National Development Plan

ALBANIA

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Introduction

This document presents a first plan for establishing a national data service for the social sciences in Albania. This plan has been mainly developed by Ms. Artela Mitrushi from the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM, an independent non-governmental organisation) and is based on work undertaken during the Southeast European Data Services (SEEDS) project (2015-2017). The SEEDS project aimed to establish national data services in the social science in the Balkans. IDM was the Albanian partner in this project and identified the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI)[1] to be a leading institution for the establishment of an Albanian data service. The plan includes comments received from NASRI's general director, Mr. Geron Kamberi (Geron.Kamberi@nasri.gov.al).

This plan should be further developed by all the relevant stakeholders, organisations and individuals whose jobs and interests are related to developing research infrastructures in Albania, primarily policy-making and funding institutions. The plan was created according to the Guide for the elaboration of national data service development plans, produced for the CESSDA SaW project, and some parts of the text are taken directly from the Guide.

The benefits of establishing a national data service

Empirical research in the social sciences is often extremely extensive and financially demanding, especially if it aims for analysis of complex phenomena on a representative sample. During such research, large amounts of data are collected, which cannot be reproduced because phenomena that are studied by the social sciences are changing over time. Because data are often not appropriately preserved by researchers, they are lost or become unusable over time. This represents a loss of potential knowledge and cultural heritage. The data service, through appropriate procedures, policies, tools and infrastructures, ensures long-term preservation of data and their dissemination.

From a research policy perspective there are benefits of national data services to scientific communities that justify the needed investments. First, through their core activities - data preservation and dissemination - data services make possible long-term access to and wider and more effective use of existing data. This means that publicly-funded data are used more fully beyond their original purposes, and that research funders can concentrate on financing fewer new data collections. Indeed, data gathered for original research can be further exploited

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[1]   NASRI is the new name (since August 2016) of the National Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI). The SEEDS project used the old name ARTI.

by "secondary" users for new insights and scientific contributions. Recent work by Beagrie et al.[2] demonstrates the economic benefits of national data services.

Second, data services strengthen research practice and quality by rendering research more transparent and open for replicability. By making data and related documentation available for scrutiny, original research can be tested and evaluated, a key pillar of the scientific method. Also, knowing in advance that the data could be used by others in the future is a way to ensure better quality in methods.

Third, more and more funders and journals are requiring that data be deposited and available to researchers for secondary use and replication - having archives and repositories as places to store and disseminate data makes possible these requirements.

Finally, the easy availability of secondary data brings value to university teachers and students, who benefit from having data to train and illustrate methods and concepts in their courses and projects.

Mission

The mission of the **Albanian Data Archive for Social Science (ADAS)** is to manage data and data services in order to support high quality research, teaching and learning in the social sciences in Albania by acquiring, developing and managing data and related digital resources, and by promoting and disseminating these resources as widely and effectively as possible.

ADAS acquires data to meet crucial commitments, such as:

» Providing access to primary research data for secondary use and analysis to support social science research, answering new questions or undertaking follow-up studies;

» Providing access to data for teaching purposes to enhance use of the collection and support skills development;

» Providing access to original research data and documentation, which allows checks for consistency, validation of sources and validation and replication of research outputs, both published and unpublished.

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2   Beagrie Neil, John Houghton, Anna Palaiologk, and Peter Williams. (2012). Economic Impact Evaluation of the Economic and Social Data Service. Available at http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/research/research-and-impact-evaluation/economic-impact-evaluation-of-the-economic-and-social-data-service/

General features of the data service

Definition of organisation

The Albanian Data Archive for Social Science (ADAS) will be a national research infrastructure that provides long-term preservation and distribution of research data in the social sciences in Albania. The mission of ADAS will be to ensure and promote sustainable services of ingest, storage and dissemination of high-quality research data obtained from the social sciences in Albania that have potential for secondary analysis. ADAS will ensure that the data will be available not just to current researchers but also to future researchers through long-term digital preservation. ADAS will offer data services for national and international researchers, students, and teachers.

Scope of collection

ADAS will collect data across the range of social science disciplines. This includes quantitative and qualitative data. The primary focus will be on quantitative data in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, political science, psychology, educational science, information science, economics, demography, and geography. The data service will also collect and curate qualitative data, but with more careful selection and with consideration of available resources. Qualitative data will encompass in the first phase oral history and life story projects, as well as other narrative studies, currently undertaken within academia and NGOs.

In order to be accepted, the research should provide:

- » Comparative or continuous research data (panel data, longitudinal surveys, and time series that allow examination of trends) as well as cross-sectional data;
- » Works of general interest for social science research (high-quality and exemplary studies with analytic potential).

Data that fall outside the collecting scope will not be actively archived and disseminated by ADAS.

Services and activities

The main activities of ADAS will be:

- » Acquiring important research data from a wide range of social science disciplines;
- » Appraisal of submitted research data and their selection for deposit;
- » Ingesting and processing research data and other documentation, together with creating metadata with the goal of preparing a package for long-term digital preservation (AIP) and preparing for

access and further use for scientific, educational and other purposes (DIP);

» Long-term digital preservation;

» Providing access to research data that enables easy and well-informed usage for various purposes;

» Training researchers and more generally data depositors on planning, dealing and preparing data for ingest in open access;

» Providing users support, and training data users on usage of data services;

» Actively promoting secondary use of research data through training of users.

Since there are a number of public and non-public institutions in Albania that produce periodic social science data, such as various Ministries (education, social affairs, health, public order), the Institute of Statistics, universities and research institutions, national think-tanks and international organizations, one core activity of ADAS should be to establish a Network of Social Data Providers (NSDP) where all those stakeholders could provide access to their data through ADAS.

Beneficiaries

ADAS intends to provide services to the academic community, i.e. university researchers, teachers and students (doctoral, master and bachelor), as well as to researchers from other public institutions (i.e. scientific institutes, government agencies), and researchers from private institutions such as: NGOs, individual researchers, journalists, and private research companies. For other individuals/institutions, the data service reserves the right to decide on a case-by-case basis.

Governance structure

An Oversight board will be created with representatives from: NASRI, the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration, the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), as well as individuals in management positions within major research and education institutions. A Scientific/expert board will also be put together with researchers, data experts/archivists, and data librarians.

Financing schemes

The funding should be secured by national public funding bodies, that is the relevant Ministry and existing funding bodies in the scientific research sector. For Albania, the relevant funding agencies are the Ministry of Education and Sports in Albania, the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI). They should cover long-term financing to ensure sustainability for ADAS. Initial funding could also be requested at the Digital Albania Fund. The host institution

will provide premises and basic office facilities. In addition, the data service will participate in international projects for further financing. An option could be funding through the PERFORM - Responsive Social Science project of the European Cooperation Development Fund.

Resources and challenges

Host institution of the future data service

Reflections about the establishment of a national data service in Albania began with the SEEDS project. IDM, the Albanian partner institution for SEEDS, identified NASRI as a possible host institution for ADAS. However, according to NASRI's general director, Geron Kamberi, NASRI does not have the appropriate staff for creating and managing the data service and cannot be at the same time the funding and the hosting institution. Also, ADAS' host-institution should have closer links to primary research data producers in the targeted fields of study.

Ideally, the host institution should be a public institution with the following criteria:

» Recognized entity with positive relations with research institutions and national ministries to facilitate the collaboration with state authorities and researchers;
» Relevant technical capacities to support functioning the ADAS such as: hardware, software, servers, network and telecommunications, etc.;
» Qualified human resources for the establishment of ADAS;
» Experience with data archiving tasks.

A public institution will also reassure the research community that their data will be kept in a secure environment.

Currently in Albania there are some appropriate institutions that may serve as host institution for the national data service, such as the National Library (which has the National Bibliography Centre), the National State Archive, the Library of the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Tirana, the Albanian Centre for Albanological Studies, which includes five institutes and their archives and libraries (Institute of History, Institute of Literature-Linguistics, Institute of Archaeology and Institute of Anthropology), the Unit of Social Science and the Library of the Academy of Sciences, or the Faculty of Social Sciences & Education of the European University of Tirana.

These structures could offer trained staff, appropriate expertise and certain databases in use, such as archives or library bibliographic catalogues related to the social sciences. A next step

should be to discuss the possibility to host ADAS with these institutions and possibly to suggest a consortium run by one of these institutions, e.g., a consortium led by the Faculty of Social Sciences of University of Tirana or by its library.

Internal structure and human resources

ADAS will include at least the following positions:

- » A Director of the data service responsible for financial and executive management, communication with stakeholders, and regional and international partners;
- » A quantitative and a qualitative data Archivist responsible for the entire process of data archiving - solicitation, curation, preservation and dissemination of research data;
- » An IT Specialist responsible for technical support of the system and ensuring appropriate functioning of the Archive in its storage, preservation, and dissemination activities.

However, the internal structure of the data service will be defined in more detail according to funding capacities.

Partner support and cooperation

At this stage ADAS does not yet have formalized partner support. However, in the future the key stakeholders will include the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI). and other government agencies, the Albanian National Institute of Statistics, the State Archives, the Central Bank of Albania, public and private universities, as well as other relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions. This should also include a study of the legal questions concerning formal relationships with stakeholders.

It will be important to set up lines of communication with key stakeholders and partners so that they are kept informed about the development and direction of the new data service. Key representatives from each stakeholder institution will be identified and contacted to obtain their consent to participate as representatives on behalf of their institution. Representatives will be included in a contact database that will be used for communicating information about the data service.

Afterword

This plan is a blueprint for a future national archive with the long-term aim of becoming a member of CESSDA ERIC. While this National Development Plan will certainly evolve over time, it represents a significant first step in defining concrete goals, priorities, and an organisational structure.

For more information, contact NASRI's General Director, Mr. Geron Kamberi (Geron.Kamberi@nasri.gov.al).

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