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**THE IVO PILAR INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

2025–2029

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences Development Strategy 2025–2029 (hereinafter: Strategy) is the fundamental strategic document of the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences (hereinafter: Institute). It outlines the Institute's mission, vision, circumstances, starting points, strategic goals, research priorities and topics, tasks and implementation indicators, funding methods, publishing activities, organisational adjustments and steps for implementing the Strategy in the specified period.

The Strategy relies on the objectives, priorities and provisions of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 (hereinafter: NRS 2030) (Official Gazette No. 13/21), the National education system development plan for the period until 2027 (Official Gazette No. 33/23), the Smart Specialisation Strategy until 2029 (from December 13, 2023), the Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act (Official Gazette No. 119/22), the Regulation on Program Funding for Public Higher Education Institutions and Public Scientific Institutes in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette No. 78/23), the Program Agreement for the period of January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2027 concluded between the Institute and the Ministry of Science and Education (hereinafter: Program Agreement; class: 643-02/23-01/00016, ref. no.: 533-03-23-0017 dated December 28, 2023), as well as other regulations and national documents that condition and contribute to the execution of all Institute's activities. This means that during the strategic period of 2025–2029, the Institute will continue to develop and implement scientific research, scientific manifestation and scientific popularisation activities to study social and economic changes, cultural phenomena, and other important topics at the local, national, and international levels. To strengthen the Institute's social role as a hub that brings together and connects prominent scientists and research groups, promoting scientific excellence in the national, international, and academic context, the Strategy outlines the Institute's development goals, research priorities, and topics, highlighting the Institute's uniqueness in the social, humanities, and interdisciplinary scientific fields.

The Strategy will directly highlight the uniqueness of the Institute's network structure, with scientific research activities carried out in the Scientific Research Unit, at its headquarters in Zagreb, and in regional centres (Dubrovnik, Gospić, Osijek, Pula, Split, Varaždin, Vis, and Vukovar). This helps promote a more balanced regional and local development in Croatia that aligns with the fundamental development directions and strategic goals of the NRS 2030.

2. MISSION AND VISION

2.1. Mission

The Institute's mission is to conduct excellent scientific, developmental, professional, and other research in social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary studies to advance knowledge and benefit society. It also aims to provide specialised services in education, publishing, and consulting based on scientific research findings.

2.2. Vision

The Institute will continue to grow as a leading nationally and internationally recognised hub of scientific and professional excellence in social, humanities, and interdisciplinary sciences. In addition to its scientific contributions, its work has applications in local, regional, national, and European contexts.

3. CIRCUMSTANCES AND STARTING POINTS

3.1. Circumstances

The Institute's significant potential is based on the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity of its scientific research, the vast experience in carrying out even the most complex project tasks, the participation of young researchers in empirical and other studies, the systematic collecting, processing, and publishing empirical and other data and documentation, its long-standing and rich publishing activities, the participation of scientists in the higher education system, the creation and implementation of public policies, and the excellent collaboration between the Institute's scientists and researchers both domestically and internationally.

This allows for even more precise and more accurate scientific profiling and direction of the Institute toward research priorities and topics in accordance with the Croatian and European research framework. It also allows the Institute to achieve its own strategic goals in line with the NRS 2030 objectives and the Institute's programmatic funding.

In line with the existing legal framework for scientific research, the Strategy bolsters the Institute's dedication to scientific excellence and gives it additional research momentum. It continues to work on established research priorities while finding new research topics and scientific interests.

The Strategy directly aligns with the NSR 2030 to ensure that, as a public scientific institution, the Institute will help realise Croatia's 2030 vision – “By 2030, Croatia will be a competitive, innovative, and secure country with a recognisable identity and culture, a country of preserved resources, high-quality living conditions, and equal opportunities for all.”

In this regard, through its scientific research activities, the Institute helps Croatia achieve its key strategic development goals and directions by 2030: (1) Sustainable economy and society, (2) Strengthening crisis-resilience, (3) Green and digital transition, and (4) Balanced regional growth. Given the Institute's program-based funding for the period 2024–2027, the Strategy helps to accomplish three main strategic goals outlined in Article 4 of the Regulation on Program-based Financing of Public Higher Education Institutions and Public Scientific Institutes in the Republic of Croatia: improving scientific excellence, strengthening

cooperation with the economy, and fostering national and regional identity and culture while promoting social responsibility.

3.2. Starting points

With a particular emphasis on the previous strategy era (2020–2025), the Strategy considers the Institute's growth and scientific accomplishments from its founding to the present. It also considers identified weaknesses, objective obstacles, priority issues, and development needs discovered during the SWOT analysis in preparing the Proposal for the Institute's Development and Implementation Budget Component for 2024–2027. The Institute has recognised four significant priority challenges in this regard: (1) strengthening the Institute's leading role in international and national competitive projects and funding sources, (2) strengthening collaboration with the private and public sectors, (3) strengthening the Institute's regional centres, and (4) increasing the popularisation of science and raising the Institute's profile in the public eye.

With various strengths, the Institute can tackle high-priority issues and establish itself as a respected and pertinent scientific organisation in the academic and scientific world. In this context, the following are particularly noteworthy: productivity and ongoing scientific output, collaboration with academic and research institutions, international partnerships, proficiency in field and panel research, diversity of research interests and a multidisciplinary research approach, and substantial spatial infrastructure. However, there is a growing demand for public policies and expert knowledge based on gathering, analysing, and interpreting various data sets, particularly those obtained through interdisciplinary research on intricate social phenomena and issues. There is a growing need for civic society and public sector services as well as cooperation with the private sector.

Accordingly, the Institute has defined its strategic objectives, which will be achieved through selected development and implementation initiatives specified in the Program Agreement.

3.3. Development and scientific achievements

The Institute's growth throughout the most recent strategy period (2020–2025) was based on maintaining and improving the general strategic directions from earlier strategic eras.

The first strategic direction focused on conducting interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research into various changes and phenomena within the social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary scientific domains. This research was conducted using contemporary theoretical frameworks and methodology, and the results were published, transferred, and disseminated, including the popularisation of science.

The second strategic direction focused on building the scientific infrastructure necessary for the most complex international, national, and local research. This included training young researchers in science and professional service staff to oversee their execution, focusing on the growth of regional centres as the Institute's unique feature.

The third strategic direction focused on participating in developing and delivering undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate education and helping to create public policies at various levels (national, regional/district, and local).

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic and the earthquakes in Banovina and Zagreb significantly influenced the Institute's growth throughout the 2020–2025 timeframe. These factors, among others, significantly altered how scientific research is organised and how research findings might be presented to the public. The Institute's building at Trg Marka

Marulića 19 in Zagreb sustained such severe material damage that it had to be renovated for several months and operate in a significantly smaller temporary space for a year and a half.

Despite these adverse conditions, the Institute carried on uninterruptedly with its primary functions, accomplishing noteworthy achievements in science, publishing, and popularisation. Comparing these accomplishments with the previous strategy era's (2015–2019) scientific, publishing, and popularisation efforts is challenging because the figures in the table below pertain to 2020–2023 and the first half of 2024, while the data for the previous time are comprehensive.

The crucial point is that from 2020 to mid-2024, the overall number of scientific projects (including domestic and foreign) rose from 91 to 110, in contrast to the 2015–2019 period. Furthermore, the number of scientific articles published in journals with Web of Science and Scopus indexes increased significantly from 133 to 178 and 184 to 248, respectively. These are three key markers of scientific success and the realisation of the Institute's first strategic objective—*to increase national and international visibility and participation in the European research area*.

Despite the challenging working conditions, the total number of publications (authored books, edited books, book chapters, journal articles, and conference proceedings), the number of national and international conferences, roundtables, and forums, as well as book presentations and involvement in teaching at the undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels, confirm the Institute's continuous efforts to disseminate research findings, transfer scientific knowledge to the higher education system, and popularise science as the Institute's development strategic goals.

Table 1. Tabular overview of the Institute's achievements in the period 2020–2024.

CATEGORY OF ACHIEVEMENTS	NUMBER
National projects	89
International projects	21
Scientific centre of excellence	1 (SCE for school effectiveness and management)
COST actions	38
Published publications by category:	
Authored books	24
Edited books	17
Book chapters	158
Journal articles	336
Conference Proceedings	53
Total number of published publications	588
Scientific papers published in the Web of Science database's journals	178
Scientific papers published in Scopus database's journals	248
Domestic scientific conferences organised by the Institute	17
International scientific conferences organised by the Institute	31
Roundtables and forums organised by the Institute	45
Book presentations organised by the Institute	32
Publishing activities (proceedings, studies, and other publications)	42
Journals:	20 issues (4 per year), a total of 154 articles and 36 book reviews
Društvena istraživanja	
Pilar	5 issues (48 contributions)
Defended doctoral dissertations	12
Elections to the scientific profession	28
Number of staff involved in higher education teaching (by level) ¹	49 staff members (41 undergraduate; 34 graduate; 8 postgraduate)

¹ The data refers to the period 2020–2023.

4. STRATEGIC GOALS

Considering the Institute's social role and distinct position in the fields of social science, humanities, and interdisciplinary research, the Institute will, during the strategic period 2025–2029, work to raise the level of scientific quality on both national and international levels, engage in more systematic collaboration with economic entities, state and public institutions, as well as cultural and educational institutions. It will also seek to improve the transfer of scientific research findings, strengthen its network of regional centres, increase the popularisation of science, and improve its public visibility while promoting professionalism, creativity, innovation, and internationalisation. Additionally, it will enhance infrastructure and ongoing professional advancement of its scientific and expert staff, with particular emphasis on promoting attractiveness and competitiveness within the European research area. These strategic goals should be accomplished through specifically defined tasks that are both long-term in terms of the Institute's permanent research focus and medium-term in terms of putting particular actions and mechanisms for their execution into action.

The achievement of strategic objectives intended to address key and priority challenges will be monitored through a system of internal quality assurance and enhancement, task implementation evaluation, and performance indicator monitoring, as well as by evaluating the organisational structure's efficacy, which facilitates the achievement of the Institute's Development Strategy.

4.1. Enhancing scientific excellence and the Institute's integration into the European research area, along with other types of international cooperation

Tasks:

- to increase the number of project activities, especially those involving the coordination and involvement of project leaders funded by international and national competitive programs
- to increase scientific output in relevant databases, particularly SCOPUS and WOS, as well as A1 journals and internationally reviewed proceedings
- to increase the number of scientists and young researchers attending international scientific meetings, conferences and other events that include the internationalization of scientific findings
- to increase scientific collaboration with international partners through project proposals, co-authorship, and other means of sharing scientific knowledge and research experiences
- to increase international mobility and promote scientists' participation in international collaborative networks, as well as bilateral and multilateral scientific activities
- to encourage scientists, particularly young researchers, to apply for research scholarships so they can study in foreign scientific organisations
- to increase the number of international scientists working together on the Institute's scientific and professional projects and encourage them to undertake study visits at the Institute
- to expand cooperation with domestic and foreign scientific institutions and fortify the Institute's ability to apply for international funding sources in the role of coordinator

- to raise the criteria for advancement, establish motivating environments to draw in young scientists and support their career development
- to enhance young scientists' skills by helping them obtain postgraduate degrees or by supporting postdoctoral studies outside the Institute
- to increase the number of projects headed by scientists who are just starting their careers
- to strengthen professional services' capacity and capabilities to assist in the execution of scientific and professional projects through continuous education, networking, and cooperation in the preparation of project applications
- to promote transparency, accessibility, and the exchange of knowledge and scientific papers
- to increase the number of applications for interdisciplinary scientific projects
- to develop a framework for rewarding and promoting excellent scientific and project-related activities
- to actively participate in the work of scientific centres of excellence.

Implementation indicators:

- number of projects proposed and granted by international and national competitive funding sources
- number of scientific papers in relevant databases, especially SCOPUS and WoS, as well as in AI journals and internationally peer-reviewed proceedings
- number of projects proposed and granted in collaboration with international partners
- number of papers with international co-authorship
- number of scientific meetings and conferences attended
- number of job promotions
- number of research stays at foreign scientific organisations
- number of foreign scientists on study visits at the Institute
- number of defended dissertations
- number of scientists who have completed postdoctoral training outside the Institute
- number of scientists in the early stage of their careers acting as independent leaders of competitive scientific projects
- number of collaboration agreements with both domestic and international scientific institutions
- number of training courses that were attended and organised to enhance the potential of professional services
- number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the professional services' competencies
- number of project proposals developed in collaboration with professional services
- number of implemented measures and introduced tools to support open science policy
- number of open-access papers
- number of successful project proposals for interdisciplinary scientific projects
- number of scientists working at scientific centres of excellence
- number of scientific books.

4.2. Strengthening collaboration with economic entities, state and public bodies, as well as cultural and educational organisation

Tasks:

- to focus the Institute's scientific efforts on the private sector's and economy's needs or on advancing education and culture
- to maintain and strengthen more systematic cooperation with business entities as well as cultural and educational institutions
- to encourage the implementation of applied scientific initiatives, such as those involving collaboration with the private sector, the economy, or culture and education
- to participate in activities of national importance and make use of the Institute's resources to provide immediate social benefits
- to implement projects that are beneficial to the Republic of Croatia
- to improve cooperation with public sector organisations and government agencies
- to expand the Institute's involvement in tackling social challenges, particularly those of national importance
- to increase the number of open-market scientific research services, such as those for economic necessities and those for the advancement of culture and education
- to attract socially relevant commercial and scientific research and promote intellectual property management
- to strengthen the ability to deliver science-based services and to carry out actions that benefit society successfully.

Implementation indicators:

- number of submitted and awarded research projects, particularly those in cooperation with the business and private sector or in culture and education
- number of formalised collaborations with business entities and cultural and educational institutions
- number of formalised collaborations with public sector organisations and government agencies, including cultural and educational institutions
- number of projects of national interest to the Republic of Croatia
- number of projects implemented through the program for addressing specific activities related to societal challenges of national importance
- number of open-market projects, especially those pertaining to the private sector and economy, as well as the advancement of culture and education
- number of scientific papers with partners in the fields of education and culture as well as economics
- number of participations in state and public administration bodies' committees and working groups, as well as other institutions and organisations at the national level.

4.3. Transfer of scientific research findings to the higher education system

Tasks:

- to collaborate with higher education institutions
- to encourage the Institute's scientists to collaborate in master's and doctoral studies
- to develop and conduct joint studies in collaboration with higher education institutions
- to develop and improve additional knowledge and innovation transfer models.

Implementation indicators:

- number of staff members teaching in graduate and doctoral studies
- number of collaboration agreements with higher education institutions
- number of joint studies in collaboration with higher education institutions
- number of scientists who hold lecturer status at a higher education institution
- number of other knowledge and innovation transfer models.

4.4. Strengthening the Institute's regional centres

Tasks:

- to strengthen the Institute's existing network of regional centres and research teams to carry out programs that improve the Institute's scientific and social involvement in regional and local communities
- to encourage project activity focused on researching issues important for local and regional identity in both national and international contexts
- to strengthen collaboration between regional and local self-government organisations and the public sector at both levels
- to contribute scientifically to solving social challenges at the regional and local levels, as well as creating local and regional development policies
- to conduct scientific research and socially beneficial initiatives to promote the regional and local development of identity, culture, and education
- to offer scientific research services on the free market, including services that are in line with the needs of regional and local communities
- to promote the transfer of scientific research knowledge, the dissemination of research findings, and the popularisation of science at the local level.

Implementation indicators:

- number of submitted and approved projects involving scientists from regional centres
- number of contracted projects addressing the needs of regional and local communities
- number of cooperation agreements with regional and local government and self-government entities, as well as the public sector at the regional and local level
- number of instances of participation in committees and working groups of local and regional authorities and other institutions at the regional and local level

- number of scientific events, conferences, round tables, panel discussions, book launches, and media appearances organised by regional centres.

4.5. Popularising science, raising public awareness, and bolstering the Institute's social responsibility

Tasks:

- using scientific and scientific-professional conferences, forums, round tables, workshops, book launches, media appearances, press conferences, and social media to spread research findings and popularise science
- to increase the number of activities related to the Institute's open days, presentation of scientific projects and recent scientific discoveries, as well as events targeted at the general public and young people
- to promote a focus on lifelong learning, the creation of a gender and sex equality environment, and the eradication of all types of discrimination
- to develop programs that enhance the Institute's social engagement within the community, with particular emphasis on advancing diversity, equity, and social inclusion in science
- to increase the Institute's visibility and outreach by modernising its website and producing and sharing meaningful content on social media accounts.

Implementation indicators:

- number of media appearances and publications, as well as posts on social media
- number of scientific and scientific-professional conferences, forums, round tables, workshops, book launches, and presentations of research findings organised by the Institute
- number of actions undertaken to advance a culture of equal opportunity and equality
- number of workshops, lectures, reports, and studies on the subject of advancing diversity, equity, and social inclusion
- number of women in leadership roles and among staff members, as well as the number of employees from national minorities, people with disabilities, vulnerable groups, etc.
- modernised Institute's website.

4.6. Strengthening the Institute's research infrastructure and digital transformation

Tasks:

- to integrate digital solutions into operations, invest in digital tools and equipment, and train staff to use contemporary technologies in research
- to promote business transparency, lower administrative and overhead expenses, and increase the efficiency of managing financial and other resources
- to promote environmentally friendly business solutions, energy-efficient and acceptable energy use methods, and procedures that lead to energy savings and cost reduction.

Implementation indicators:

- number of staff members who have completed professional development programs
- number of organisational measures taken to lower administrative and overhead expenses
- number of digital work transformation procedures implemented
- installation of an energy-efficient heating and cooling system.

5. RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The Institute's scientific and research activities during the strategic period 2025–2029 will be carried out within the framework of seven research priorities. Each research priority includes topics defined based on scientific relevance and topicality, as well as scientific achievements of scientists and research groups. In the context of the Strategy, the term “research priorities” does not imply a hierarchy of significance. Research priorities are arranged according to the Institute's established strategic goals while defining the Strategy's content, emphasizing interdisciplinary and intercultural research. Thus, it is reasonable to anticipate theme overlaps in research priorities.

The research priorities are as follows:

5.1. Cultures and identities

As part of the *Cultures and Identities* research priority, scientific research on topics such as the following will be particularly encouraged: historical horizons and cultural legacy; social, cultural, and national identities; religions and religiosity; the Homeland War; social memory and forgetting; the culture of memory; emigration and ethnic minorities, diaspora, regional identity, bilateral and multicultural links and relations.

5.2. Social cohesion and social change

As part of the *Social Cohesion and Social Change* research priority, scientific research on topics such as the following will be particularly encouraged: the role of institutions in social cohesion; social exclusion and marginalized groups; intergroup relations, tolerance and prejudice; human rights; the gender dimension of social development; civic and political engagement; subcultures and subcultural practices; social aspects of sport; social attitudes and public opinion; social structure and dynamics.

5.3. Social innovation, management, and sustainable development

As part of the *Social Innovation, Management, and Development* research priority, scientific research on topics such as the following will be particularly encouraged: innovative society and digital transformation; transformation of work, good governance and management of public and common goods; sustainable development; entrepreneurship; alternative forms of economy; local resources and development perspectives; evaluation and contribution to shaping public policies; social and psychological aspects of adaptation, coping, and mitigating climate change.

5.4. Quality of life and individual differences

As part of the *Quality of Life and Individual Differences* research priority, scientific research on topics such as the following will be particularly encouraged: subjective well-being (among specific groups – children, young people, adults, elderly); health and psychosocial aspects of living with rare diseases; psychosocial aspects of ageing; permanent personal traits; risky behaviours and substance abuse; digital technologies and quality of life; quality of various systems.

5.5. Family, children, youth

As part of the *Family, Children, Youth* research priority, scientific research on topics such as the following will be particularly encouraged: family, marital, and partnership relationships and parenting; children's and youth's psychosocial development; individual development in a social context; children's and adults' cognitive, emotional, and social development in a social context; environmental influences on children's and youth's development; stress in children and youth; risk and protective factors in children's and youth's development; preventing alcohol, tobacco, and internet addiction in children and youth; problematic internet use.

5.6. Education

As part of the *Education* research priority, scientific research on topics such as the following will be particularly encouraged: knowledge, skills, and human capital, efficacy and quality of education, STEM and ICT education, education for sustainable development, career development and employability.

5.7. Population, settlements, and mobility

As part of the *Population, Settlements and Mobility* research priority, scientific research on topics such as the following will be particularly encouraged: demographic sustainability, population policy and demographic revitalization strategies; migration in national and transnational contexts; urbanization processes, housing and spatial mobility; rural and peripheral areas revitalization; local public and spatial planning; sociocultural and spatial characteristics of Croatian border societies.

6. FINANCING

The state budget provides funding for the Institute's activities through program contracts, designated funds, and its revenue (*Statute of the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences*, Articles 67 and 68). Revenues derived from working on scientific projects (international, national, projects for other clients, expertise) and commitments outlined in the Program Contract with the relevant ministry are essential to implementing the Strategy. Therefore, the key financial conditions for accomplishing the Strategy are the financial sustainability of scientific projects, the principles of sound financial management, particularly cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and effectiveness, as well as rational management and contracting in accordance with capabilities.

7. PUBLISHING ACTIVITY

Publishing activity is an essential component of the Strategy's implementation. The strategic priorities in publishing activity for the period 2025–2029 are the publication of two scientific

journals: *Društvena istraživanja*, časopis za opća društvena istraživanja (published since 1992) and *Pilar*, časopis za društvene i humanističke studije (published since 2006), as well as scientific monographs, conference proceedings, proceedings from national and international scientific conferences, lexicons, studies, and expert reports resulting from work on scientific projects and in various forms of scientific collaboration in national and global contexts.

8. ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTATIONS AND STEPS IN STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategy can be implemented only by consistently promoting and hiring seasoned scientists in scientific roles and young researchers interested in scientific research and projects that complement the Institute's research priorities.

The following three crucial actions will facilitate the Strategy's implementation:

- adoption of an Action Plan that will determine the deadlines and accountable parties for the implementation activities outlined in the Strategy
- adoption of internal Institute acts that will regulate how particular strategic goals are implemented
- implementation and monitoring of the Strategy and the Action Plan, as well as financial evaluation (of the Strategy and the Action Plan) within the designated time frames

The Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences Development Strategy was approved at the Governing Board meeting on November 27, 2024.

Number: 07-73/24-2954/2403

Zagreb, November 27, 2024

CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNING BOARD
Professor Nevio Šetić, PhD