

THE SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH AGENDA OF THE INSTITUTE FOR PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THEORY FOR THE PERIOD 2020–2025

About the Institute

The vision of the Institute is that of an encouraging and interdisciplinary community of researchers which nurtures a pluralism of theoretical perspectives and research orientations and which functions as an internationally relevant academic center of excellence for the humanities and the social sciences.

The Institute fosters an environment for socially and scientifically relevant, multi-perspective, and interdisciplinary theoretical and empirical research that reflects the complexity of methodology and content as well as the challenges of the contemporary age while taking into consideration historical currents.

The Institute operates both in Serbia and in the region as a paradigm of commitment to the consistent application and improvement of good practices in theoretical and empirical research, thus stimulating the elevation of academic standards in the domestic context and the productive cooperation with relevant actors both in academia and beyond. With this, the Institute seeks to emphasize the importance of the public role of the social sciences and the humanities.

The Institute is developing the field of engagement studies in the spirit of multi-disciplinarity and constant dialogue by thematizing the social, cultural, and political movements that strive for active change of the status quo as well as the individual and communal power of agency. At the same time, the Institute is involved in questioning the effectiveness of engagement, emancipation, solidarity, and resistance both in the wider social context and in the context of everyday experience.

Development goals in the following five-year period:

1. Intensifying cooperation with the relevant foreign institutions and the diaspora through the multiplication of joint activities, projects, and exchanges which is reflected in the confirmation of at least 12 new cooperation agreements with defined joint activities;
2. Doubling the share of non-budgetary funds in the overall budget which will enable the separation of the budget line for new initiatives and programs as well as for supporting professional development opportunities for employees;

3. Creating a systemic support framework for development by establishing a fund for research development and the improvement of mentoring work with younger researchers;
4. Increasing the international influence and raising the quality of the Institute's scientific production by indexing the journal of the Institute in the relevant databases and doubling the share of published works of researchers in indexed international journals;
5. Establishing new and inclusion in existing postgraduate studies within the fields of activity of the Institute, in accordance with legal possibilities.

These cross-sector goals will be detailed in the following text in which each segment of the Institute's field of activities is treated separately. The implementation of this plan presupposes active participation of the Institute's Research Groups (the Group for Engagement Studies and the Group for Practical Philosophy and Social Ontology) as well as of its Research Laboratories (EduLab: the laboratory for educational strategies, ShoahLab: the laboratory for the study of the Holocaust, DigiLab: the laboratory for digital sociometry, GenLab: the laboratory for the study of fender, the Laboratory for active citizenship, and the Laboratory for the study of philanthropy, solidarity and care).

The Institute will carry on nurturing an inclusive, democratic way of work through shared deliberations related to the important aspects of its activities in which all employees have an equal opportunity to participate.

Events Program

The Institute has an extremely rich events program which allows each researcher, regardless of whether they are formally a member of the academic community or not, to present their work and make it visible. In the upcoming period, such a program should continue and it should be systematized in a way that avoids hyperproduction so as to enable the existing and potential audience to participate in the activities of the Institute.

1. The traditional event of the Institute held on Wednesdays should continue in a format that would enable both renowned and young, yet unaffirmed, researchers to present their work. Moreover, these events should also include lecture cycles which would respond to the needs of the Institute's Research Laboratories and Research Groups as well as to the Annual Lecture Cycle that ends with the conferral of the Miladin Životić Annual Award for Critical-Theoretical Engagement.
2. A Half-Day Thematic Seminar: a critical reading of relevant contemporary books and papers by domestic and foreign authors. This format has already been recognized as an efficient way of debating many important topics with the guests of the Institute since it provides a balance between a deeper analysis and the timespan of the event; moreover, it enables researchers from the whole academic community to participate thus expanding the reach outside the Institute.

3. National, regional, and, most importantly, international conferences are events for which the Institute has been recognized in the domestic public sphere due to the efforts of the Groups for Engagement Studies over the past six years. The Institute should organize one international scientific gathering once a year with reputable international guests. This is in accordance with the Institute's goal of reaching a wider audience and initiating a wide dialogue about relevant topics. The projects in which the Institute is involved in as well as the broad international cooperation which the researchers of the Institute nurture promises to make such a plan feasible.
4. Doctoral Seminars are a new format which should be included in the events program of the Institute. Doctoral seminars would promise every young researcher at the Institute to have the opportunity to organize seminars on those topics that are relevant for their work and which would include representatives from academic life in Serbia and, possibly, the region. This form would contribute to the rise of the work quality done by young researchers in Serbia generally.
5. Public Events Cycle intended for a wider audience. Elaborated under the Public Engagement rubric.

Project Portfolio

Given the prioritization of scientific cooperation thorough projects and numerous links with the international academic community as well as the significant number of repatriate researchers, the Institute has in recent years managed to substantively strengthen its project cooperation with international academic institutions. The fruit of this vision are, among others, one Horizon 2020 project, two projects funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, one Erasmus + Jean Monnet network, and several Cost networks in which the researchers of the Institute are involved.

On the next four years, the Institute will endeavor to expand its project portfolio both in those fields in which the Institute is already recognized based on the projects within the field of engagement studies – primarily in the theory of social movements and theories of (deliberative) democracy, identity politics and the politics of the Other, and gender theory – and in philosophy and the humanities. Of key significance is expanding the network of partners who recognize the Institute as a quality partner institution in international programs, primarily within the new EU program for science: Horizon Europe.

The Institute will invest additional efforts in strengthening the Institute's laboratories which have great potential for realizing their activities through projects and cooperation with other institutions in the country and abroad.

At the national level, the Institute will provide all the necessary support to researchers in order to gain funds from the Fund for Science of the Republic of Serbia and other nationally available funds.

Publishing

The Institute has a rich publishing program within which, in recent years, emphasis has been on the *Dispute* edition that enables publishing collections about relevant research topics that the Institute explores. There is a new edition, *Minima*, which publishes short editions in the form of a polemic between two reputable authors with an editorial. The most important publishing enterprise of the Institute – the *Philosophy and Society* journal – is indexed in relevant world lists: Scopus and Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI).

The Institute will continue the necessary work for fulfilling the demands for indexing its journal in the prestigious Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) list, which would confirm the Institute's strategic goal of internationalization and quality improvement. Since 2020, the Institute is publishing a new journal in Serbian – *Criticism: the Journal for Philosophy and Theory of Society* – which is directed at a regional audience. The Institute will guarantee the necessary conditions for the development of this journal and for ensuring a high categorization in the scientific community in the country.

The Institute will place emphasis on supporting the editorial teams of both journals in order to ensure the quality and the highest standards that apply in this field of publishing. When it comes to the Institute's editions, the plan is to re-organize them in order to stress three branches: 1) monographs in cooperation with renowned publishers that can ensure the proper placement of these publications and their promotion, 2) collections on important topics for the activities of the Institute, 3) edition of short polemical editions (*Minima*). All of these three branches should get a new and recognizable look which will be done in consultation with the editor of publishing.

In addition to these already established branches of publishing, the Institute will work on new editions. *The Legacy of Engaged Thought* should open up the space for exceptional older theoretical and scientific works that have left their mark on the history and societies of our region (Dimitrije Tucović, Miladin Životić, Zagorka Golubović, Žarana Papić, and Laszlo Sekelj). The *Chance* edition should provide an opportunity to provide, through public calls, young researchers from the country and the region with a space to present their work in the form of short monographs. This would further strengthen the area of youth support that has been part of the Institute's mission for over a decade.

Additional effort is needed in order to strengthen cooperation with renowned publishing houses and to promote the Institute's publications to the public. Each edition should be accompanied by an essay that would be intended for a wider audience in order to popularize the Institute's publications; this would be done in cooperation with one of the daily newspapers or weeklies. Moreover, the plan is to provide additional funds for publishing support, primarily in terms of proofreading the Institute's publications in all languages.

Public Engagement

The crisis of the authority of science and the challenges faced by experts in Serbia impose the need for an institution that defines the establishment of engagement studies as its program orientation in order to develop a strategy for promoting theory and research results to the general public. The mission of the Institute does not end only in the academic sphere but requires transferring concepts and conceptions to the arena of public opinion in order to influence the quality of the debates in our society.

In that sense, each researcher can contribute with their own public appearances and presentations of theoretical and empirical insights to the general public. The task of an engaged institution is to offer interpretations of social phenomena based on research results in order to improve the understanding of reality and its complexity.

Each researcher of the Institute will be encouraged to publish one text per semester in one of the dailies or weeklies with which the Institute has already established cooperation. This is especially important given the conditioned need to disseminate the results of funded projects to the general public. Each major event will be accompanied by a public debate that will be intended for a wider audience and organized in cooperation with cultural centers or foundations with which the Institute collaborates.

The Institute will also develop a strategy for the production of video content with interviews, lectures, and other forms of digital cooperation with its international network of associates which should contribute to the visibility and refinement of theoretical concepts in the regional public.

In addition, the Institute will continue to stimulate younger researchers to work on new projects with the Center for the Promotion of Science with which good cooperation has already been established as a way to popularize theory and research.

Last but not least, the Institute will encourage its researchers to actively participate in policy making both in the scientific and educational system and in other areas where they can contribute with their expertise. In this sense, it is important to further shape the Institute's laboratories which have major potential to be recognized as expert centers with quality data.

International Cooperation

This area of the Institute's activities has been occupying an extremely important place for a long time and this trend will continue in the upcoming period. Signing cooperation agreements with relevant institutions should bring more precisely defined opportunities for research exchanges. The Institute should formally become part of various thematic networks within the disciplines it covers (associations and consortia at the European and global levels).

The Institute recognizes the importance of researcher mobility by supporting trips to post-doctoral studies and research stays abroad and at the same time wants to (in accordance with its spatial capacities) increase the number of foreign visiting researchers and help their field research in Serbia.

The international component of the Institute's work should be reflected in the advisory bodies of the Institute which would be comprised of our long-term associates from abroad as well as from researchers from the diaspora. An academic council will be formed which should consist of renowned guests of the Institute as a guarantee of its independence and anchoring in international trends. Participation in the work of these bodies would be important for guiding the direction of development in the future as well as for an objective evaluation of the achievements of the Institute. Also, such profiling would help the Institute to expand its network of individual and institutional associates.

The Institute will continue to develop long-term cooperation with cultural centers and embassies that have funds to support science and education, as well as with foundations that have a representative office in Serbia.

Cooperation in Serbia and South East Europe

An important element of international cooperation that stems from the Institute's legacy is regional cooperation which has been, by now, conducted through different events coordinated by the Institute and other regional institutions. First and foremost, the Institute nurtures cooperation with the Center for Advanced Studies-South Eastern Europe of the University of Rijeka, the Center for Southeast European Studies of the University of Graz, and the Friedrich Ebert Dialogue South East Europe situated in Sarajevo. In the upcoming period, special attention will be given to signing contracts with academic institutions in the region (Skopje, Tirana, and Sarajevo) and developing joint projects and initiatives which should contribute to the further strengthening of academic networking in the region with the Institute as the focal point. In that regard, the projects that lead to a better interpersonal understanding and overcoming traditionalized resistance on national grounds will certainly have the Institute's support, fostering thus Miladin Životić's vision.

There is a particular need for further engagement of the Institute within the bounds of national scientific bodies, such as the University of Belgrade and the Association of Institutes of Serbia. Furthermore, the Institute will intensify its links and collaboration with individual national academic institutions and those relevant representatives of civil society that have a research focus or that are engaged in activities which coincide with the mission of the Institute's laboratories in terms of areas and goals.

The Legacy of the Institute

Relying on the legacy of the Praxis School as a field of engaged thought, the Institute has put engagement studies at the center of its research activities. As the meetings of the Praxis

School (the Korčula Summer School) were a unique gathering place of different traditions and theoretical orientations, the Institute should continue with more dedication its mission of creating an inclusive framework for critical and multi-perspective thinking about the most urgent societal problems.

In the upcoming period, the Institute will endeavor to become a legacy house of diverse theorists of our region through its activities and strategic planning. Such an endeavor has already been initiated with the establishment of the legacy of Vladimir Vukičević, Slobodan Bosnić, and Milorad Mida Belančić. A special emphasis will be placed on procuring the consent for establishing the legacies of former associates of the Institute.

Moreover, following the vision that has led to the creation of the Miladin Životić Annual Award for Critical-Theoretical Engagement, the Institute will strive to establish a post-doctoral program under the symbolic name “Praxis” which would be designed for young researchers from abroad who are interested in engagement studies within the context of South Eastern Europe.

Participation in Post-Graduate Studies

The Institute will devote special attention to the development of an interdisciplinary academic curriculum in those academic fields in which it has unique expertise in the region. These fields primarily include: the studies of engagement, seen through the lenses of social movements and theories of (deliberative) democracy as well as gender/feminist theories. In order to fulfill this task, a close cooperation with higher education institutions in Serbia and/or the region is called for, while bearing in mind that the legal framework in Serbia does not allow institutes to carry out post-graduate studies. Primarily, the Institute will inquire into the possibility of cooperating with the departments at the Faculty of Political Sciences and the Faculty of Philosophy as well as into the possibility of establishing post-graduate studies at the University itself.

Library

Special attention will be devoted to the indexing of the Library of the Institute in the Cobiss database and to the formation of an open-access electronic library. This digital archive should be publicly available; moreover, it should contain all the publications of the Institute from the start of its publishing activities to the contemporary publications which are not available for purchase.

The Institute will request from the authoritative bodies a physical space that would be suited for preserving this legacy which will be significantly expanded in the upcoming period.