



## AN ANNIVERSARY INTERVIEW

### *Professor Vlado Šakić, PhD, Director of the Ivo Pilar Institute*

- *This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences' work. It was founded in the days of the Croatian War of Independence, in a time of a fight for survival, when questions of science, culture and art take a back seat. Why was it then that the idea of a new scientific institution in the social sciences was brought forward?*

The idea to start such a scientific institution was developed by a group of intellectuals even before the establishment of the Croatian state and the first democratic election, but within the structures of the former country it was not something that could be made possible. All those supporting the idea of founding an institute will know who they are, I don't want to name any names, lest I forget someone unintentionally. Either way, the idea was there, and very soon after the election, across the whole of Croatia and especially within the University of Zagreb, a series of proposals aiming to establish new approaches to science and higher education was introduced. Gradually, a network of scholars from the social sciences and the humanities prepared for reform initiatives. During numerous gatherings and mutual interactions, discussions were held from various perspectives and viewpoints of scientific disciplines on the relevant aspects of the current status in the area of social sciences and humanities and ideas of how to enforce the necessary changes were brought up.

Allow me to try to succinctly diagnose the situation at the time: firstly, the scientific and higher-education systems in the social sciences and the humanities were burdened due to the two ideological sets of belief – the Yugoslavian and real-socialist; secondly, there was a selective amount or complete lack of research of the main components and processes in Croatian society and thirdly and maybe most importantly, there was frequent use of inappropriate scientific research methodology. In addition to the grounds of such a diagnosis, I would also add the results of an analysis I had published in June of 1999 in the weekly *Danas* (Today). I had analysed the summaries of 1200 doctoral theses in Croatia

between 1970 and 1990 in eight scientific disciplines: law, economy, history, political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy and pedagogy. I wanted to see which of the following areas each thesis covered: the Yugoslavian state (organisation, functioning), the real-socialist paradigm (self-government, common property, common work, etc.), the Marxist paradigm or other topics. It turned out that 60 percent of the topics referred to the Yugoslavian, real-socialist or Marxist paradigm, around 20 percent to topics obviously never to be researched again and only 20 percent of the topics had some sort of theoretical and/or empirical value. Additionally, the conclusions of the dissertations dealing with the Yugoslavian, real-socialist and Marxist paradigms were mostly affirmative, with no scientific criticism.

This is the context in which during 1990 and 1991, new higher education, scientific and publishing institutions were founded, among them the Institute of Applied Social Research, which is what the Pilar Institute was originally called. It was founded on 26 November 1991, within the framework of the University of Zagreb. The decision was signed by the then president of the Senate, late professor Jure Radić, PhD, and it was signed into the Register of Scientific Organisations under that name on December 23, under registration number 194. I personally attended the signing as president of the Founding Committee. The first director of the Institute, as acting president, was professor Ivan Rogić, PhD, and I was named president of the Governing Board.

- *But the original name of the Institute, Institute of Applied Social Research, can't have been random. Where did the applicability of research come into play, what projects were conducted?*

The founding group chose that name in order to point out how important it was not only to research, but also to apply the new insights and understandings. This was in concord with the spirit of the times and the formerly mentioned grounds on which we built the foundation of the Institute. The best example of the dimension of the possibility of application are probably the titles of the first thirteen projects approved by the then Ministry of Science and Education. To name them: *Zloupotreba sredstava ovisnosti u Hrvatskoj* (Substance Abuse in the Republic of Croatia), *Iseljništvo kao čimbenik sveukupnog razvoja Hrvatske* (Emigration as a Factor in the Total Development of Croatia), *Istarski Hrvati: između postignutog identiteta i usporene integracije* (Istrian Croats: Between the Accomplished Identity and Slow Integration), *Povijesni sklop i povijesni slom komunizma – problem naslijeđa i uspostava demokratskog društva* (Historical Context and Historical Downfall of Communism – the Inheritance Problem and the Establishment of a Democratic Society), *Djeca u ratu* (Children in War), *Rat protiv Hrvatske: akteri, ratni zločini, ratno izbjeglištvo i žrtve* (War Against Croats: Actors, War Crimes, War Refugees and Victims), *Starenje i tehnologija* (Aging and Technology), *Demokratske promjene i kulturni razvoj* (Democratic Changes and Cultural Development), *Istraživanje javnoga mnijenja o društvenim i političkim procesima u Hrvatskoj* (Survey of Public Opinion on the Social and Political changes in Croatia), *Demografski razvoj i populacijska politika Hrvatske* (Demographic Development and Population Policy of Croatia), *Katolička socijalna doktrina i suvremeni svijet* (The Catholic Social Doctrine and the Modern World), *Socioreligijska i religiozna karta Hrvatske* (The Socioreligious and Religious Map of Croatia), *Procesi urbane transformacije u području Jadrana* (Urban Transformation Processes in the Adriatic Area).

Additionally, the Institute conducted a series of other projects in the period between 1992 and 1994, with the main topics being those related to war and researching public

opinion, areas in which we were immediately acknowledged as an important scientific centre in the social sciences and humanities: *Ratni sukobi u Hrvatskoj — istraživanje javnog mnijenja* (War Conflicts in Croatia – Public Opinion Research); *Položaj izbjeglica i prognanika — istraživanje javnog mnijenja* (The Position of Refugees and Displaced Persons – Public Opinion Research); *Javno mnijenje Hrvatske — Stavovi o mirovnoj akciji UN* (Public Opinion in Croatia – Attitudes on the UN’s Peacekeeping Action); *Stavovi o hrvatskoj vlasti, strankama i političkim djelatnicima* (Attitudes on Croatian Government, Political Parties and Political Workers); *Stavovi o budućnosti, Javno mnijenje Hrvatske – izbori 1992.* (Attitudes Towards the Future, a Public Opinion Research – the 1992 Election); *Istraživanje mnijenja prognanika* (Research on Opinions of Displaced Persons); *Ciljevi urbane preobrazbe Zagreba, Javno mnijenje Hrvatske — županijski lokalni izbori 1993.* (Aims of the Urban Transformation of Zagreb; Public Opinion in Croatia – the 1992 County Local Election); *Javno mnijenje Hrvatske — Stavovi o hrvatskoj vlasti, strankama i političkim djelatnicima 1993.* (Public Opinion in Croatia – Attitudes on Croatian Government; Political Parties and Political Workers in 1993); *Sažeta analiza dostupnih dosjea poslijeratnih političkih zatvorenika na teritoriju RH* (A Comprehensive Analysis of Available Files of Post War Political Prisoners on the Territory of the Republic of Croatia); *Prijedlog novog modela zatvorskog sustava RH u kontekstu međunarodnih standarda ljudskih prava zatvorenika* (Proposal for a New Prison System in the RC in the Context of International Standards of Human Rights of Prisoners); *Socijalna reintegracija hrvatskih vojnika i njihovih obitelji* (Social Reintegration of Croatian Soldiers and Their Families)...

To get back to your question about the applicability of results... The findings and guidelines of most of our projects were very quickly applied and used in different levels of public practice and in different sectors. That’s how we, on a national level, enabled a wider perspective for the social sciences, which were previously thought of as mainly theoretical in character with meagre options of practical application. I would definitely add that, from the beginning, we have been basing our research on a rigorous scientific methodology which enabled us to compare results with those observed in other countries. While back then we dealt mainly with local themes, from the beginning we created preconditions for an international exchange of information, which was also one of the main founding thoughts. On how seriously we approached that mission attest the first editions of the *Društvena istraživanja* (Social Research) magazine.

- *In 1993, the Institute became a public institute of the Republic of Croatia, and in 1997 changed its name to Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences. Was the change of the status and the name a reflection of some movement in the scientific orientation and the Institute’s mission?*

In 1993, the Act on Scientific Activity was passed, and according to this act all scientific institutes became public institutes of the Republic of Croatia, under the supervision of the then Ministry of Science. In all institutes, the Minister named temporary Governing Boards and acting directors and in a period of three months all institutes were to align their statutes with the new status.

The Pilar Institute, although at the time having been in function for only two years, was already known for its scientific work and research results which were interesting and useful not only to the academic audience, but the wider interested public as well. I have before me the 1993 business report, and I must admit that even today I am astonished by the enthusiasm with which the Institute, with a small number of employees and in the harsh

days of the Croatian War of Independence, conducted its thoughts and assignments. However, that year brought some unexpected decisions and changes as well.

At the time, the Institute worked on thirteen projects accepted by the Ministry of Science, and three of the projects were presented in thematic blocks in *Društvena istraživanja*. A symposium was planned for the end of year on the topic of social reintegration of war-affected groups on which the results of the projects War Against Croatia, Children in War and Social Reintegration of Croatian Soldiers would be presented. Particular progress in comparison with the previous report was made in the scientific-market orientation of the Institute, with several new projects created and numerous scientific favours done.

The *Društvena istraživanja* magazine, while under-financed, was published regularly, and community attention was captured by thematic issues on the war against Croatia and about Istria. That year saw nineteen lectures by eminent lecturers, Croatian and world scholars, mostly on the problems Croatian society was facing, in the framework of a regular forum of the Institute which caused great interest and significantly contributed to its affirmation and recognisability.

That year, the international activity of the Institute hit its stride as well. The report makes note of, for instance, participation in COST projects, participation of young researchers in international activities such as summer schools or workshops, contacts with foreign scholars, uniting with UNESCO, and within this, the Committee for International Cooperation was created in the Institute as well.

On the basis of those accomplishments, there was a certain expectation that the director and the Board would be named in the same composition, so we were all surprised when on 30 December, we received three decisions by the then Minister by fax. The first one referred to the naming of a temporary Governing Board, the second to the dismissal of the Director, and the third to naming the new director. Such a procedure caused a revolt of the employees who gathered on New Year's Eve at the Institute and sent a letter to the Minister with the request to justify the naming of completely "new" people in the administrative bodies of the Institute.

However, the Minister spent the entire following year refusing to talk to the dissatisfied scholars of the Institute, the temporary Governing Board created a new statute, the Research Council accepted a certain number of external associates. Such a majority made decisions unsupported by scholars employed on a permanent basis who, through their work, gained reputation and results for the Institute in the short time since its founding. The crisis ended when two years later, at the end of 1995, the new Minister of Science, following the continued scientific strike, reappointed the real scientific actors of the growth and development of the Institute and creators of the founding ideas.

- *But the Institute crisis was actually a chance for some steps forward...*

The first symbolic step in that process, in comparison to the changes at the programme, organization and professional levels made in order to get us back to point zero in a certain sense, was the redesign of the name, company and logo of the Institute. That change was the starting point of a long-term building of integrative tendencies in the Institute.

Luckily the scientific traces and motivation of the scholars were established enough that the Institute was able to continue its development based on them. A new impetus was provided by a programme of continuous-research under the title "Social Structure and Social Integration", approved by the competent ministry in the framework of which thirteen

projects were turned in. The names of these projects show that the Institute continued its work in the frame of the paradigm it was founded on, which was usually shown by two parables: *Croatian society is an unexplored society* and *Through research to facts*. I'd like to name those projects: *Istraživanje ugroženih društvenih skupina* (Research of Endangered Social Groups), *Socijalizacija djece i mladeži* (Socialization of Children and Youth), *Kvaliteta obitelji* (Quality of Family), *Integracija domovinske i iseljene Hrvatske* (Integration of Homeland and Uprooted Croatia), *Hrvatski iseljenici i suradnja s domovinom* (Croatian Immigrants and Cooperation with the Homeland), *Društveno vrednovanje znanosti i tehnologije* (Social Evaluation of Science and Technology), *Postkomunizam i multikulturalizam* (Post-Communism and Multiculturalism), *Religijske zajednice u Hrvatskoj i njihova uloga u integracijskim procesima* (Religious Communities in Croatia and Their Role in Processes of Integration), *Istraživanje javnog mnijenja i medija javnog komuniciranja* (Public Opinion and Public Communication Media Research), *Razvojne i psihosocijalne posljedice privatizacije* (Developmental and Psychosocial Consequences of Privatization), *Sustavno oživljavanje hrvatskih periferija* (A Systematic Revitalization of the Croatian Periphery), *Interakcijski pristup strukturi patoloških fenomena* (An Interactive Approach to the Structure of Pathological Phenomena) and *Hrvati u okolnim zemljama* (Croats in Surrounding Countries).

Aside from a return to scientific-research activities, we continued working with the University Department for Croatian Studies and noticeably influenced the broadening of study programmes. I want to mention that we are solely responsible for creating the sociology and psychology study programmes and, as associates, started holding classes in 1997/1998. Such a practice of parallel scientific research and educational activity has continued up to the present day.

In 1997, we changed the Institute's name to Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences. With the expression "social sciences" we encapsulated the expansion of activities in comparison to "applied social research". I've mentioned that the idea was brought up in 1996 when we normalized our activities following the strong traction and an established public reputation. This was the time when Croatia reintegrated occupied territories and when the space for a thematic expansion of research on a national level was opened, and thanks to a significant increase in the number and competency development of scholars and junior researchers in comparison to the initial structures, conditions for a more significant part in different way of international activity were achieved – taking part in international scientific projects, the organization and involvement in international scientific conferences and networking into other forms of international information exchange. The purpose of the name change was to present our founding ideas and orientations, as well as previous achievements in that way, and also for us to become the central scientific institution in the socio-humanistic area. Additionally, this opened up the option of expanding the name with the addition of "humanities" as even then, a larger number of scholars from the humanities area were hired in the Institute.

- *The name of Dr Ivo Pilar was also added to the Institute's name.*

I remember that, when talking about the name for the Institute, the Ruđer Bošković Institute was brought up quite a lot... Even though there is no mention of the areas it covers in its name, because of the scientist's name, everyone understands both the symbolic significance and the mission of the institution. When the suggestion to name the Institute after Ivo Pilar was brought up it was accepted by consensus, as the founding ideas and future tasks of the

Institute were clearly expressed in it. It is a well-known fact that Dr Pilar studied in Zagreb, Vienna and Paris and left behind a large and expansive scientific and journalistic body of work from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1933, when he died. His books and works encompass a series of scientific disciplines – geopolitics, sociology, history, political science, philosophy, law, psychology. In addition to that, he had a law firm in Tuzla for twelve years and was politically active in the period preceding the First World War. It was scientific erudition and foresight that enabled him to achieve a Europe-wide reputation during his lifetime. He was most interested in historical, geopolitical and sociological analyses and predictions of the possible consequences Croatia would encounter were it to become a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes after the First World War. Since his predictions started becoming true soon after the Kingdom was created, and he continued his work in the same vein, he was persecuted even in Zagreb, where he died under suspicious circumstances. His texts were omitted even in the SFR Yugoslavia, until the beginning of the 90s, when Croatia was forced to defend its independence and democracy from aggression – unfortunately, it turned out Pilar's predictions were correct.

Ivo Pilar symbolizes the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research alignment of the Institute in the social sciences and humanities, a return to the Western-European geopolitical and democratic roots and associations as well as scientific excellence. It should be especially emphasized that the founding idea of deviation from the two ideological beliefs – the Yugoslavian and the real-socialist one – is on par with his predictions on what entering Yugoslavia would mean for Croatia. Finally, at the time we hoped that in due time our Institute, much like the Ruđer Bošković, would become recognizable by its shortened name, the Ivo Pilar, by which we are known to the public today.

- *How do you see the place and role of the Institute in the context of related social institutions in the country, both then and now?*

We consider all Croatian institutes related in a way, not only those in the area of social sciences and humanities, because we all function under the same rules and are financed from the same or similar sources. The significance of the Pilar Institute is however in its organisational structure, thematic diversity and interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. The Institute employs scholars from fourteen scientific fields and three areas, who work in seven regional centres and the head office in Zagreb. The scientific projects in such an environment are necessarily multidisciplinary, and the work on them is done in groups. We are intentionally not divided into departments in terms of organization – we wanted to avoid limiting ourselves to specific professions or thematic areas. Our research teams are formed according to project needs, not in the framework of formerly established structures. In this way, we achieve a wide range of activity and can follow through with projects which are not necessarily in the immediate scientific interest of individual researchers.

We also cooperate with other institutes, mostly those in the social sciences and humanities, and hire external associates for tasks requiring expert knowledge, and our researchers are free to collaborate on other institutes' projects. I would say that we are very open to collaboration; we have agreements with the majority of Croatian and several world universities and a series of local and international organisations.

- *The number of scholars, from the initial 33, has increased to almost 100. Some work in the Institute's regional centres. Why were these regional centres established?*

Regional centres, which are one of the key founding principles upon which the Institute was established, were opened within the first two years in Split, Pula and Osijek, while the other four centres, those in Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Gospić and Varaždin, were opened in 2006, 2007 and 2011 respectively. The Institute's founding and strategical documents contain the information about the reasons and the purpose for establishing regional centres. These reasons are related, first of all, to decentralizing scientific potentialities which have been systematically concentrated in Zagreb throughout the years. Some other reasons include: developing a faster and more effective use of the Institute's scientific accomplishments and potentialities in particular Croatian regions; developing cooperation and scientific networks with higher-education and cultural institutions in regions' centres; carrying out local and regional projects; setting up scientific and other types of cooperation and exchange in border areas with neighbouring countries' similar institutions, as well as with the members of Croatian minority groups; and lastly, developing scientific potentialities capable of independent scientific activity.

Today, regional centres employ around a third of the Institute's scholars. Considering their competences and achievements, the networks they have developed in local environments and in the Institute's scientific activities, it is hard to imagine or plan the future of the Institute without them. Alongside carrying out strategical ideas, scholars in regional centres have a special task of sensitizing local environments to scientific research and its role in planning sustainable development, and they also have the task of analysing local identities. We shouldn't disregard the fact that by staying in their local environments, these scholars can, through their own scientific development, show young people who think about leaving that one can do scientific work and live off that work in a home environment

Many accomplishments of our employees in regional centres are on the path of implementing the mentioned ideas and strategical principles. Year after year, the visibility of these accomplishments grew, contributing to the reputation of the entire Institute. In certain places, e.g. in Rijeka, Senj, Požega, Sisak, Ogulin and Vis, they have also brought about ideas of establishing such centres. Due to all of the mentioned reasons, I maintain that we should seriously think about the strategy for regional centres' further development and open a discussion on this topic. Despite there being ambitions for this kind of decentralization, I am afraid that such a thing will be difficult to achieve without a better understanding of the national dimension and without funding from the competent ministry, i.e. only via partnership with local communities.

- *How did the increase in the number of employees impact the decision-making and work coordination within the Institute?*

Projects represent the scientific foundations on which the Institute has been built since day one. Therefore, the planning, implementation and coordination of these projects make up the basis from which all other scientific infrastructure develops. After the Institute's establishment, it was crucial to employ scholars and junior researchers and to enable their scientific development. The thirteen original projects that I mentioned included ten scholars with doctorates, six who had master's degrees and nine who were junior researchers. The original scientific infrastructure developed with the increase in the number of scientific projects. In this way, the founding ideas related to the known and repeated premise about

how Croatian society is unexplored, as well as to the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary orientation in research, were implemented in practice.

In the context of the new recruitment, we should also mention another reason, apart from the increased number of projects, why the Institute holds an important position at the national level. This refers to the fact that the majority of new employees have always been junior researchers who developed professionally via taking part in all of the Institute's activities and in this way contributed to its development, while at the same time, they were enrolled in doctoral programmes and acquired their PhDs. Junior researchers have, from the Institute's establishment to this day, successfully defended 80 PhDs. A few years ago, data showing the ratio between the number of successful PhD defences and the number of students enrolled in PhD programmes in Croatia were published. At the national level, the share of successful defences was 45 per cent, while in the Institute it was as high as 93 per cent. I hold that credit for this success should be given to the atmosphere which prevails in the Institute, to professionalism and to the sense of cooperation which clearly creates a stimulating environment for our young colleagues.

Apart from working on projects approved by the competent ministry, we have simultaneously carried out or collaborated on the so-called projects for third-party clients. However, the number of these projects has unfortunately been affected by the economic situation in the country. Clients who commissioned such projects were usually content with how the projects were executed and with the results they produced, but further deals were not made since, despite being interested, they simply lacked the money to keep on funding further projects. Business reports in the last several years best represent how the general economic situation impacted the number of commissioned projects.

In order to enter the international research environment and carry out international projects, it was necessary to further develop scholars' and junior researchers' competences, so this group of projects started to grow in the second phase of development, i.e. in the late nineties. These projects have soon reached the level of continuous-research projects in terms of quality and number, which contributed to the reputation of the Institute at the global level.

As projects continued to grow in number, the demand for new junior researchers and scholars also grew. Moreover, the increase in the number of regional centres also required new recruiting. Therefore, the Institute's history can be divided into several phases in which we had to adjust work management and coordination to the new circumstances. Nonetheless, the basic form of coordination has remained unchanged: the coordination of all scientific projects is carried out by the Research Council, while projects for third-party clients are coordinated by the director in collaboration with the project leaders. The Governing Board deals with the entire infrastructure related to executing projects, as well as to presenting and publishing the results. Normal working conditions have always been supported by the cooperation between the Institute's Governing Board and the Research Council, as well as a friendly atmosphere that has always been present.

- *Apart from research whose findings are owned by the client, all other research is carried out for public needs – ranging from those who decide on sector policies to the wider public. Considering a commendable amount of such research, do you think that its results have contributed to an informed decision-making and progress in certain areas?*



In contrast to projects for third-party clients that you mentioned, these projects are financed by the Ministry and the Croatian Science Foundation, and there are also international projects. The projects funded by the Ministry and the Foundation have, until now, had academic purposes – the results have been published in scientific publications, they have been used as academic literature and rarely in practice. I would say that this is not the fault of this or that institute. It is rather a consequence of the low status science has in our society, not of a small potentiality to implement the results of projects. The fact that science has a low status is also evident in the small investment in science – Croatia takes the bottom position among the EU Member States in this respect. What is more, governing structures often ignore, or they don't understand or have an eye for the practical dimension and the possible benefits scientific research can have for a community's social, economic and all-encompassing development.

International projects are somewhat different. Strategies which contract-award procedures for projects are based on commonly assume in which public policy at the EU level the results will be used. In this way, the results of international projects we collaborated on were primarily used, in contrast to the majority of domestic projects, in developing and adopting certain public policies. These projects covered subjects such as quality of life, addictive-substance abuse, etc.

In regards to projects for third-party clients, their findings have also frequently been used beyond the client's needs. Among them, strategic projects at the national level that influenced or were supposed to influence the shaping of public policies stand out. For instance: *HNOS, hrvatski nacionalni obrazovni standard – vrednovanje* (Croatian National Educational Standard – An Assessment); *Modeli obveznog srednjoškolskog programa* (Models of Compulsory Secondary-school Program), and *Zdravstveni odgoj u osnovnim školama* (Health Education in Primary Schools), which were carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Education. There is also the project *Turistički cvijet – kvaliteta za Hrvatsku* (The Tourism Flower – Quality for Croatia), which has been continuously run in collaboration with the Croatian Chamber of Economy since 2006; the project *Udio nacionalnih manjina u javnom sektoru* (The Share of National Minorities in the Croatian Public Sector), carried out in 2012 in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration; the project *Hrvatska vojska – hrvatsko društvo* (Croatian Military – Croatian Society), carried out between 2007 and 2010 in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence; *Domovinski rat – strukture sjećanja* (Croatian War of Independence – Remembrance Structures), carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Croatian Veterans; *Leksikon hrvatskog iseljništva i manjina* (Lexicon of Croatian Emigration and Minorities), carried out in collaboration with the Croatian Heritage Foundation; *Pilarov barometar hrvatskog društva* (Pilar's Barometer of Croatian Society), *Istraživanje kvalitete života u Hrvatskoj* (Trends in Quality of Life in Croatia), etc.

- *One sometimes hears about how institutes of social sciences and humanities differ in terms of ideological worldviews. Are such value judgements permitted in social sciences in general, particularly in institutions related to the Institute?*

Before I answer this question, let me just give a short theoretical introduction. It is a well-known fact that the principle of objective validity in social sciences harks back to positivism, when most social sciences started to become separate from philosophy and develop their own research areas, scientific methodology and theories. Weber laid the principle of

objective validity as a key principle in sociology, based on which scholars attempted to study and measure social facts like those in natural sciences. In other words, pursuant to the principle of objective validity, social sciences, in following the example of natural sciences, should not be influenced by the researcher's political affiliation or worldviews. Whether this can be realized in practice has been debated ever since, most often within the philosophy of science. The position claiming that an ideal research objectivity is not possible even in natural sciences prevails, and this is supported by Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy. Nowadays, a position related to Karl Popper's ideas prevails: a position which maintains that science is a continuous process of verifying scientific theories with the aim of confirming, refuting or further explaining them.

Catchphrases such as "through research to facts", "a return to an objective approach", which we tend to use in order to describe the principles upon which the Institute bases its work, fit in the mentioned theoretical context, meaning that they derive from it. The founders based the Institute's development on the universally-accepted principles and dilemmas on which social sciences developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and chose "Croatian society in a European and global context" as the main area of research. This was also the general idea in employing scholars and junior researchers, which means that their scientific competences were the sole criterion. So, the Institute was established on the basis of respect for scientific research by scholars of different worldviews and political affiliation, but on the same scientific foundations.

Therefore, the Institute's orientation in terms of worldviews, as well as its comparability with other scientific institutions, can only be discussed with regard to checking the scientific methods and theories which the Institute's scholars used in their research and result interpretation, and certainly not with regard to their political affiliation and worldviews. Nevertheless, I wish to point out that the difference in worldviews is precisely the reason behind the positive atmosphere in the Institute and the relations which rest on respect and tolerance, wherein lies the Institute's well-known distinguished value.

- *Among the wide range of covered research areas in the last twenty years, which particular topics would you single out? Which projects stand out in terms of their ambition, scope, quality or social impact?*

The fact that in the last five years we have completed about 300 scientific projects, 25% of which which were international, does not make my choice any easier according to the criteria you mentioned. It will be easier to single out groups of projects covered by a particular subject of research. I will enumerate them according to how often they have been represented since the Institute's establishment, instead of set criteria. They are as follows: research on the causes and effects of the war against Croatia, research on public opinion in Croatia, research on rural and urban environments and sustainable development, research on quality of life and well-being, research related to education, research on Croatian emigration and minorities, research on young Croatians, research on substance abuse and juvenile delinquency, population research, research on individual differences, research on cultural consumption, research on social attitudes and identities, entrepreneurship, research on the military and security. Each thematic frame consists of at least one, but more often than not of more projects which can be considered among the best in Croatia in terms of their quality and social impact. What is more, a growing number of these project have gained high visibility also in the European context.

- *The Institute has been developing cooperation with a range of universities, from the University of Split, the Catholic University of Croatia to institutions outside Croatia, for instance the University of Georgia (USA) or the University of Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Could you say something more about this kind of cooperation?*

I would add the universities of Osijek and Dubrovnik, with which we have signed a partnership agreement, as well as the University of Silesia in Katowice (Poland) with which a partnership agreement is pending. Our experience of cooperating with universities in Croatia and abroad are diverse. In Croatia, we have developed cooperation mostly in terms of creating study programmes at different levels and in terms of lecturing. To reiterate, developing our scholars' and junior researchers' scientific-research competences parallel to their teaching competences has been one of the Institute's founding goals since the very beginning. At first, we pursued this goal at the University of Zagreb, within which the Institute was founded. It is a well-known fact that the Institute is a co-founder of the University Department for Croatian Studies, where today many of our scholars and junior researchers work as lecturers. We had a similar role as part of our cooperation with the Catholic University of Croatia: two of our scholars were members of the founding committee and the Institute has drawn up several proposals for undergraduate and graduate study programmes. Apart from that, many of our scholars work there as lecturers, while several permanently left the Institute for a job at the University.

We gradually started cooperating with other universities in Croatia, with the high point of such cooperation being two proposals for doctoral study programmes at the universities of Osijek and Split in which first students ought to be enrolled next year.

In terms of international cooperation, special emphasis needs to be put on a study-abroad programme which we have been offering to students from the University of Georgia since 2008. Within this programme, students acquaint themselves with Croatia's, and some of Bosnia's cultural heritage and tourist attractions. A special significance of this cooperation lies in the fact that the programme is run by the Institute's scholars and junior researchers, and this is probably the reason behind the programme's popularity at the mentioned American university. The biggest achievement of our cooperation with the University of Mostar is the co-publishing of the magazine *Mostariensia* and the organisation of several joint conferences. We are currently holding talks about furthering the scope of cooperation, i.e. about launching joint projects and developing study programmes.

- *The institute has a long-standing experience of running and collaborating on international projects. Has something changed in this respect upon Croatia's accession to the European Union?*

First of all, I would like to point out that the Institute supported the negotiations with the EU and Croatia's accession to the Union in many different ways. Three events need to be singled out. The first event is a big international conference *Annales Pilar 2007*, which took place in Vukovar under the title "Significance of the EU for Croatia – Significance of Croatia for the EU". Next is the series of seven forums titled "Talking Europe" in 2010 and 2011, where respectable German and Croatian scholars and intellectuals discussed various social and political aspects and foundations of the EU. The third is a survey on the share of national minorities' members in public enterprises in the Republic of Croatia, commissioned for negotiation purposes. To celebrate Croatia's accession to the EU, I too was asked by the Croatian Diplomatic Club – alongside four renowned speakers, among whom was the

current Croatian PM – to hold a short lecture titled “Croatian Society in the European Union” to the representatives of Croatian authorities, a group of diplomats and renowned public figures and academics.

When Croatia entered the EU, the Institute was already a well-established scientific institution in the European context. When I introduced the Institute at the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy in Vienna to numerous Austrian scholars, I joked about how the Pilar Institute had already entered the European Union and how we were currently helping Croatia in joining us. In this wider context, it was not hard to adjust to new circumstances. What is more, new opportunities to take part in most prestigious scientific programmes opened up, which we managed to use, such as the *FP7* and *HORIZON 2020* programmes. In fact, you could say that EU accession added new quality to the Institute’s already established reputation and contributed in truly making it, with the aforementioned accomplishments in mind, the central scientific institution in the area of social sciences in Croatia.

- *A point of a continuous interest is Vukovar, a place and a symbol of suffering and heroic defence in the Croatian War of Independence – it is a topic to which the Institute dedicated a range of public conferences, as well as a lot of research and publications...*

I will again start off with a bit of theory. I have mentioned the term “the spirit of the time” several times because its philosophical origin is deeply rooted in social sciences and humanities. It is a well-known fact that this term was coined within classical German philosophy, and it is also known in science as *Zeitgeist*, and it has been used in all areas of human activity. We use it in science so that we could more objectively appraise not only all scientific achievements, but also misconceptions, i.e. so that we could, with regard to “the spirit of the time”, evaluate positive achievements in contrast to misconceptions. For example, instead of being considered as one of the greatest minds of the Western civilization, today Aristotle would be made fun of for his claim that the heart is the centre of the soul without understanding “the spirit of the time”. Bearing this in mind, if we don’t take “the spirit of the time” into consideration, it is hard to understand the universal dimension to Vukovar in 1991, a dimension that, without a doubt, belongs to this city.

In layman’s terms, Dr Ivo Pilar symbolizes the Institute’s scientific foundations, while Vukovar stands for its humanistic foundations. What they have in common are the national and universal dimensions. In Croats’ collective memory, Vukovar has a symbolic significance similar to that of Thermopylae for the Greeks. Masada for the Jews, or the Alamo for the Americans, while the symbiosis between the sacrifice and the heroism of its defenders and citizens, with regard to the spirit of the time, carries a universal dimension according to all moral and humanistic standards. Since the Institute was established when Vukovar was occupied and many of its refugees and former prisoners of Serbian concentration camps had settled in Zagreb, the Institute’s founders and the first group of scholars gathered many times to scientifically research the causes and effects of the war against Croatia. In time, these gatherings resulted in friendships which have lasted up until the present day. In such a scientific and humanistic environment, we organized numerous conferences, had many publications and encouraged research. After a peaceful reintegration and the return of Vukovar’s citizens, we decided that scientific conferences on various topics, but with the same subtitle – “Vukovar in 1991: 7,8,9, etc. Years Later” – would be organized. Apart from that, we wanted to establish a regional centre in Vukovar immediately after its peaceful

reintegration, but we succeeded in that only in 2006 due to various reasons. Since the centre's establishment, the aforementioned traditional scientific conference has been a part of the programme during the week when the city commemorates its victims. We have also received an official recognition from the city for our work there. This made the connection between Vukovar and the Institute symbolic on both sides. Bearing all this in mind, the decision to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Institute's establishment in Vukovar under the city's auspices seemed only logical.

- *I would like to suggest ending this overview of the past with a look at the future...*

I agree. I accepted the suggestion about doing and publishing an interview in which I would talk about the Institute's history since its establishment, as a part of the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, for several reasons. First of all, by answering in a colloquial manner to questions about various aspects of the Institute's development, I tried, as one of its founders and its director of many years, to connect all the pieces into an imagined whole. Also, in this subjective overview I wanted to mention and explain some important moments in the Institute's development which one cannot find in the official reports or documents about the institute; i.e. the moments which in particular periods or aspects attracted the public attention or were a hindrance to the Institute's continuous development. Lastly, I thought that in this way – through a more relaxed type of conversation – I could help everyone, particularly the Institute's employees, in finding answers to some question about the Institute's history which they personally found interesting or to clear up some doubts they might have had.

I have received multiple offers in my 25 years here to leave the Institute, but I have rejected them all without a second thought no matter how attractive they were. I decided to stand as a candidate for the Institute's director for the fifth time in a row because I enjoyed almost a unanimous support of the employees, and this has always felt like a moral obligation to me, more so than the realization that I would have to neglect my work as an author and a scholar. Apart from that, there have always been uncompleted projects or threats to the continuity of the Institute's development, which gave me a feeling of personal responsibility. And so, I have spent two thirds of my professional life in the Institute, because this has been my own choice and there is no other institution where I would rather work. I maintain that the future of the Institute, as well as the responsibility for its further development, lies primarily in the hands of those who, parallel to their own professional growth, helped develop the institute to where it stands today as an internationally renowned, central scientific institution in Croatia in the area of social sciences.

*Interview by: Mirjana Paić-Jurinić*