National Development Plan

KOSOVO

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The Kosovo
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Data Centre

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National Development Plan
KOSOVO

Introduction

First efforts towards establishment of data services in Kosovo started with the international project SEEDS - South Eastern European Data Services[1] whose goal was to develop knowledge and tools related to data service infrastructures. The plan is based on SEEDS project results and was created in cooperation with Dr. Arben Hajrullahu (arben_hajrullahu@yahoo.com), Nitë Bylykbashi-Deliu (nita.bylykbashi@hotmail.com), and Lirije Palushi (lirije.palushi@gmail.com) from the Centre for Political Courage, Pristina, who authored the SEEDS project reports. As partners in the SEEDS project, they gained experience in data curation and got familiar with policies, procedures and resources that need to be put in place in order to establish data services for the social sciences. The plan was created following 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 goal of this document is to promote the development of data services for the social sciences in Kosovo, to give an overview of larger strategic considerations in conceiving and establishing a national data service, and to bring the attention of relevant stakeholders to key issues in development planning.

The benefits of establishing a national data service

Empirical research the in 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 can not be reproduced because phenomena that are studied change over time.

Because data are often not appropriately preserved by researchers, they may be 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.

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

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1   South Eastern European Data Services (SEEDS) project (2015-2017). http://seedsproject.ch/

fewer new data collections. Indeed, data gathered for original research can be further exploited by "secondary" users for new insights and scientific contributions. Recent work by Beagrie et al. [2]emonstrates 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 at 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.

How to use this document

The document is divided into two main sections. In the first section, a "concept" for a future national data service has been developed, that is, the model and key features that are to be put into place. This includes defining: the nature of the organisation; the overall mission; the scope of the collection of data; the offered services and activities; the beneficiaries; and the governance structure.

In the second section, the previously developed concept is evaluated in relation to realities on the ground, including probable resources and challenges for setting up and maintaining a viable data service over time. This includes subsections on identifying the host institution for the data service, defining the human resources required (number and types of staff, internal structure), and identifying potential partners among the existing network of relevant national and international organisations.

Mission

The mission of the **Kosovo Social Sciences Data Centre (KSSDC)** is to offer a secure environment for enabling researchers in Kosovo to store, access, and reuse national and regional data from

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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 http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/research/research-and-impact-evaluation/economic-impact-evaluation-of-the-economic-and-social-data-service/

The Kosovo
Social Sciences
Data Centre

KSSDC

National Development Plan
KOSOVO

the social sciences. The data centre is open and dedicated to the broad research community including researchers, teachers, and students, as well as other stakeholders involved in scientific research in Kosovo and abroad.

General features of the data service

In this section, the general **desired features** of the data service are outlined. The main objectives and structure of the data services are described. The resulting concept will define the foundation and help to plan further and more concretely (in sections 2 and 3).

Definition of organisation

The Kosovo Social Sciences Data Centre (KSSDC) will be a national infrastructure for social sciences and humanities providing long-term preservation and distribution of research data. The data centre should be housed within a larger existing organisation but its services will be available to the whole community, national and international. The main purpose of the KSSDC will be to provide curation of research data produced by the research community in the country and access to these data for researchers and the broader public.

Scope of collection

Holdings of the KSSDC will include social science data in a broader sense. The primary focus, however, will be on quantitative data in sociology, psychology, education science, political science, and economics. These include microdata (coded numerical responses to surveys with a separate record for each individual respondent) and macrodata (aggregate figures, e.g. country level economic indicators). KSSDC will also collect and curate qualitative data, but with more careful selection and with consideration of available resources. Qualitative data include in-depth interviews, diaries, anthropological field notes and the complete answers to survey questions. The third type of data may include digitised paper documents, or originally digital files like images, photographs and audio and video clips. The data may come from different sources: international (offices of international organizations in the country), national (central and local government institutions), universities, individual researchers, NGOs and think tanks, and market research agencies.

Services and activities

The key services of the KSSDC will include:

- » selecting and acquiring data;
- » processing and cataloguing data and documentation;
- » data dissemination;
- » digital preservation and (technical) systems development and maintenance; and
- » education and support for depositors (how to manage data, data management plan) and users (how and why to use data for secondary research).

In addition, the data service will do the following:

- » promotion of Open Access to scientific research in Kosovo;
- » enabling secure access to sensitive data; and
- » permanent monitoring of compliance with the international standards in the field of data management and preservation by collaboration with the wider scientific community.

Beneficiaries

The data center will be opened and dedicated to the broad research community, including researchers, teachers, students as well as other stakeholders involved in scientific research in Kosovo and abroad. The beneficiaries encompass a wide range of institutions and individual researchers in Kosovo, such as higher education institutions, both public and private, research institutes and institutions, NGOs, IGOs, public institutions such as the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, and think thanks. A data producer can be anyone who proves the validity of their research data and who is able to share data for secondary use with the broad research community. On the other hand, everyone who has access to the preserved data is considered a user. Users will be registered and include students, teachers, members of public and private institutions, policy makers, and journalists from Kosovo and abroad.

The producers of social science research data in the country are the higher education and research institutions part of the public and private universities, other public and private research institutions, individual researchers, as well as non-governmental organizations and think tanks. The users of data are registered researchers from the country and abroad, and other interested parties such as public institutions, policymakers, journalists, students, and others.

Governance structure

An executive board consists of the KSSDC director and the head of the host institution.

A Joint Oversight Board will be composed of representatives from the KSSDC, hosting institution,

The Kosovo
Social Sciences
Data Centre

KSSDC

National Development Plan
KOSOVO

and representatives of funding institution(s).

A Scientific advisory board will consist of eminent researchers in the social sciences, data archiving experts, information science experts and information technology experts. This board will advise on issues related to social science methodology and data archiving procedures.

Financing schemes

Ideally, services will be financed by the government budget, e.g., within the regular budget of the University of Prishtina in order for the national service of data archive to function adequately. Besides the official financial resources which should secure the sustainability of the data archive continuously, we will seek other financial resources from other relevant national stakeholders as well as international funding from different institutions and agencies, e.g. the European Commission, in order to provide additional promotion and capacity-building activities.

The general costs for the creation and maintenance of the data archive will depend on different conditions such as staffing, equipment, and economic adjustment at the time of creation/ maintenance. A more detailed budget will be determined after a deep analysis of the possible costs at the time of creation.

Description of resources and challenges

In this section we consider how the concepts and general features of the data service outlined in section one can be implemented in practice, taking into consideration real local and institutional resource conditions.

Host institution of the future data service

The Kosovo Social Sciences Data Center (KSSDC) could be established by the Centre for Political Courage (CPC) within the Institute for Social Studies and Humanities (ISSH), at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina.

CPC was a partner in the international project SEEDS - South-Eastern European Data Services[3] which aimed to support the establishment of new data services for social sciences in countries where no such service exists. Through the SEEDS project CPC staff gained experience and developed skills in data management and in data archiving standards, policies and procedures.

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3   SEEDS project was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. URL: http://www.seedsproject.ch

A prototype website of the data center was developed as a result of the SEEDS project. CPC was also involved in the RRPP Data Rescue project[4] which aimed to ensure the long-term preservation of the data produced within the framework of the RRPP - Regional Research Promotion Programme Western Balkans and to make these data available for secondary use, to the largest extent possible. The project was a great opportunity for CPC staff to experience the process of data solicitation and to learn about challenges which can stand in the way of data archiving goals and efforts.

Human resources and internal structure

The precise number of staff as well as their definite roles and responsibilities will be determined at the time of the establishment of the KSSDC, based on the available resources and expected services. However for the data service the following dedicated staff is needed:

- » Director/Head of the KSSDC (S/he should be responsible for financial and executive management, communication with stakeholders, and with regional and international partners);
- » Data Expert with proven knowledge in social science methodology and data management;
- » Experienced IT expert in data management, software application, documentation standards, data exchange protocols and programming and database skills;
- » Office and Financial Officer to maintain day-to-day office duties and finances.

The KSSDC should be organized as a separate organisational unit at the ISSH at the University of Prishtina. The staff in the aforementioned positions will be chosen through an open call for application and only if they fulfil the expected requirements and are qualified in accordance with the work descriptions.

Once staff size and positions have been determined, the search for suitable candidates should begin. The search will require detailed job descriptions that are appropriately publicized. If the positions are taken over by existing staff, it should be clarified which of their responsibilities are to be transferred and which are to be maintained.

Some training activities for possible future staff members have already begun as part of the SEEDS project. Staff hired for the data service before day one should begin training with respect to their future roles and responsibilities, either within the context of SEEDS or through other training mechanisms.

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4   RRPP Data Rescue project. http://seedsproject.ch/?page_id=618

The Kosovo
Social Sciences
Data Centre

KSSDC

National Development Plan
KOSOVO

Staff will be subject to the rules and regulations of the contracting institution.

Partner support and cooperation

Since Kosovo has not yet established its National Data Archive, one of the crucial parts for the future operation of this data service will be the cooperation with relevant national and international stakeholders. On a national level, it is very important that the data archive will be recognized as a valuable national service by all relevant science and research institutions, which are part of the science community and higher education system in Kosovo.

Stakeholders and partner institutions will, inter alia, include:

» the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) as the main science policy institution, which also provides multi-annual institutional financing of research activities (distributed to universities and public institutes);

» all relevant public and private scientific institutions and domestic and international agencies operating in Kosovo that deal directly or indirectly with social science data. This includes faculties (constituents of universities); it also includes public institutes that have their own policies about data archiving and may also have their local information specialists/librarians who can promote and facilitate data depositing and data use;

» the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, which produces national statistics, valuable and very heavily used data in social science disciplines;

» the National Archive, which can play a role in the long-term preservation of some kinds of data (e.g., publicly available data as national heritage);

» the Agency of Information Society (AIS) / Ministry of Public Administration, which is the main institution responsible for developing, maintaining and preserving the IT infrastructure and administrative data of public institutions;

» the National Library;

» the University Library; and

» think tanks and NGOs, which are engaged in social science research activity, and which promote the concept of open data. This should also include a study of the legal questions concerning formal relationships with stakeholders.

The Kosovo
Social Sciences
Data Centre

KSSDC

National Development Plan
KOSOVO

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