The RRPP is aimed at fostering and promoting social science research in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). Social science research aids in the understanding of the specific needs for reform and in identifying the long-term implications of potential policy choices. Researchers receive support through research grants, methodological and thematic trainings, as well as opportunities for regional and international exchange and networking. The RRPP is coordinated and operated by the Interfaculty Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (IICEE) at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). The programme is fully funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

www.rrpp-westernbalkans.net
Why social sciences?

Quality research studies contribute to the visibility of options and opportunities while evaluating and critically reflecting upon political decisions and their implications. Given the difficult post-conflict context in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and the transitional processes that are still taking place in the entire Western Balkans, we have decided to support researchers focusing on the following areas of interest:

- The Rule of Law and Democracy
- Economic Development and Social Change
- Social and Economic Change and the Challenge of (new) Social Disparities
- Managing Diversity (national, ethnic and religious identities, gender, youth, and minorities, incl. Roma)
- States, Networks and Informality

Benefits

We offer a platform for dynamic regional and international cooperation. The focus remains on researchers and policy makers that are to become the driving force of higher education reforms, which effectively promote stronger recognition of the social sciences and its significance in the region. In order to do so we cooperate with relevant ministries and jointly implement activities aiming at influencing systemic changes in the long-term.

How to participate?

The programme operates through three inter-related pillars:

- The allocation of research grants for projects that are concerned with issues related to transformation processes in the region;
- The organization of methodological and thematic trainings provided by international and regional experts and mentors;
- The enabling and strengthening of regional interactions and cooperation – especially through training and regional/international conferences.

Researchers from the region can submit applications following a call for research projects published on the RRPP website. The RRPP Scientific Board then evaluates the applications according to the criteria defined within the call. Hereafter, the Steering Board makes the final decision on whether (or not) to fund the research projects recommended by the Scientific Board. The entire evaluation process lasts approximately five-six months.

What did we achieve so far?

During the period 2008 – 2011, under the umbrella topic “Political, Social and Economic Change in the Western Balkans”, we have supported 29 research projects (5 regional and 24 national) with a value of CHF 1.3 million.

Furthermore, 12 regional trainings conducted by international specialists for research methods and management have been organized, gathering a total of 209 participants. In order to improve the capacity building impact and research quality, we have financed individual mentoring sessions and participation at international conferences for the research teams that are supported by RRPP.

By 2011, three annual scientific conferences have been organized, gathering 282 regional and international scholars. Besides the effect of networking, such conferences provide researchers an opportunity to present their work and expose it to critical review.

Finally, during the period 2008 – 2011, we fully supported the “Regional Gender and Women’s Studies Network Project” gathering scholars interested in the regional gender studies. The project was implemented by the Euro-Balkan Institute in Skopje, Macedonia.

The RRPP perspective until June 2013

The RRPP will continue to support research, capacity building, networking and policy-dialogues in the Western Balkans, striving to produce human and social capital that will influence the status of research and life of social scientists in the long-term.