave Macmillan.
 - 9 Crosier, D., & Parveva, T. (2013). *The Bologna process: Its impact on higher education development in Europe and beyond*

flexibly organized research systems, and pragmatic approaches that promote basic scientific research, while also nurturing science which serves society in the wider sense.¹⁰ However, all these encouraging aspects depend greatly on the research culture that higher education institutions embrace.

In Kosovo's higher education system, scientific and applied research work is not fully integrated into regular activities of higher education institutions. In addition, given the lack of adequate physical infrastructure, laboratories and equipment, as well as lack of access to scientific resources in electronic libraries, there is a growing need to improve the inadequate environment for scientific research work. Last but not least, higher education institutions conduct limited applied research initiatives that link higher education institutions and the industry (society).¹¹

THIS STUDY AIMS TO ANALYZE:

- 1 The extent to which research work is integrated into the regular activities of different stakeholders in higher education institutions in Kosovo;
- 2 The impact of the current frameworks (legislative, regulative, and cultural) in ensuring the development of research culture in Kosovo's higher education institutions.

The study uses a qualitative research approach, combining content analysis and 14 semi-structured interviews. For the purpose of analyzing the development of research culture, higher education institutions in Kosovo are the selected sample of institutions conducting research and are thus, the focus of research.

The study is structured in the following way. Following this introduction, the second section discusses the methodology the study uses to analyze the findings. The third section provides a general overview of research in higher education in Kosovo. It provides a background of higher education institutions conducting research and describes the national regulative framework of research activity. The fourth section discusses the current research culture in Kosovo's higher education institutions by providing an in-depth analysis of drawbacks identified at the national level and higher education institutions level. The study concludes by discussing key issues with developing research culture in Kosovo's higher education and provides recommendations to tackle such issues.

10 Etzkowitz, H. (2008). *The Triple Helix: University-Industry-Government Innovation In Action*, London: Routledge.

11 Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST). (2017). *Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021*. <https://bit.ly/2sdQXyU>

3. Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to analyze 1) the extent to which research work is integrated into the regular activities of different stakeholders in higher education institutions in Kosovo; 2) the impact of the current framework (legislative, regulative, and cultural) in ensuring the development of research culture in Kosovo's higher education institutions.

This study used a qualitative research approach. The first phase of the research consist of content analysis of policy documents, law(s), administrative regulations, statutes, strategies, program documents, and syllabuses. The selected documents in this corpus are published sources, accessible to the general public. In addition the documents were organized chronologically and analyzed accordingly with Atlas.ti qualitative software. Content analyzes was paired with 14 semi-structured interviews conducted with higher education experts, representatives from MEST Department of Science and Technology, former members of the National Research Council, MEST research grant beneficiaries, former Vice Rectors for Research and Teaching issues at a HEI, NCP for Horizon 2020, and academic staff in higher education institutions. Each interview lasted about one-hour. In order to identify the interviewees, the snowball (chain-referral) sampling strategy was used.

Since the purpose of the study is to analyze the development of research culture in Kosovo's higher education institutions, other research institutes and the Kosovo Academy of Science and Arts were not included in the sample.

4. Overview of the research in Kosovo

Kosovo does not have a very long tradition of scientific research work. During the 60s, Kosovo engaged in research with the existing capacities of that time. Most of that research was undertaken for academic purpose to enhance the knowledge base, while few institutes, such as Inkos Institute and others, engaged in applied research initiatives, supporting the economic development. While, most of the scientific research was undertaken at the university level, Kosovo had couple of research institutes that focused on different fields of study such as: Institute of History and Institute of Albanology. The establishment of these institutes indicates where the existing research focus was, namely studies pertaining to the fields of social sciences and humanities. When discussing about other research initiatives, they were conducted at the University of Prishtina, at individual or group level among academic staff.

As with other countries in the region, an important part of the deficiency in research capabilities relates to the imposed exclusion of the academic and research community in the pre-war period, when academic staff was forced to isolation from the international scientific networks. Critical damage to material and infrastructure were caused during the war, and the difficulties in fostering economic recovery since then have limited the possibilities for renewal of these sectors.

Kosovo Academy of Science and Arts (ASHAK) is the main scientific institution in Kosovo, which consists of four departments, namely, Linguistics and Literature, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Arts. The total number of publications since its founding, in 70's, is 189.¹² A report published by Integra, a non-government organization based in Prishtina, titled "Crisis in the Academy" highlights numerous issues related to the Kosovo Academy of Science and Arts (ASHAK) as follows:

- Lack of international academic publications within its membership;
- Members have been publicly accused of plagiarism;
- Continuous association of members with political parties;
- Lack of accountability measures in requiring ASHAK to report public funds expenditures;
- Regardless of their requirement, ASHAK does not report to the parliament;
- Absolute dominance of male members; and
- Albanian-only published content.¹³

12 ASHAK. (2018). In Kosovo Academy of Science and Arts. Retrieved from <http://www.ashak.org/>

13 Gashi. (2018). Kosovo's all-men Academy of Science. In Prishtina Insight. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2NNVmlr>

At national level, MEST clarifies the vision for higher education for Kosovo, where knowledge and scientific research are in function of a sustainable cultural, social, and economic development. Its main duties and responsibilities include developing policies and implementing the National Research Program, which seek to establish a good infrastructure, institutional and financial basis for the development of science, research and the promotion of sustainable development and modern technological applications in the Kosovo economy.¹⁴

MEST IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FOLLOWING TASKS:

- Makes the allocation of funds to public providers for research in the public interest within the general provisions under the applicable law on financing of public services in Kosovo;
- Plans and organizes the structure of higher scientific and educational institutions in Kosovo based on Kosovo's economic and social needs;
- Performs professional examination of the National Centers for Science, Technology and International Cooperation in the field of science, technology trusteeship and scientific research;
- Advises and coordinates the work with higher education institutions to ensure proper communication and cooperation on relevant scientific issues;
- Supervises the work and implementation of legality in cooperation with the department of inspection in all higher education institutions in the field of science and technological development;
- Initiates and develops the necessary procedures for amending the legislation in force but also proposes drafting of new legislation and other by-laws;
- Assists in the establishment and cultivation of cooperation relations with similar scientific institutions in the country and abroad;
- Assists Kosovo's higher education institutions in the process of integration into the European Research Area.¹⁵

A newly emerging trend with conducting applied research seems a growing service provided by non-governmental organizations and private research institutes. The aim of these institutes is to inform the policy-making in different areas through conducting applied research. Most of these institutions are project-based and financially supported by international donor organizations.¹⁶

14 MEST. (2018). In Ministry of education, Science, and technology (MEST) webpage. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2EuY1yl>

15 Ibid.

16 Interview with a Higher Education expert conducted on 3rd of October, 2018.

5. Analysis of the research in Kosovo

The necessity for proper national level policy on research in higher education is crucial for the well-functioning and the advancement of research work among the scientific community.¹⁷ However, the analysis of research at the national level presents many serious problems in Kosovo. There is a general consensus among the interviewees that these challenges influence a negative development of research work in higher education institutions in Kosovo. These challenges highly depend on a) current policy in place, b) funding designated to research, c) research fund and other international opportunities for research community, and d) coordination between research and labor market, among others.

- **Lack of National Research Council (NRC)**

Kosovo continues to use a top-down approach in regulating research in higher education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) is the supervisory entity regulating legislative infrastructure for research activity among the scientific community. The main document defining the scope and implementation of research consist of the Law No. 04/L-135 on Scientific-Research Activities, which provides the institutional basis and strategic orientation regarding research and innovation. In this regard, it also establishes the National Research Council (NRC), which is mandated to promote and manage development of scientific-research activity of Kosovo.¹⁸

The National Research Council was established in 2007 and operated until 2011 and besides its shortcomings, the council managed to develop the national research program and standards for scientific work in Kosovo. The Council was comprised of 15 members and was responsible to develop the National Research Program, evaluate in a comparative manner the situation regarding scientific-research activity, its position and development at the national and international level, and propose and encourage measures aiming at advancement of scientific-research activity.

However, after 2011, the parliament has not managed to achieve a majority voting consensus to appoint the new members of the NRC. A higher education expert argued that this problem persists due to political preferences towards the list of potential candidates and never reached 61 votes. Thus, the 2007 to 2011 was the only mandate that NRC was ever constituted and, currently, Kosovo lacks NRC.¹⁹

17 Huisman, J., Boer, H., Dill, D., & Souto-Otero, M. (2015). *The Palgrave international handbook of higher education policy and governance*. Houndmills (etc.): Palgrave Macmillan.

18 Law No. 04/L-135 on Scientific-Research Activities. Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo/No. 11/02 May2013,Prishtina. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2S2unpZ>

19 Interview with a Higher Education expert conducted on 3rd of October, 2018.

The inability of parliament to achieve majority voting and enable the appointment of NRC, is a clear message to our society that such voting mechanisms are guided by politically influenced preferences. It illustrates a typical case where individual political preferences outweigh social benefits. The establishment and the functioning of NRC should be mandatory.

National Research Council should be the responsible entity for developing macro level policy and action plan, identifying scientific priorities and funding opportunities, aimed at creating conditions for infrastructure investment, strengthening participation in international research projects, and developing a systematic program education for researchers. However, as a result of political influence on science, Kosovo does not have a regulatory body overseeing the implementation of research activities. In light of no proper organization of research work at national level, scientific community engages in ad-hoc research work that lack clear focus and priority funding opportunities.²⁰

- **Lack of National Research Program (NRP)**

National Research Council had developed the National Research Program in 2010.²¹ The Kosovo's National Research Program (NRP), approved by the Kosovo Assembly, was a five-year plan that aimed at improving the state of research in Kosovo. NRP has identified the following five research priorities:

- 1 Natural Resources, Energy and Environment
- 2 Agricultural Production and Food Safety
- 3 Medical Research
- 4 Social and Economic Studies
- 5 Linguistic, Cultural and Historical Studies.

In addition, NRP had set the following five objectives and measures to be reached until 2020 as presented in the table below:

20 Interview with National Research Council former member on 3rd of October, 2018.

21 MEST (2010). The National Science Program of the Republic of Kosovo. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2P6ppJT>

TABLE 1: NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

OBJECTIVES

MEASURES

1



Development of human capacity for research activities

- By 2015 at least 50 candidates will have received support to pursue post-doctoral studies through joint programs with full or partial financing from the Kosovo Budget.
- By 2015 at least 100 candidates from Kosovo who pursue PhD studies in top 500 universities worldwide will have received full or partial financing from the Kosovo Budget.

- 100 short term mobility grants assigned for active researchers.

2



Development of research infrastructure

- By 2015 the establishment of at least 10 laboratories (at the value of € 250,000 each) plus introduction of scientific equipment at a total cost of € 1 million will have been accomplished.

- Research and Technological Development (RTD) Information System was supposed to be built by 2012.

- Access to relevant electronic libraries was to be granted by 2011.

3



Internationalization of scientific research activities

- Support for the publication of a considerable number of scientific publications in international journals.

- Total annual value of joint research projects with foreign institutions was to be at least € 2 million beginning in 2012.

- Enhanced participation in international research networks.

- Improved cooperation with researchers of Kosovar origin working abroad.

OBJECTIVES

MEASURES

4



Strengthening the links between science, society and economy for enhancing economic and social development

- Establishment of an applied RTD program for supporting science-industry relations.
- Establishment of an innovation program to meet the economic and social innovation needs of private sector (business, NGO) until 2015.

5



Excellence in research and scientific activity

- Centers of scientific excellence established.
- Awards for extraordinary achievements applied.
- Research institutions build in quality assurance mechanisms in the field of research such as manuals for indexing of publications.

SOURCE: THE NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM OF KOSOVO

According to a MEST representative, even with a small budget allocated for its implementation, some of the planned activities started initial phase of implementation.²² For example, the program enacted the development of scientific projects, increased scientific community mobility, granted more access to electronic resources and established an award for the “Scientist of the Year.”

However, other interviewed experts disagree with this claim. They argue that, to date, none of the activities planned within the National Research Program had been fully implemented. A higher education expert argued that the NRP was not implemented properly and was impractically operational due to the lack of funding. In addition, there were no monitoring mechanisms in place to follow progress made and the impact of the partially implemented program.²³

Instead of the 5,393,953 EUR planned for financing activities related to research, science, infrastructure, mobility, and internationalization of research, only 520,000 EUR per year have been allocated by MEST for the last five years. Only arithmetically evaluating the problem, it means that the new spending scheme of research fund is 4,873,953 EUR less than envisioned for supporting science and scientific community in Kosovo. For instance, when 10 laboratories are planned to be established, each of them had been estimated to cost more than 250,000 EUR, the overall budget of 520,000 EUR is only sufficient to establish 2 laboratories, putting aside all other activities.

In addition, the NRP suggested a scholarship scheme to fund doctoral and post-doctoral research abroad. The purpose of this activity was to enable researchers to strengthen their scientific career in their given field and afterwards be able to bring their research gains in Kosovo as a brain gain mechanism. This proposed activity envisioned to fund 20 doctoral students (14,000 EUR each) and 10-15 post-docs (20,000 EUR each) amounting to around 530,000 EUR per year.

This proposal has been made eight years ago and no concrete measure of research brain gain have been undertaken. Assuming that this scholarship scheme was active for eight years and sent 35 researchers per year (PhD students and Post-docs), until now, Kosovo would have sent 280 researchers abroad. On average, if a researcher would have finished their research activity for four years, today, Kosovo would have 175 research gains. The returned researchers would have been involved in and benefit higher education institutions and other research institutes.

However, according to a former member of NRC, MEST have tried to substitute this scholarship scheme with minimalistic scholarships for PhD students of around 2,000 EUR each, amounting to 50,000 EUR per year.²⁴ The actual research brain gain mechanism is 480,000 EUR per year less than proposed scheme. In addition, there is no evidence to evaluate the impact of such provided scholarships.

Research activity is still considered as a marginal enterprise in Kosovo. The national research program should become an integral part of the higher education system and of vital importance for Kosovo's economic and

22 Interview with MEST representative conducted on 26th of September, 2018.

23 Interview with a Higher Education expert conducted on 3rd of October, 2018.

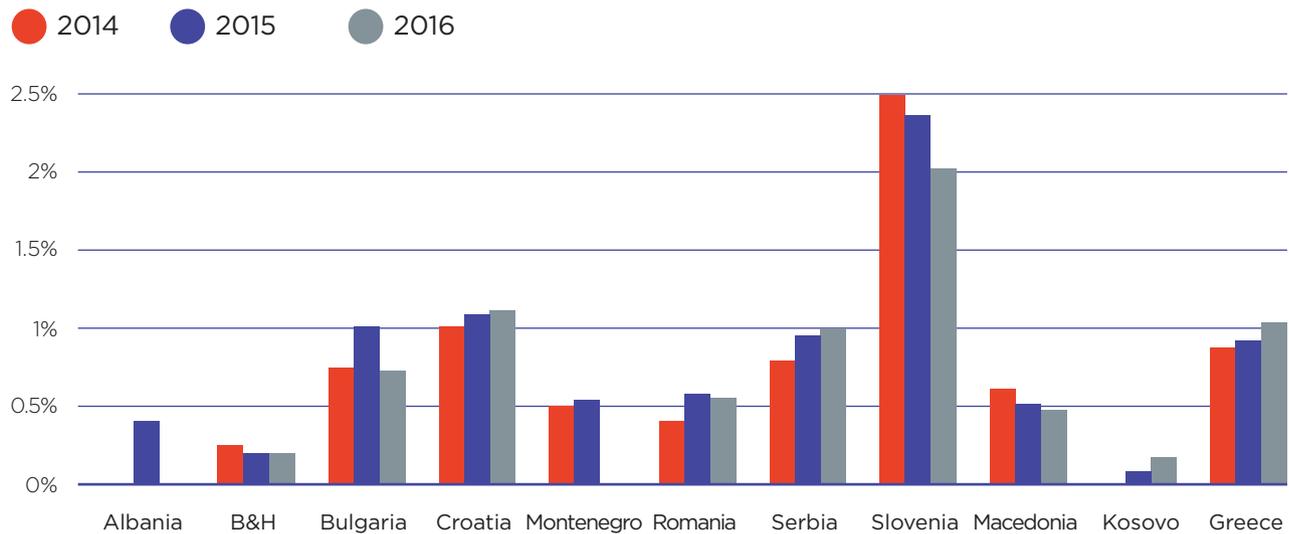
24 Interview with National Research Council former member on 3rd of October, 2018.

social development. However, partial implementation of the program and the lack of policy influence a disorganized and ad-hoc research work across scientific community in Kosovo. Instead of MEST striving to make it easier for the scientific community to engage in research work, the lack of National Research Program creates confusion among researchers, as there are no updated research priorities and substantial funding opportunities presented.

- **Limited national budget for research**

According to the Lisbon Agenda, all the EU Member Countries are obliged to allocate a minimum of 3% of their GDP for scientific research. However, this quota is far above what has been achieved. Kosovo lags behind when it comes to compliance with the conditions set by the agenda. Compared to other countries in Europe, Kosovo has the lowest budget designated for research per GDP, amounting to 0.1%.

FIGURE 1: EXPENDITURES IN PERCENTAGE OF GDP FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D)



SOURCE: GAP INSTITUTE, BASED ON UNESCO INFORMATION

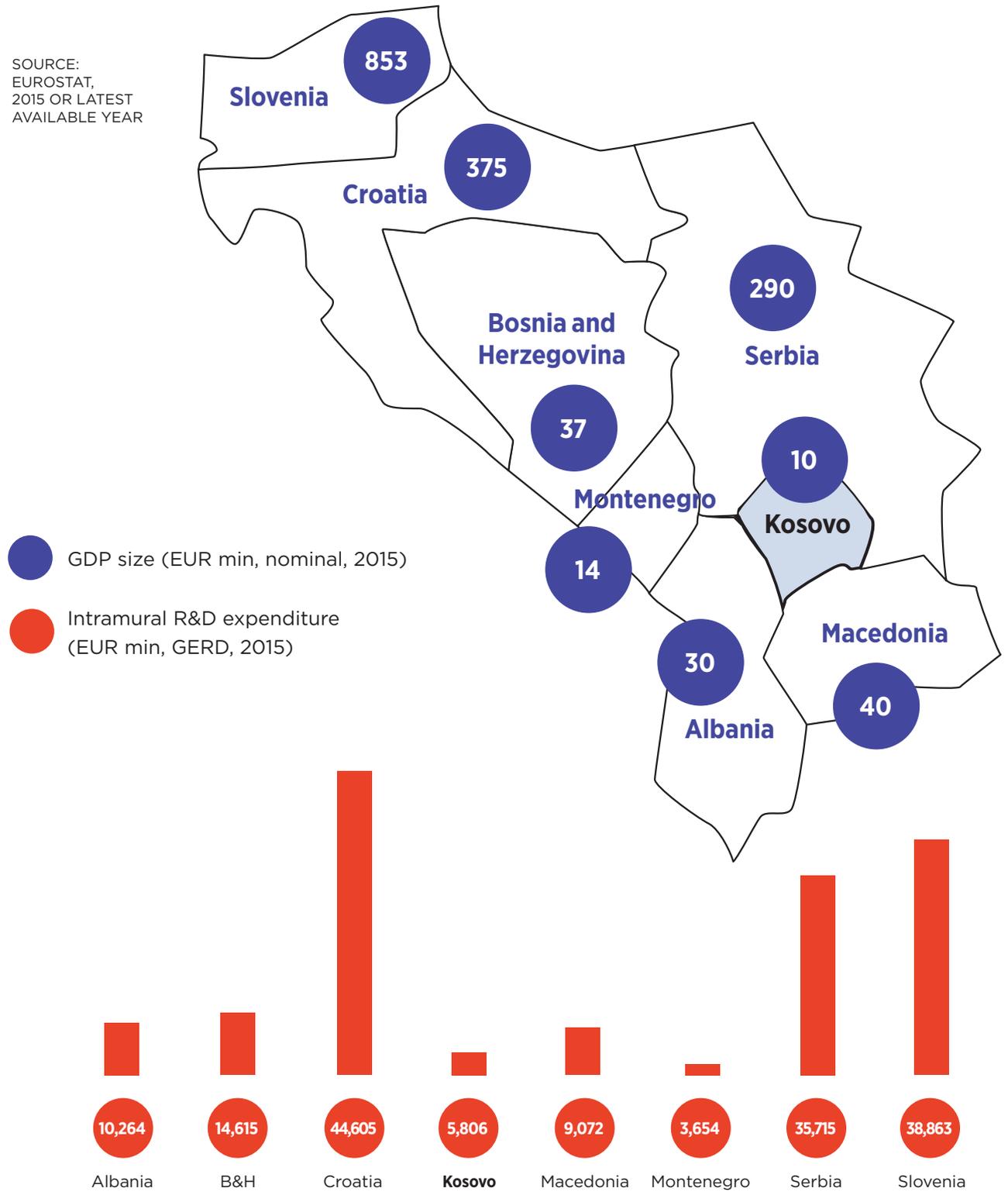
At present, Kosovo spends the least in the region on research and scientific activity. Despite the fact that Law on research and scientific activity provides that 0.7% of annual budget should be allocated to this field, in 2015 only 0.19% of budget was allocated (0.05% of GDP), while in 2016, around 0.33% of budget (0.1% of GDP). All the neighboring countries stand better than Kosovo in this aspect, as they allocate approximately 0.9% of their GDP for this activity.

Throughout the region, Slovenia is the country that invests the most in this field – more than Greece, Croatia and Bulgaria – with more than 2% of its GDP every year. However, it is expected that this low number pertaining to Kosovo for research and scientific activity will change compared to other countries, especially during 2019. The reason for it is that Ministry of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, founded in 2017, designed programs of financially supporting NGOs, start-ups and small and medium enterprises associated with research activities.

Even though the share of GDP that Kosovo has dedicated to research and development is one of the lowest compared to other countries, the full envisaged funding has not been allocated up to date either. The Research Program foresees annual expenditure of 4.5 up to 6.5 million EUR in implementing planned activities, be that in mobility programs, brain gain, publications, access to electronic libraries, quality assurance mechanisms within research institutes, participation in international projects etc. This budget, however, has not been allocated to either the academic community or to the research institutes.

FIGURE 2: GDP SIZE AND R&D EXPENDITURE IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

SOURCE:
EUROSTAT,
2015 OR LATEST
AVAILABLE YEAR



Regarding scientific research activity, Serbia is considered the dominant leader in the Western Balkans for scientific publications indexed in Scopus/Web of Science 2017. In Serbia, about 75% of the scientific output in the Balkans is produced. Kosovo and Albania are at the bottom of the table with about 5% of the scientific activity.

The growth of scientific activity is closely linked with the growth of the standard of living and economic activity. However, the fact that national budget designated for research is low and there is discrepancy between the Law on Scientific Research Activity and the actual budget planning and implementation, signals that research work is not considered a national priority in Kosovo. A former member of National Research Council argued that the current situation positions science as a neglected sector.²⁵

- **Problems associated with MEST Research Fund**

MEST supports the scientific community in Kosovo providing services as below:

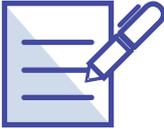
- Enabling mobility initiative
- Subsidizing international conference participation
- Providing grants research projects
- Scholarship opportunities
- Assisting the community in getting published locally and internationally
- Organizing the Science week and other conferences
- Helping the scientific community organize conference.

The MEST Research Council is responsible to review applications from the scientific community. Applications for mobility, conference participation, and other research exchange programs are open throughout the year. While, for supporting research projects, on average, there are two open calls per year.

The research fund aims at strengthening the scientific research work in higher education. During the last five years, the research fund, implemented by the Department of Science at MEST, was 520,000 EUR per year.

²⁵ Interview with National Research Council former member on 3rd of October, 2018.

TABLE 2: **MEST BUDGET PLAN**

	ACTIVITIES	ALLOCATED BUDGED
	Scientific publications	€ 80,000
	Local scientific projects	€ 100,000
	Regional projects	€ 50,000
	Short-term mobility	€ 35,000
	PHD scholarships	€ 50,000
	Voucher scheme	€ 15,000
	TOTAL (per year)	€ 520,000

SOURCE: MEST BUDGET PLANS (2014 - 2018)

The foreseen budget for research in 2019 will be around 1 million EUR. According to a MEST representative, this increased budget will have tremendous impact in improving scientific research work in higher education in Kosovo.²⁶

26 Interview with MEST representative conducted on 26th of September, 2018.

However, it is worthwhile mentioning that, even with an increased funding for science, there is no significant evidence to suggest the development of a research in higher education in Kosovo. Funding and working conditions are not the main determining factors of the development of scientific research culture. Hence, the following discussions highlight numerous issues identified with the current MEST Research Fund and its implementation.

Lack of monitoring and transparency. There is no public information available concerning research fund expenditures by MEST. There is no evidence supported by an accountability mechanism to monitor budget spending, including, awarded researchers and their respective scientific fields, as well as, the expected scientific and practical contributions of these funded research projects.

In order to enhance transparency and avoid mismanagement of funds, MEST should develop mechanisms that monitor budget spending. In addition, making information public enables researchers and society at large to observe various issues related to research funding, including, priority fields being funded, granted projects, investment in research infrastructure, mobility and publishing, intended scientific and practical contribution of funded projects. Transparency would influence a critical mass discussion.

The research proposals are highly descriptive. A higher education expert noted that it should not come as a surprise the fact that the “so called-scientific contribution” in higher education in Kosovo is highly descriptive with no novel contribution. For many years, the context of our education system has fostered descriptive thinking and narration. In addition, there is lack of common understanding of conducting and communicating research. In consequence, MEST Research Council is responsible for the fact that they choose to fund those projects, regardless of their descriptive nature.²⁷

Lack of promotion for research fund opportunities. Although, a MEST representative²⁸ suggests that research fund opportunities are well promoted, most of the interviewees disagree with this claim. It is a true paradox that while research fund is designated for researchers, it is also somehow hidden from them. There is no proper promotion managed by MEST to endorse the opportunities provided for the scientific community.²⁹ First of all, MEST should publish such opportunities via their webpage, which at the moment does not contain updated information. Secondly, MEST should organize information sessions to properly inform the scientific community of opportunities, but also allow them to clarify the application requirements. Thirdly, MEST should organize workshops to help scientific community during the application process, especially focusing on the needs of young researchers.

- **Lack of participation in international research programs**

MEST intends to regulate the infrastructure and enable researchers to have more access to funding and legally make it easier for them to undertake scientific activities. The benefits are afterwards acquired from competent academic staff scientists, independent researchers, research institutes, higher education institutions, and the

27 Interview with a Higher Education expert conducted on 3rd of October, 2018.

28 Interview with MEST representative conducted on 26th of September, 2018.

29 Interview with an Academic Staff (Public HEI) conducted on 29th of October, 2018.

society at large. A MEST representative confirms they are negotiating with different European research initiatives to pin Kosovo in the European scientific map by granting the status of associated country in Horizon 2020³⁰, Framework Program (FP9)³¹, and has achieved the neighboring member status in European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST)³². In addition, MEST facilitates the participation of Kosovar researchers in CEEPUS.

In order to support Kosovar researchers with Horizon 2020 grant applications, Kosovo has the network of National Contact Points (NCPs) as the main structure to provide guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in Horizon 2020. MEST managed to develop administrative instructions for the definition and functionalization of the Kosovo NCP for the EU framework in research and innovation, Horizon 2020. The purpose of this sublegal act is to regulate the structure and the functionalization of the NCP's.³³ Currently there are 9 NCP and a National NCP coordinator.

Taking into consideration that Horizon 2020 is the largest EU Funding Program for research and innovation (R&I) with a budget of nearly €80 billion, it is highly beneficial for research-oriented stakeholders to acquire such funds. For Kosovo to move from the third party status in Horizon 2020, it should pay a fee of 2 million EUR per year. While achieving a higher country category membership would pin Kosovo as more visible consortium partner, researchers and higher education institutions in Kosovo face other important challenges. First and foremost, they lack incentives and competitive research ideas to apply for Horizon 2020 funding opportunities.

The low number of applications to Horizon 2020 is clearly presented in the table below through the comparison between Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries. Kosovo has the lowest applications in the region (67), as well as the lowest awarded applications (11). Kosovo is far behind from Serbia, which is a leading country in the region with 2464 applications and 203 awarded applications.

30 Horizon 2020 is the largest ever EU Funding Program for research and innovation (R&I) with a budget of nearly €80 billion. It supports projects throughout the R&I cycle and put particular emphasis on coupling research with innovation to deliver breakthrough solutions. Horizon 2020 is a single umbrella program bringing together three separate 'priorities' under a three pillar system: Excellent Science, Industrial Leadership and Societal Challenges. Each pillar has individual strands or sub-programs.

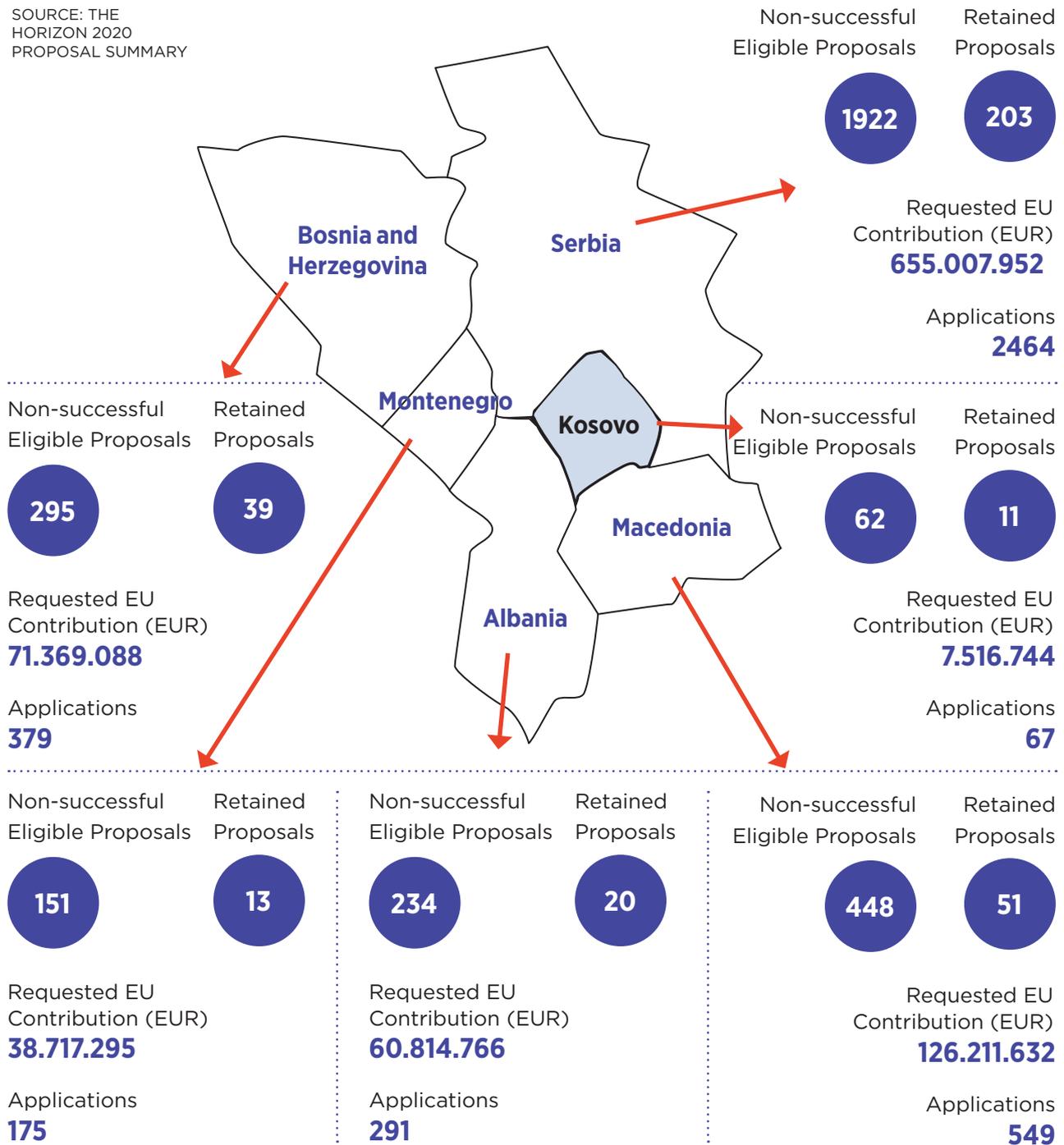
31 FP9 is the working name for the next Framework Program, which will run from 2021-2027 (Horizon 2020 is the 8th Framework Program).

32 COST is the longest-running European framework supporting trans-national cooperation among researchers, engineers and scholars across Europe. It is a unique means for them to jointly develop their own ideas and new initiatives across all fields in science and technology, including social sciences and humanities, through pan-European networking of nationally funded research activities. Based on a European intergovernmental framework for cooperation in science and technology, COST has been contributing - since its creation in 1971-to closing the gap between science, policy makers and society throughout Europe and beyond. As a precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research, COST plays a very important role in building a European Research Area (ERA).

33 Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST). (2018). Administrative Instruction MEST No: 01/2018. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2Pm0NOW>

TABLE 3: THE HORIZON 2020 PROPOSAL SUMMARY

SOURCE: THE HORIZON 2020 PROPOSAL SUMMARY

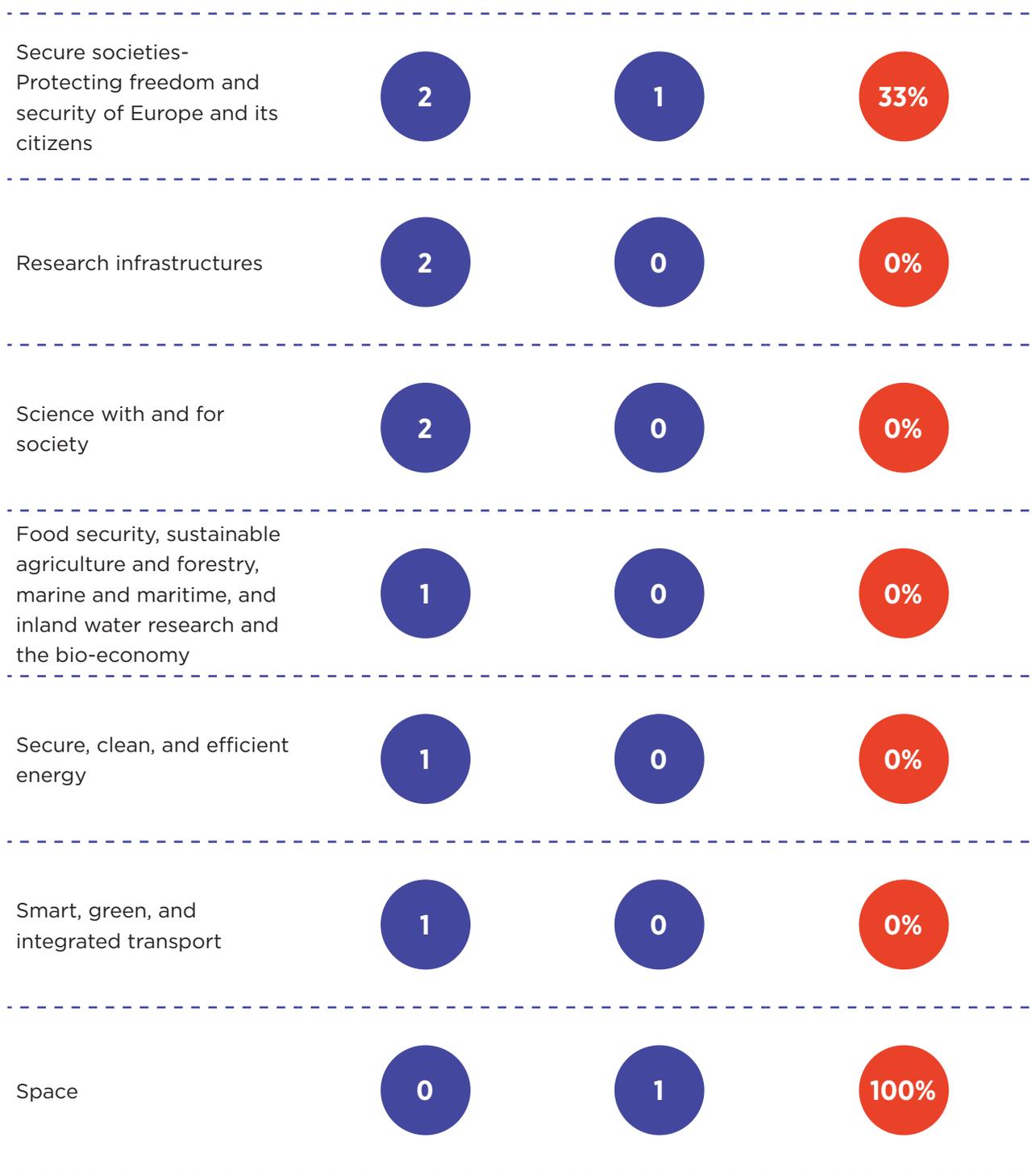


According to eligible and awarded proposals by thematic priority, the most applications (25) are under ‘Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative, and reflective societies’. However, out of 11 awarded proposals, higher success rate is found in ‘Health, demographic change, and well-being’ and ‘Climate action, environment, resource efficiency, and raw materials’.

TABLE 4: ELIGIBLE AND RETAINED PROPOSALS BY THEMATIC PRIORITY

THEMATIC PRIORITY	NON-SUCCESSFUL ELIGIBLE PROPOSALS	RETAINED PROPOSALS	SUCCESS RATE PROPOSALS
Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative, and reflective societies	25	2	7%
Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions	8	1	11%
Information and communication technologies	4	1	20%
Health, demographic change, and well-being	3	3	50%
Climate action, environment, resource efficiency, and raw materials	2	2	50%

THE SITUATION OF RESEARCH IN KOSOVO



SOURCE: THE HORIZON 2020 PROPOSAL SUMMARY

When analyzing the requested contributions by the type of organization, the study found that proposals are either from NGO's, SMEs, or individual/group of researchers. To date, no higher education institution in Kosovo has received a Horizon 2020 grant.

Although the reasons why HEIs are not part of such opportunities is elaborated under higher education institutions level analysis, generally speaking, according to an NCP, the main problem is that there is lack of interest by HEIs and individual academic staff.³⁴ NCPs receive offers from Horizon 2020, which they distribute to relevant stakeholders in HEIs to apply. However, NCPs are rarely reached to provide their support, as there are no interested groups of researchers to prepare such projects. The willingness of HEIs to be part of such international research competitions directly relates to their institutional research culture, which indicates they do not prioritize applications in such research funding initiatives.

- **Lack of interaction between academia and the private sector**

The global developments are vast so that it requires scientific community to further develop and keep up with the trends through scientific and applied research. Regardless of the sector, achieving competitiveness in the market and sustainable economic and social development is crucial. Scientific activity is the key means to sustainable economic and social development, whereas, in Kosovo, science is a neglected sector and it is not considered a sector of utmost importance vis-à-vis societal and economic developments.

Considering the current situation, Kosovo is facing the following barriers and bottlenecks which are detrimental for the evolution of a dense interaction between academia and the private sector:

- Limited absorptive capacity in the private sector (e.g. large companies with relevant intramural R&D and a culture of co-operation with academia, innovative SME sector, vibrant start-up system transferring new ideas into new business models);
- General lack of resources (financial resources, human resources, infrastructure on both sides, academia as well as business sector);
- Limited understanding and knowledge about the specific needs of the business sector in the academia sector;
- Lack of innovative projects which need state of the art scientific support (testing, modeling, prototypes etc.).

Higher education institutions have a critical role in driving sustainable development, which deals with economic, social and cultural issues. However, the study presents findings regarding developments in the field of academic and research in Kosovo that are not very promising. There is a general consensus among scholars from different fields confirming that higher education institutions in Kosovo face numerous challenges regarding scientific research work. The identified challenges below highly depend on the type of research culture that these institutions uphold.

34 Interview with an NCP conducted on the 6th of November, 2018.

- **Lack of research in higher education institutions**

Currently, there are 31 higher education institutions in Kosovo. From the total number of HEIs, 7 have established themselves as universities and are public entities, while 24 are private colleges.³⁵ University is defined by the Law No.04/L-037 on Higher Education in Kosovo, as an academic and research institution. Analogous to this definition, according to the Humboldtian model of higher education, universities should have a research role, which means that universities should be dedicated to consume as well as produce research.

The role of universities in regards to its research component is primarily identified through the mission and vision statements, which present their purpose for conducting research.³⁶ In light of this, with the purpose of understanding whether universities in Kosovo commit to having a research role, this study analyzed the mission statements of seven public universities in Kosovo, which are presented in the table below. According to mission statements, all public universities in Kosovo formally commit to having a strong scientific and applied research role.

TABLE 5: **MISSION STATEMENTS OF UNIVERSITIES IN KOSOVO**

UNIVERSITY	MISSION
 <p>University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The university is an autonomous public institution of higher education, which develops academic education, scientific research, artistic work, professional counseling and other areas of academic activities.
 <p>University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide quality education, research and innovation in order to produce leaders in the field of Technology, Economics, Law, Education, and Philology that will suit the needs of a dynamic world.
 <p>University of Peja “Haxhi Zeka”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UHZ is a center for scientific, artistic and professional education that prepares a competitive student for the labor market, a future leader in relevant fields that will contribute to the overall development of society.

35 Kosovo Education and Employment Network (KEEN).(2017). Evaluation Report. Implementation of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan in 2017. Prishtinë. <https://bit.ly/2whx3Ga>

36 Murphy, P., Peters, M., & Marginson, S. (2010). Imagination: Three models of imagination in the age of the knowledge economy. New York: Peter Lang.



University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani”

The University is an institution of higher education dedicated to create, promote and transfer knowledge and serve society. University offers unique academic and research experiences, cooperates with community and economy to provide attractive and qualitative programs in relevant areas in order to prepare professionals and students for the local and European labor market.



University of Mitrovica “Isa Boletini”

The University of Mitrovica, in accordance with the relevant documents at the national and international level, has a mission to provide citizens of Kosovo and abroad with the opportunity to create, develop and transmit knowledge through teaching, research work, to prepare students for further studies, professional practice, and to promote lifelong learning.



University of Gjilan “Kadri Zeka”

The university is an autonomous public institution of higher education, which develops academic education, scientific research, artistic work, professional counseling and other areas of academic activities (the exact same mission as University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”).



University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj

Our mission is to work together with students and staff as well as to develop cooperative activities with local partners (including those in the university development process) as well as foreign partners (European Universities of Applied Sciences, etc.) through the mobilization of students and teachers, in order to utilize all internal resources (human and material) in order to establish a sustainable link between local and regional economic needs and the ever-increasing quality of education.

SOURCE: OFFICIAL WEBSITES OF UNIVERSITIES

However, the study found out that there is a gap between universities’ mission statements and their actual research work. The fact that their academic staff is engaged in several HEIs, indicates that they are devoted to teaching rather than research work. According to a recent report conducted by Admovere out of the 840

academic staff members who have CVs posted on the UP webpage, 257 (31%) are engaged at least in another public or private higher education institution. Out of these, 141 are engaged in private institutions, 85 in public ones, 29 in private and public at the same time, while 48 (5.71%) are engaged in three educational institutions at the same time.³⁷

The current situation is problematic and relates directly to the work culture and ethics. When academic staff has several engagements (teaching focused), it prevents them to consider other activities, such as research work and time allotted to research becomes scarce. Hence, the question remains: how can academic staff engage in quality research work and internationally funded research projects, when they are overloaded with lecturing. In this regard, academic promotion is the only drive for research activity in public HEIs in Kosovo. There was a consensus among interviewees that research is not an organic component of higher education institutions work. Conducting research is perceived as a periodical activity of academic staff's work. The problem with this perception is mainly because HEIs do not explicitly require academic staff to engage in research activity.³⁸

Higher education institutions in Kosovo associate research work primarily with academic staff promotion process. The only explicit requirement for academic staff to engage in research work is for the purpose of their academic promotion. Although the academic staff's contract states that their responsibilities go beyond teaching, and that they are required to report their research activity at least once a year—there is no specific mechanism other than promotion to incentivize, monitor or evaluate their research work.

Every four years, academic staff is subject to academic promotion or tenure. During the promotion process, academic staff is evaluated to either remain in the current rank, or promote to academic titles such as teaching assistant, professor assistant, associate professor, and professor. In addition, each academic title requires specific criteria to be met as following:

- Professor (at least 5 article publications as main author or corresponding author, participation in conferences, experience with basic and applied research projects, mentoring MA and PhD thesis work);
- Associate Professor (at least 3 article publications as main author or corresponding author);
- Assistant Professor (at least 1 article publication as main author or corresponding author);
- Teaching Assistant (research activity and article publication is not a requirement).

Considering that, research work in Kosovo's HEIs is at an early stage of development, having academic staff promotion process as a mechanism to encourage research work is not the worst stimulus. As such, four years is a considerably enough time for each academic staff to advance their rank through engaging in research activity.³⁹

37 Gashi, Sh., Memeti, A., & Bërlajolli, G. (2018). The up academic staff: Studies, other engagements, plagiarism, assessment, and staff-students ratio. Retrieved from: <http://admovere.org/>

38 Interview with a Higher Education expert conducted on 3rd of October, 2018.

39 Interview with a Higher Education expert conducted on 5th of October, 2018.

For instance, the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” has improved in the number of scientific publications as compared to last year’s research. In 2017, UP had 1,320 papers, while in 2018 there are 1,735 papers published. Taking into account that there are 465 professors in 2018 in UP, one professor of the University of Prishtina on average has 3.7 papers. This average was 2.7 in 2017. Nonetheless, 9 out of 12 faculties in UP have a lower average than the UP average.⁴⁰

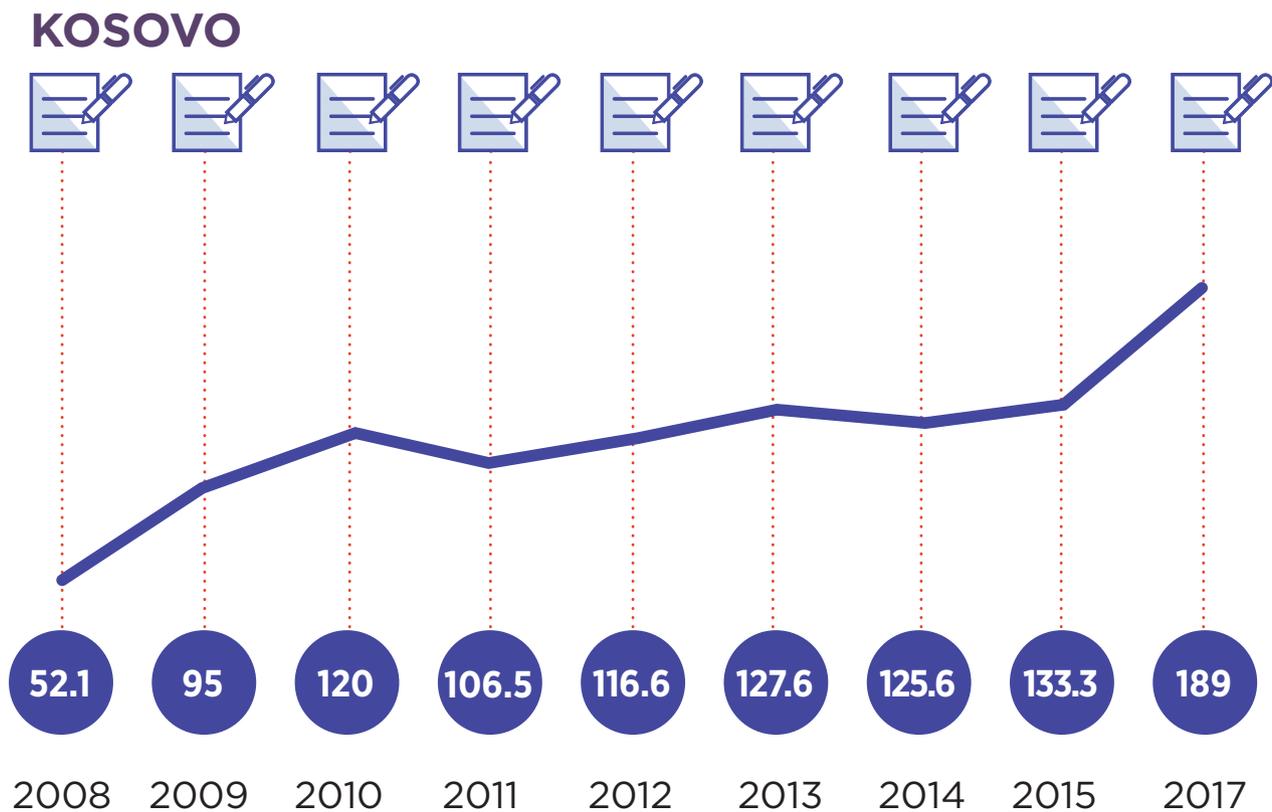
From the increased publication, faculties of exact sciences lead the way, with the Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary (5.3 papers per professor), the Faculty of Medicine (5 papers per professor), and the Faculty of Mathematical and Natural Sciences (4.9 papers per professor). As for humanities and social science faculties, the top publisher is the Faculty of Education (2.3 papers per professor), which ranks fourth in the university level for the number of papers per professor.⁴¹

The table below presents the number of publication in internationally indexed journals in Kosovo. Again, this graph confirms the increased scientific activity by Kosovar scientists and academics.

40 ORCA. (2018). Academic Integrity, Scientific Publications, and the Management of the University Of Prishtina. Retrieved from: www.orca-ks.org

41 Ibid.

FIGURE 3: PUBLICATION IN INTERNATIONALLY INDEXED JOURNALS



SOURCE: MEST

The increased number of published papers, based on 1-3-5 formula, also improved the numbers related to academic staff rank justification. While last year’s report by ORCA suggested that, from 481 professors, only 28% of academic staff justified their rank, this year, 41% justify their academic ranks.⁴² However, the problem with academic staff promotion requirements is that it has influenced a general understanding that the only purpose for conducting research is related to their promotion process, i.e. publishing papers. The interviewed academic staff classify their promotion process as imposed and only influences them to “secure their livelihood” in HEIs.⁴³

In addition, the review committees, during academic staff advancement, deal with a “quantitative dilemma”—i.e. solving for 1, 3, or 5 articles published. They only evaluate the amount of articles published in the above mentioned databases. There is no mechanism that goes beyond technical and structural requirements, such as evaluating the process of conducting research, article quality, scientific, and applied contribution, among others.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

Although the increased percentage of academic staff that justifies their rank shows an increased awareness among academic staff to follow the technical requirements, there is a huge misunderstanding regarding the conceptualization of science and scientific research work. If research is equal to publishing an article, then, yes, there is an improvement. However, improving the numbers of published articles does not increase the quality research work. The current system only influences a quest to check all the formalities.

If one were to analyze the added value of the increased amount of published articles, namely the scientific and applied contribution, the conclusion is that nothing has changed in the recent years. It is even possible that research quality is worse than in previous years. That is because, even academic staff that in the past tried to conduct quality research work and produce modest scientific results, today try to adapt to the majority, following their quest to check all the procedures in the list of their promotion process requirements.

“*Scopusmania*” has cultivated a pattern among academic staff chasing the checklist requirements rather than conducting quality research. The checklist approach is minimalistic and has fostered mediocrity in higher education in Kosovo. In addition, this type of requirement influenced an ad-hoc and isolated research work that serves individual academic staff personal needs (personal promotion), while hampering collaborative research work. The outcomes of such evaluation of research relate to the rise of publications with low or marginal quality research and lack of novel scientific contribution. Last but not least, the way the current system is organized detaches academic staff from research work that can contribute to fostering economic and social development in Kosovo.

- **Lack of academic integrity**

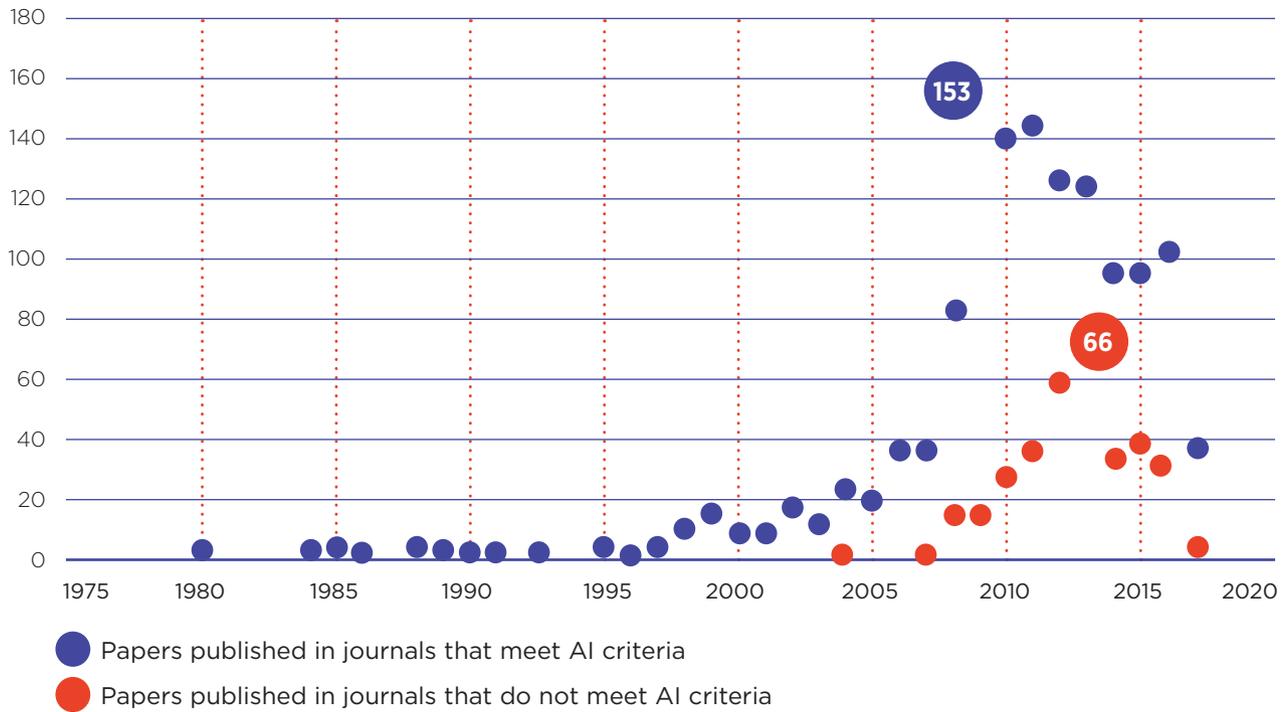
In order to ensure that academic staff will publish in trustworthy journals, MEST issued the Administrative Instruction (MEST) No: 01/2018 on the recognition principles of platforms and international magazines with reviews. The published articles should be indexed in one of the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO host, WorldCat, and Directory of Open Access Journals.⁴⁴

Although publishing in dubious journals has decreased after the MEST administrative instruction, it is still a prevailing phenomenon in higher education institutions in Kosovo. From a study conducted by ORCA, 28% of the university’s professors have published at least once in one of 134 dubious journals. This includes 38% of the professors with justified academic ranks. In addition, 25% of the professors with unjustified ranks have published at least once in a dubious journal.⁴⁵ The following graph presents papers published by academic staff at the University of Prishtina in journals that meet administrative instruction criteria as well as publications in dubious journals.

44 Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST). (2018). Administrative Instruction MEST No: 01/2018. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2yO6nOL>

45 ORCA. (2018). Academic Integrity, Scientific Publications, and the Management of the University Of Prishtina. Retrieved from: www.orca-ks.org

FIGURE 4: PAPERS PUBLISHED BY ACADEMIC STAFF AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA



SOURCE: ORCA (2017)

However, it should be noted that predatory journals are issued constantly. As such, Professor Jeffrey Beall’s list of predatory publishers is only an awareness raising attempt for academic staff and HEIs and not a “set in stone” list. More importantly, manipulators are regularly hunting for loopholes in the system. Particularly, in a higher education system as in Kosovo, where the interpretation of laws and regulations occurs in an arbitrary manner, and “research” on such loopholes almost always yields success.

As already discussed, in a checklist system as the one we have in Kosovo, manipulators have flourished. They are constantly being promoted and there is no mechanism to stop this vicious-cycle. Manipulators as the “stars” of the system have introduced us with different types of scams, such plagiarisms, fabrication of personal data and research results, among other aspects of their lack of academic integrity.

The checklist system has provided opportunities to academics with lack of integrity, since the regulations, such as academic staff’s promotion are interpreted in a selective and arbitrary manner. Although integrity of academic staff has been questioned numerous times, problems related to integrity have never been addressed. Many cases have been identified in technical reports and media, but no proper measures have been taken.

Plagiarism is a prevalent phenomenon in higher education institutions in Kosovo. Although there are cases of reoccurring plagiarism, both amongst the academic staff and the students, this phenomenon has not been

directly investigated.⁴⁶ To date, higher education institutions lack a single platform or mechanisms in place to verify plagiarism.

- **Lack of research strategies and capacities for international cooperation**

Practice in HEIs has shown that, although some HEIs have/had policy for research work, they have failed to fully implement them. For instance, the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” old strategy (2013-2016) focused on four areas, which correspond with the National Research Program and had a total designated budget of 1,828,750 EUR. As stipulated in the Strategy on Research, the planned budget was 1.5% to 3% of the total annual budget of the UP. However, this budget was never actually allocated.

In relation to the measures provided by the Strategy on Research, some of the measures had been implemented. Five planned doctoral programs and one interdisciplinary program have been accomplished. However, in order to ensure the full-implementation of such strategy, the working group should have been careful with over-ambitious and unrealistic financial planning which hinder or cause ceasing of a number of planned activities. In such circumstances, the strategy should comprise a modest budget allocation and a detailed action plan. In addition, the implementation of the strategy should establish monitoring mechanisms. Both exaggerated financial planning and lack of monitoring appear to be problems with the Research Strategy that was drafted.

Secondly, academic staff claimed that there is lack of sustainable research funding at higher education institutions in Kosovo to motivate academic staff engagement in research activities. For instance, the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” does not have a specific budget allocated for scientific research work. While, the UP mission categorizes University as having a research role, the fact that the same institution lacks a specific budget line allocated for research, is a true paradox. There are some sporadic funding opportunities, which the interviewed academic staff criticizes as highly bureaucratic. As such, they discourage researchers’ to apply to such funding opportunities.⁴⁷

Another paradox present in higher education in Kosovo relates to the fact that the salary of academic staff is the largest in the region. For instance, a full professor is compensated with approximately 1500 EUR for 6 hours per week (24 hours per month). If royalties are taken into account, it turns out that some salaries of full professors can go up to 2,500 EUR per month. In principle, 6 hours per week are designated for lecturing and the rest should be allocated to scientific activity and other academic staff responsibilities. However, as already discussed, research work is a detached activity from HEIs every-day work. As such, the approximately 1500 EUR for 6 hours per week (24 hours per month) is perceived as a compensation for teaching only.

The main problem here is not the compensation per-se, but lack of organization of research work as an inseparable component of academic staff daily work. This comes as a result of lack of research culture at institutional level, as well as academic staff level. There is no systemic understanding of conducting and communicating

46 Gashi, Sh., Memeti, A., & Bërlajolli, G. (2018). The up academic staff: Studies, other engagements, plagiarism, assessment, and staff-students ratio. Retrieved from: <http://admovere.org/>

47 Interview with an Academic Staff (Public HEI) conducted on 29th of October, 2018.

research work. The current gaps in the system will serve as a barrier for the development of a research culture, where HEIs and academic staff embrace research activity as systemic engagement in research activities.

The third paradox is the lack of institutional initiatives to engage in projects that secure funding. Higher education institutions and their respective academic units do not motivate groups of academic staff to apply to such initiatives. On the contrary, according to an academic staff, they demotivate them to apply, especially young researchers-who according to them are not allowed to take lead in large projects.⁴⁸

In order for HEIs to succeed in Horizon 2020 grant applications, HEIs should consider many factors. Initially, the institutions need to make sure they establish a group of researchers that specialize in the given theme of application. Furthermore, the selected group of researchers will spend their time to prepare the application. As such, institutions need to compensate their effort or temporarily release them from teaching and administrative duties and responsibilities. Moreover, the group of researchers will need to develop an innovative and competitive idea which pertains to the quality of European researchers ideas. In addition, researchers should have experience in drafting research project proposals with international donor organizations. Lastly, skills for drafting research project proposals should be coupled with an advanced knowledge of English language skills.

However, as mentioned previously, no HEI has managed to receive Horizon 2020 research grant. The study does not ignore that there are case by case situations of Horizon 2020 projects success stories. However, those are individual academic staff researchers who formed consortiums with other countries and institutions rather than initiate the project with partners in Kosovo at institutional level. It is evident by now that the checklist system has harmed collaborative research work in Kosovo's higher education institutions and change will occur only when research becomes an inseparable component of HEIs and academic staff's activities.

- **Lack of discussions for scientific research**

Academic staff argued that HEIs do not provide any platform where they can present and discuss their research activity. In addition, there is no requirement or other form of motivation at institutional level to encourage academic staff to engage in applied research projects and translate scientific findings to inform policy-making in the context of social and economic development. Currently, HEIs lack an established culture where:

- Academic staff present and discuss their current or previous research;
- Academic staff provide constructive criticisms and recommendations to support their colleagues research approach;
- Academic staff are required to reflect on the applied aspect of the research project.

⁴⁸ Interview with an Academic Staff (Public HEI) conducted on 29th of October, 2018.

Organizing forums or discussion groups (divided into fields and sub-fields) would inform the research community and can provide room of brainstorming of other potential research areas. However, lack of platform(s) for discussing research activity has resulted in the lack of a common understanding of excellence in scientific research. While such mandatory forums foster transparency and identify cases of poor or lack of research work, the current scheme of evaluation is created perfectly to hide poor research work.

- **Lack of research-oriented programs**

Although in certain master studies programs, different academic units have started to change their approach by incorporating aspects of research, this is very limited across HEIs in general. In such programs or classes, students are assessed based on research proposals, reflection papers, reading scientific literature, and conducting research activities, among others.

However, there is no systematic approach to research-informed programs. As such, academic staff has been provided the flexibility to decide if they want to incorporate research aspects in their classes or not. This situation has created discrepancy among classes taught, as there is no framework and a common understanding that guides research-informed classes and programs. This serves as a barrier to develop research sense among students. It also prevents their potential to become researchers in the future.

The preparation and implementation of syllabuses falls under the discretion of individual academic staff. There is no monitoring mechanism to evaluate if research-based plans in the syllabus are covered. In most HEIs, academic staff only submits timesheets to mark the presence during lectures and activities, which is a very formal way of monitoring them. Recently, faculties at the University of Prishtina have established an electronic check-in and out system. However, timesheets and electronic systems do not convey any information about the quality of research-based strategies, research methods and literature, and other related research activities.

The teaching and learning remains at the traditional level, where consulting books as opposed to other type of available literature is given a priority when programs and syllabuses are developed. With no substantial monitoring mechanisms in place, academic staff is permitted to conclude their academic careers with the same lecture notes, teaching methods, and literature.

Academic staff should be encouraged to incorporate research aspects in their classes, as mentioned. More importantly, HEIs need to develop quality-driven reporting mechanisms to demonstrate their research-based outcomes based on their syllabuses.

- **Poor research infrastructure and access to electronic libraries**

Another major factor that hinders the development of research consumption culture in Kosovo is related to the poor infrastructure and lack of physical infrastructure for professional research activity. There is a general lack of physical space, tools, instruments and labs and the existing ones are too old for modern and qualitative scientific and academic research. For instance, the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” has over 15 laboratories from all academic units.

Lack of research infrastructure puts the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” at a disadvantaged point as consortium partner at Horizon 2020. Consortium partners first screen the research conditions at the potential partner university before establishing a project consortium. As such, with the current conditions at University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, it is highly difficult to convince a potential partner that they have the necessary capacities and expertise to engage in innovative research projects.

The University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” manages inventory stock supporting laboratories of academic units once per year. Academic units identify their needs, and the UP responds to such requests, depending on their budget. However, the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” does not have an actual plan on how to functionalize outdated laboratories. There are also cases where certain academic staff have personalized laboratories and tools.

In addition, HEIs have limited access to physical and online libraries. For instance, UP has recently renewed its subscription to Science Direct. However, there is no information about the user circulation of the database. Checking the user circulation would show the interest and incentive from academic staff to read updated literature and follow research trends. The study found that, ironically, there are individual scholars in Kosovo that have access to more online journals and libraries than the institution where they work.

The UP currently publishes only three scientific journals. However, these journals do not meet international criteria and therefore do not have international impact factor. Similar situation is present at the private higher education institutions in Kosovo, which do not have international peer-reviewed journals or ones that have an international impact factor.

- **Study programs and student mentoring**

There is a consensus among the interviewees that PhD programs in HEIs in Kosovo do not yield substantial scientific and practical contribution. In Europe, HEIs do not grant the permission to PhD candidates to research outdated topics. In Kosovo, however, research is scattered and there is no keeping track of overused research focuses.

Another problem related to PhD studies is that most of programs do not have a course on scientific research and publishing. Having this course is mandatory in PhD programs, while the lack of such a subject affects negatively the doctoral thesis as an outcome and the entire professional development of PhD students.

Regarding master and bachelor level, thesis is the only research work that students are obliged to undertake during their studies. There are many problems related to thesis preparation as follows. Different academic units in HEIs appoint the same deadline for all thesis defenses. When analyzing the existing situation, it results it is technically impossible for commissions to read all the thesis work to be defended in one day and be able to constructively evaluate them. In short, most students who defend their thesis graduate with a passing grade. The problem here is that thesis work is treated as a formality.

There is a consensus among the interviewees that thesis works, both at BA and MA level, are very descriptive and outdated. A former Vice Rector for teaching issues at a HEI noted that—although BA and MA thesis are not supposed to bring new knowledge or contribute scientifically—thesis should provide a thorough literature review with a strong theoretical framework, should use appropriate research methods to answer research questions, and should consider the ethical foundations of conducting research work.⁴⁹ However, the interviewed academic staff argued that the current culture of conducting thesis work does not address either of the above-mentioned conditions, fostering poor research work.

Student's thesis work does not undergo through plagiarism check software. Individual academic units have developed different mechanisms to check for thesis plagiarism. However, none of the HEIs have managed to institutionalize the practice of checking thesis for plagiarism.

49 Interview with a former Vice Rector for teaching issues at a HEI conducted on 8th of October, 2018.

6. Concluding remarks

As examined throughout the study, there is a complex set of elements that influence the development of a research culture. A culture of research provides a supportive context in which research is uniformly expected, discussed, produced, and valued. To evaluate the development of research culture in Kosovo's higher education institutions, the study considered both operational (legislative, regulative, and procedural) and normative (values, attitudes, and beliefs) aspects.

The study found that Kosovo deals with basic problems pertaining to the lack of properly defined national and institutional regulations regarding research work that has prevented the development of research culture in Kosovo's higher education institutions. Mostly, the current framework resulted in a lack of general understanding of what science and scientific contribution is.

The study found that research is not considered a national priority. As highlighted in the study, the only updated document that regulates scientific work is the Law No. 04/L-135 on Scientific- Research Activities. A major problem persisting at the national level is the lack of National Research Council along with the National Research Program organizing the scientific and applied research work.

The inability of the parliament to achieve majority voting and enable the appointment of NRC is a clear message to our society that Kosovo has complex problems with the rule of law. It illustrates a typical case where individual political preferences outweigh social benefits. As a consequence, policy gap has influenced the development of a type of "culture of research" in which researchers engage in scattered research work that highly depends on individual researcher's incentives and interest.

The fact that research work is not considered an important component in Kosovo's economic and social development, has translated into the lowest budget designated for research in Europe per GDP, amounting to 0.1%. However, the study emphasized that, even with an increased funding for science, there is no significant evidence to suggest the development of a research culture. As already mentioned, there are other determining factors that influence the development of research culture, such as a common understanding among different stakeholders on the values of research activity as imperative to sustainable social and economic development in Kosovo.

A similar situation persists in higher education institutions. The study found that research is not an organic component of higher education institutions and academic staff daily work. Conducting research is perceived as a periodic activity of academic staff's work. The problem with this perception is mainly because HEIs do not explicitly require academic staff to engage in research activity.

The study found that there is no concrete mechanism other than academic staff promotion to incentivize, monitor or evaluate their research work in higher education institutions. Academic staff is mainly promoted on publishing scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, where for Assistant Professor 1 article, Associate Professor 3 articles, and full Professor 5 articles.

The study highlights that academic staff promotion process is perceived as an imposed activity to conduct research in order to meet the checklist of requirements that will enable them to “secure their livelihood” in HEIs. As a consequence of the current system, de-facto, research is translated as a pure hobby. Hence, the current system challenges the development of a research culture in many levels.

Although the study shows an increased number of papers published, improving the numbers of published articles does not increase quality research work. Research work is considered as an output (1-3-5 papers published) as opposed to a process (getting engaged in collaborative research projects). This type of requirement influences an ad-hoc and isolated research work that serves individual academic staff personal needs (personal promotion). The current situation has generated no substantial impact from the increased number of scientific papers, apart from for academic staff justifying their ranks through following the checklist of formal requirement that enables their rank promotion.

Since research is not an integral part of institutions, there is also lack of sustainable research funding in HEIs. A more problematic issue, however, is the low level of incentives at institutional level organizing collaborative research activities. Another worrisome outcome of the study relates to the fact that no higher education institution in Kosovo has ever engaged in Horizon 2020 opportunities, indicating lack of regional and international cooperation embedded in their institutional culture.

The fact that research is not officially part of the system has resulted in a phenomenon where teaching is not informed by research. Academic staff continues to prioritize teaching over research. In addition, there is lack of research-oriented programs, there is limited consumption of recent literature, books continue to be as a prime source of knowledge, there is lack of research infrastructure, and poor physical and electronic libraries remain a problem. This situation has influenced academic staff to only address technical requirements of conducting and communicating research.

Considering that higher education system in Kosovo embraces a top-down regulative approach, anything that is not explicitly required from HEIs and academic staff is rarely implemented voluntarily. As such, the checklist system destroyed a modest potential that already existed across academic staff that were committed to innovation and production of quality and novel scientific findings.

Overall, findings suggest that Kosovo’s higher education institutions are teaching oriented institutions. Exceptional cases will exist among certain academic staff. However, there is an urgent need to conduct an in-depth vetting process of academic staff to separate teachers from teacher-researchers. Although a quite controversial recommendation, vetting will enable HEIs in Kosovo to transparently assert they are neither research institutions nor Universities and they lack the necessary capacities to engage in scientific research. In short, a distinct separation between teaching and research would be established.

Research activity is the key means to sustainable economic and social development. However, when providing a synthesis between theoretical understanding of research culture development and the contextual factors in Kosovo's higher education system, the study outcomes highlight a great level of discrepancy on the perceptions towards conducting research work and generating scientific contributions. Kosovo's higher education institutions have failed to address operational (legislative, regulative, and procedural) and normative (values, attitudes, and beliefs) factors to developing research culture. Therefore, the current system (national and HEIs level) has prevented scientific community to embrace a research culture that indicates a collective understanding on the production and dissemination of research work that could improve societal well-being.

7. Recommendations

National level:

- Prioritize research, innovation, and development, by increasing the investments in science and research, as well as, appointing the National Research Council and drafting the National Research Program.
- Allocate sufficient funds for effective implementation of the National Research Program.
- Regularly monitor the implementation of the National Research Program.
- Officially become part of Horizon 2020, FP9 and other European and international research groups/networks.
- Undertake recurring informational campaigns for the purpose of distributing information on funding for research allocated by MEST, and funding programs such as the FP7 program, Europe 2020, Horizon 2020, and others.
- Enhance transparency of expenditures for research and science funding and regularly report on projects supported by the MEST.
- Improve the reporting and monitoring procedures of MEST research grant holders.
- Ensure access to digital academic libraries in order to enhance the research quality in Kosovo and enable access to up-to-date academic resources.
- Provide awards for excellence as a brain gain mechanisms - support innovation, talented researchers, especially for PhD (study in HEIs abroad and bring good practices in Kosovo).

Higher education institutions level:

- Draft/update strategy on research/artistic and development activities based on the National Research Program and with a detailed action plan and budget.
- Establish monitoring mechanisms for implementing the strategy on research/artistic and development activities.
- Develop a research work performance evaluation and management system with detailed criteria and mechanisms.
- Adopt a detailed regulation defining the scope of scientific and applied research work to be conducted by academic staff.
- Make scientific research work an integral aspect of academic staff's work, starting from Teaching Assistant position. Amend academic staff contracts to explicitly request them to conduct research work and report at least twice per year.
- Appointments and academic promotion, starting from teaching assistant, should go beyond article publication. The evaluation should be based on article quality, engagement in basic and in applied research projects, research mobility exchange, and participation in conferences as oral presenter, among others.
- Establish research platforms/centers where the academic staff is expected to present and discuss the research they are currently working on. Research platform meetings should be at least once-per month and discussions should serve to applied research (strive to translate scientific findings to inform policy-making in the context of social and economic development).
- Establish research working groups/networks based on profiles and priority areas.
- Functionalize research institutes by planning the annual budget for activities and establish other necessary institutes.
- Condition the research institutes within HEIs to win their existence, fostering a self-sustaining ecosystem through applying for research projects in Kosovo and internationally.
- Hire non-academic staff researchers in higher education institutions. Give priority to PhD candidates.

- Establish strategic partnerships for consortiums with higher education institutions, and research institutes in Kosovo, region and Europe for applying to Horizon 2020 and FP9 research projects.
- Establish strategic partnerships with higher education institutions, and research institutes in the region and Europe for staff and student research motility exchange.
- Support technically and financially academic staff/researchers while drafting grant/project proposal for research projects (Horizon 2020).
- Establish “research support group” in faculties and departments to improve the quality of scientific project applications submitted to the MEST and foreign donors, focusing on capacity building, improving research proposal drafting, challenge their innovation, and support their lack of English language skills.
- Establish a syllabus monitoring mechanism to foster research consumption culture. Institutions are obliged to subscribe to online databases, courses integrate recent literature, avoid using books as a prime source of knowledge, integrate research-based strategies such as action research, applied research, research proposal, critical literature review, reflective papers, among others, be able to substitute the lack of literature in Albanian language
- Organize PhD programs based on global trends with themed research areas.
- Integrate applied research aspects in PhD programs, especially in practical study areas that can contribute to narrow contextual issues/problems and innovation.
- Academic staff should involve post-graduate and doctoral students in their research projects.
- Support PhD students to participating in international conferences and other research project initiatives that relate to their dissertation
- Pursue a determined anti-plagiarism policy. Develop a plagiarism checker mechanism to prevent students from graduating through unethical research outcome.

