

Interview by Davorka Pšenica

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## Professor Vlado Šakić, Director of the Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

**{** *The Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar is a scientific institution for social sciences and humanities. The Institute's activities include scientific research and publishing, public presentations of scientific research, international exchange of scientific information, participation in the academic teaching and other activities closely related to the Institute's fields of interest. The Institute was founded on November 26, 1991 by the University Assembly of the University of Zagreb under the name of Institute of Applied Social Research. Pursuant to the Law of Scholarly Research it became a public institute of the Republic of Croatia in 1993. It was renamed the Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar by a decision of its Governing Board on February 18, 1997. It was named after Croatian scientist and publicist Dr. Ivo Pilar (1874-1933) who played an invaluable role in the development of social sciences and humanities in Croatia.*

**The Voice of NUL:** The Ivo Pilar Institute has been working for a full nineteen years as one of the leading scientific and research institutions in the field of social research in Croatia with a recognized international reputation, and at the start would you tell us more about the Institute itself, its field of research and the volume of its activities in the last nineteen years.

There are several determining factors which make the Ivo Pilar Institute unique not only in Croatia, but in the wider regional, post-socialist surrounding. The Institute was founded on the initiative of a group of Croatian scholars from the social and humanistic fields, immediately after the establishment of Croatian independence and of the democratic political system. This initiative was supported by the University of Zagreb and the Ministry of Science, which promoted us from the start to organize itself as a national institute in the field of social and humanistic studies through the establishment of regional and functional centers, in line with similar scientific institutions within the European Union and the United States. In other words, the Institute, from its very beginning, has been developing the national and global dimensions of its scientific activities.

The other determining factor is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to research in social and humanistic sciences. There are currently 107 scientists and junior researchers at the Institute engaged in research in 16 different scientific fields, of which 10 are social sciences, 5 are humanities and 1 medical science; all of which point to the multidisciplinary character of the research. With such orientation, we hoped to achieve our goal of high standards in theoretical and methodological research of different and highly complex social phenomena. Numerous public recognitions of our work show that we succeeded in this goal. On the other hand, based

on such orientation and achievements, we have become congruent with similar leading institutes in the most developed countries of the Western world which allows us to participate in international projects and to exchange scientific information.

The third determinant relates to our Institute's orientation toward the complementary relationship between the scientific research and academic teaching. The great majority of our scientists and junior researchers teach at a university level. We participated in the creation of faculty studies and even the establishment of a university.

Our fourth determinant is the systematic encouragement and development of young scientists and their inclusion in all types of scientific activities. Close to one hundred young scientists received their master's and doctorate degrees under the auspices of the Institute in the last ten years.

The fifth determinant, but no less important, is our scientific publishing, which your readers can access on our web pages where our research studies are available to the public.

**The Voice of NUL:** What is the basic mission and role of the Institute, and what is the importance of its scientific activities for the public, Croatia and wider?

The Institute, in line with its provisions and specific character, performs its scientific mission within the national scientific and research strategy and in line with the European Union priorities in the social sciences and humanities fields. In this context, the importance and benefits from our activities depend on two complex facts. First is the level of significance given to science in general in the Croatian society and in particular to the social and humanistic fields.

The second factor relates to the application of our scientific achievements. As we know, as a metaphor, scientific achievements and social processes in Croatia are more in a "conflict" than in a "harmonious" partnership, which impoverishes social processes and we as scientists are denied verification of applicability of most of our scientific achievements. In spite of this, I maintain that this relationship is a process in itself, and only through persistent and quality work can we influence changes in line with our expectations.

In other words, we, at the Institute, fulfill our basic scientific mission systematically and participate in the development of the Croatian society, but at the same time, we share a disappointment with our colleagues regarding the low status given to science and scientists, which is evident in the relatively low representation of the scientific research in the national and local development strategies.

**The Voice of NUL: How many scientific projects have you done so far? Which ones would you single out and evaluate as most significant?**

Among the 200 projects in 20 years, of diverse and various complexity, it is difficult to single out a few that are most significant. I would rather list the subject fields that were significantly covered and resulted in the publication of scientific achievements from these projects. These are social, national and cultural identity, public opinion and mass media, quality of life, urban, rural, population, religious and technological studies, education and human resources, integral sustainability and sustainable development, military conflicts and their consequences, family, children and youth, democracy and good government, local development and local history, migrations, inter-human differences, life and work of Ivo Pilar, etc. A great number of projects had a strategic national character, and



Prof. dr. sc. Šakić govori na Međunarodnom znanstvenom simpoziju *dr. Ivo Pilar i ideja ujedinjene Europe*, Beč 12. ožujka 2010. / Professor Šakić speaking at the International conference *Dr. Ivo Pilar and the idea of a united Europe*, Vienna, 12 March 2010.



indeed, we should mention the continued and longtime participation in the international projects including the EU where we now have two projects.

**The Voice of NUL: Do you have any plans to extend the research into humanities, specifically to literature. Can you inform us on these plans and projects?**

As I mentioned, the Institute has a number of scholars from humanities, some of whom are heading projects. History, socio-cultural anthropology and religion projects have predominated so far, while literature is included in the project entitled "Relationship – Culture: Society in Croatian Modernization" led by Ivan Rogić.

**The Voice of NUL: Apart from research projects, the Ivo Pilar Institute is an important publisher of scientific publications. In addition to the journal *Društvena istraživanja*, the Institute publishes collections of papers from international conferences and symposiums and other publications. Tell us a few words on the publishing activities and plans?**

Apart from the journal *Društvena istraživanja*, (*Social Research*) we recently started publishing the journal *Pilar* for social and humanities studies which together with *Društvena istraživanja* covers the whole spectrum of subjects that we research. Our goal is to develop this journal to the same level. Regarding our other publications in addition to *Collections*, *Studies*, we are publishing special editions which come out from our regional and functional centers. Moreover, there are more and more titles that we publish in cooperation with other publishers.

It should be mentioned that the Institute's publishing activity is greatly burdened by the lack of financial resources which do not allow us to publish valuable empirical works in appropriate time and as we are not a for-profit organization, we cannot change this situation ourselves. Therefore, our future publishing plans depend to a large extent on the general conditions of the publishing industry itself, and on the level of financial support of scientific publishing coming from the relevant state institutions.

**The Voice of NUL: In February of this year, on the occasion of the National and University Library Day, you and Professor Tihomil Maštrović, Director General of the National and University Library, signed an Agreement on Cooperation between these institutions. Can you tell us something about this Agreement and future plans of cooperation between these two institutions?**

The National and University Library has become in the last few years a genuine, national and university informational and educational center comparable to the same institutions in the most developed Western countries. It is necessary that this process, along with the competent

state agencies, be supported by the whole cultural and scientific community since the National and University Library is an institution of national and public interest, which will be more and more evident in the coming Western integration processes. When Professor Maštrović and I signed the Agreement, I emphasized the importance of press digitalization and its online availability for the public and scholars, comparing it in importance to building roads in Croatia as a geopolitical strategy.

This Agreement refers to the cooperation in the primary NUL activity, which is the collection and use of valuable scientific publications, and also to life-long education, the organization of joint public gatherings, etc. The first Agreement that we signed relates to the storage of dr. Ivo Pilar's written legacy at the National and University Library which was given to the Institute by Ivo Pilar's family. I hope that this collection will also be digitalized and become available to the Croatian and international scientific public. Our institutions will also cooperate in the creation of the *Lexicon of Croatian Emigrants and Minorities*, and in other joint research projects.

**The Voice of NUL: And finally, your expectations and plans for the future?**

As I stated, our plans are related to the national strategy of science development and to the European priorities in social sciences and humanities, though, our high expectations are based on our past record of achievements as a public institute in Croatia and in its European dimension. This point will be further elaborated in my final words at the end.

There are two perspectives facing Croatia which could decisively determine its cultural and scientific status in the future. One has its origin in the inherited totalitarian tradition with recognized protagonists, while the other one aspires to the harmonization of the Croatian developmental matrix with the European integration processes. The problem is also that some European centers are exerting pressure to make a step backward in Croatia in order to advance in Europe which encourages those actors bearing totalitarian tendencies. We, as scientists, especially those in social and humanistic fields, have a duty to understand, to predict and to explain these processes and base our suggestions for strategic development on them. On the other hand, politicians have a duty to integrate knowledge acquired through our research into the processes which will determine Croatia's future in the European and global context. I see the Pilar Institute and its achievements as part of these processes and one of the foundations for the planning of the Croatia's future.