

Policy Development Fellowship Programme | 2004 - 2014

Selected Stories from 10 years







INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLICY ADVOCACY (ICPA)
OPEN SOCIETY FUND, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.

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Opening letter from OSF Executive Director

Dobriła Govedarica *Executive Director*
Open Society Fund, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We launched the Policy Development Fellowship Program (PDFP) in 2004 with the main goal to improve BH policy research and dialogue and to contribute to the development of a sound policy-making culture based on informative and empirically grounded policy options. Over a decade, 102 fellows had the opportunity to collaborate with the Open Society Fund in conducting policy research, writing a policy study and brief, and engaging in advocacy and dissemination of policy recommendations.

The policy challenges facing BH were manifold when we started the programme in 2003/04. I vividly remember a piece by Žarko Papić, building on the transition narratives of the day. He said that BH faced a triple transition: not just a change to a democratic political system and market economy, but also attempting to rebuild trust in public institutions in an ethnically-divided, post-war era¹. Through the decade of the programme, the EU accession agenda gained huge momentum and BH made significant steps in that direction. The bind of this triple transition coupled with the promise of a stable European destination was at the heart of the policy work done in the fellowship.

It may be hard to remember in 2014, but the presence of the international community on the ground in 2003 was enormous. This brought with it policy advice from multiple angles, mostly in English and of varying quality. At a certain point, much of this advice seemed to lose significant legitimacy with the legend of supremely expensive “jet-in jet-out” consultants doling out context-light prescriptions for complex reform challenges. This fellowship programme was also a response to this situation and an attempt to foster the development of a cadre of *domestic* policy thinkers and actors with requisite skills to counterbalance this over-reliance on the international community. Further, with a political environment steeped in the ‘other agenda’ narrative, it was key to try to drive the policy reform agenda with local voices and in local languages.

From issues of reform of public administration, parliaments and the judiciary to economic development, corruption and accountability to public service delivery, minority inclusion and rights protection, the programme sought to initiate cross-sectoral dialogue informed by policy expertise and evidence. In terms of direct policy impact, the results were not as far reaching as I had hoped for, with few recommendations having significant influence on government decisions. However, the programme helped us to develop a more nuanced view of the policy-making process and realisation that reforming the institutions of governance is a marathon, not a sprint. In fact, within this longer-term view, the body of research produced has had a much longer life than expected with the bank of papers continuing to be referenced. Also within a long-term perspective, the programme has delivered positive outcomes on the capacity development side, with the alumni fellows taking leading positions in government and NGO sectors and leading in the initiation of many new policy research institutes and think tanks in BH.

I wish to thank all fellows for their efforts on the programme. I would also like to thank Dr. Leslie Pal (Carleton University, Canada) and Eóin Young (International Centre for Policy Advocacy) for their energy and input on the thinking of the programme, as well as their training and mentoring over 10 years. I would also like to thank Lisa Quinn (International Centre for Policy Advocacy) for supporting the fellowship throughout and for her work on this fellowship stories research. Finally, I would like to thank Viola Zentai from Local Government Initiative, Open Society Institute and Centre for Policy Studies, Central European University for supporting the development of the programme at the beginning.

I will close with the wish that alumni fellows will continue to advance a democratisation agenda that values expertise, evidence and engagement.

1. Papić, Žarko (2001) ‘The General Situation in B-H and International Support Strategies’ in *International Support Policies to South-East European Countries: Lessons (Not) Learned in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Žarko Papić, 15-37. Sarajevo: Open Society Fund/Soros Foundation.



Framing of the Research

Lisa Quinn *Director*

International Centre for Policy Advocacy.

The most valuable resource to emerge from the Policy Fellowship Development Programme is the cadre of 100+ fellows who constitute an impressively skilled policy community in BiH that has to a large extent embraced evidence-informed policy practices. So, the idea behind this research and publication is to give a voice to fellows and to learn about their experience of the fellowship and most importantly, what happened after the fellowship. A core approach was to record their stories in their own words and to showcase some of their success stories which emerged from the fellowship.

This piece of research was not intended to be a comprehensive ex-post evaluation of the entire fellowship programme (already conducted in 2012²), but rather aimed to build on and complement that research by focusing on a more qualitative dimension at the outcome level. Specifically, the intention was to elaborate 10 individual alumni fellows' stories and to explore the contribution of the fellowship in this journey, tracking their individual policy skill development over time, further sharing of these skills, their career path as well as policy engagement. As with all outcome level evaluation, I fully recognise that the input of the fellowship is only one factor that led to the successes detailed, and my focus was on contribution, not attribution. Nevertheless, as evident in the stories, the fellowship did play a significant role.

I conducted an initial focus group to get a broad overview and framing of relevant issues, followed by individual semi-structured interviews with the 10 selected fellows. The 10 fellows documented in this publication were selected to represent a spread across sectors (academic, NGO, and public sectors) and time, from the early days of the fellowship to later years. There is also a spread in terms of focus of the stories, with some elaborating more on the individual skill level and others providing detail on influence achieved on the policy-making process of the issue researched during the fellowship. Equal gender representation was intended but not realised due to availability issues of shortlisted fellows.

In the design of the research, I used three main variables to examine the contribution of the fellowship to the professional life and policy advocacy work of fellows:

2. Evenson, Kristie (2012) *External Evaluation of the Policy Development Fellowship Program of the Open Society Fund, Bosnia & Herzegovina*.

VARIABLES	INDICATORS
Individual skill and career advancement	<p>Set of skills and knowledge gained and put into practice since the fellowship</p> <p>Relevance and importance of capacity developed and experience gained through the fellowship for career</p>
Institutionalising policy thinking and learning	<p>Impact of fellowship skills/ knowledge gained on workplace practices:</p> <p>New practices in new organisations/structures/initiatives</p> <p>New practices in existing organisations/structures/initiatives</p>
Policy influence	<p>Level of influence of research produced through the fellowship on policy (types of influence – ranging from starting a discussion, introducing new thinking, providing new option(s), to direct policy impact of adoption of recommendations)</p> <p>Continued work on the fellowship policy topic and reputation built in this policy area</p> <p>Influence in other policy area(s) since the fellowship</p>

I am very grateful to Dobrila Goverdarica and Lejla Memic from Open Society Fund, BiH for their wonderful support during this research, and to all interviewees for such open and warm cooperation during a thoroughly enjoyable week in Sarajevo and Banja Luka in February 2014. Thanks also to Les and Eoin for sharing their lessons and insights from a decade working with fellows.

I hope you enjoy reading these stories and insights as much as I did learning about and from them, and hope these success stories encourage others to become engaged in the policy field.

THE DESIGN OF THE FELLOWSHIP

One of the key challenges in the early years of PDFP was to work out an approach to the fellowship that targeted the needs of fellows, supported capacity building and kept fellows engaged through the year-long process. Through a process of trial and error over the first three to four years, we got to a design that brought in a competitive element at the beginning, supported fellows through each stage of the process from research design to advocacy, and combined learning in workshops with doing through multiple drafts and feedback on the particular policy product that was the focus of every stage. We feel that the approach has many lessons for others engaged in the policy capacity development field. The following table provides an overview of the final design:

STAGES	TIMELINE	ELEMENTS OF THE STAGE	OUTCOMES OF THE STAGE
Application stage	4 months	Submission of CVs and research overview	20 fellowship candidates selected
Competitive fellow selection stage	3 months	Workshop on policy research design Candidates develop and get feedback on two drafts of policy research proposal Fellows selected by board based on 2nd draft research proposal	10 fellows selected from 20 fellowship candidates
Fellowship research, analysis and writing stage	7 months	Policy research process Workshop on policy paper writing and analysis Fellows develop and get feedback on two drafts of policy study	Completed Policy Study
Advocacy planning stage	3 months	Workshop on policy advocacy and policy brief writing Fellows develop and get feedback on two drafts of policy brief Advocacy Planning process	Completed Policy Brief Completed Advocacy Plan

Fellows' Stories







Adnan's story shows how practical policy thinking learned in the fellowship programme helped to set a path for his own academic and policy-advising career, as well for the reshaping of curricula he teaches to economists in BiH.

“The fellowship was one step towards my achievement which I have now.”

Adnan Efendić

Associate Professor, Department of Economic Theory and Policy, University of Sarajevo

Fellowship year & research: 2005-2006

“Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path towards the European Union: macroeconomic challenges”

& 2007-2008 “Institutions, Economic Performance and EU Integration: The Case of Transition Economies and BiH”

“I remember that during these trainings I started to think about policy in a different way and I recognised the importance of policy.”

As an academic, Adnan was introduced to new policy thinking through the fellowship which had been missing in his education before. He shares insight into this gap, what he gained through the fellowship, and how it acted as a stepping stone in his career:

“I’m an academic, I work for the Department of Economic Theory and Policy, but for some reasons we are much more focused on the theory but not that much on policy. I remember that during these trainings I started to think about policy in a different way and I recognised the importance of policy. At our universities, we usually don’t teach students so much about policy, how to get proper policy recommendations, how you disseminate what you find, etc. This programme helped me with these issues and

research challenges. I will again stress the word ‘policy’, which is the skill I developed through this programme.

The trainings and supports which we got during this programme were very useful, especially because I attended them in the beginning of my professional career (some 10 years ago). These supports were very important in my professional development and this programme was one step towards my achievements which I have now.”

Innovation was a feature of the fellowship programme, with many research topics being explored for the first time in BiH. Adnan is the only interviewee to have participated on the fellowship programme twice, and the second round was closely linked to his PhD topic. Adnan speaks of the contribution of his second fellowship research to the BiH academic community:

“The second fellowship topic was something really new at that time: how institutional environment...how institutional efficiency...effects economic development. At that time, I went to the UK on my PhD study and realised that there was a whole theory in this field (Institutional economics). I linked that theoretical approach with the problem in BiH: we really have a problem with the complicated institutional environment which effects economic development of this country as well. This was something new. I didn’t know anyone else who did applied research in this field and in this country at that time. So, this study was the first one published in the local language (to our knowledge) being available for a domestic audience and I think that’s one of the main benefits of the second research.”

Adnan has also recently introduced a course on this topic in his department and he describes how he fosters a policy perspective and thinking in his students:

“We changed the programme recently and I proposed that we introduce an Institutional economics course, as something very relevant for our country. And it’s now taught as a regular postgraduate course. As a literature for this course, I use this study and the students get it free, thanks to OSI. It’s a direct benefit of this programme.

I’m trying to stimulate my postgraduate students to learn as much as they can about applied research and policy recommendations...During this course, they need to analyse applied papers, actually they must read some 5-6 applied empirical research. I also try to develop critical thinking with my students because our students usually read, read and accept - but you need to be critical about what you read, this can also influence policy recommendations.”

Policy recommendations is a central topic for Adnan! He speaks further about the importance of policy recommendations and how this aspect of policy work often represents a crucial gap. In fact, Adnan was invited by OSF to set a topic for the 2013-14 fellowship, and he “developed the proposal with policy recommendations in mind... what would be interesting to find.”

“Sometimes I see that researchers conduct very huge and sound analysis, but when they come to the stage where they need to propose something feasible, to propose some sound policy recommendations, this is usually the weakest link of many research projects... Policy recommendations are not just a conclusion from that analysis.”

In addition to his academic career, Adnan carries this focus on policy recommendations through to his practical policy work, especially in ensuring that recommendations from research are firmly grounded in policy. He describes the experience leading one such project:

“I’m currently doing a big international project related to the issue of migration and economic development. It’s a huge project with research on the ground, in which we analysed all relevant sectors, including a lot of empirical quantitative and qualitative research. The study should bring some key policy recommendations because the audience wants sound policy recommendations, they don’t want theory. And that is our main challenge.”





Adnan's story shows how valuable the experience of doing real primary research and advocacy can be in setting a career path for more novice researchers. In fact, he has gone on to study public policy further and has established a fledgling think tank.

“The main advantage of this programme is it gives you real experience.”

Adnan Ovčina

President, Centre for Regional Research, Sarajevo

Fellowship year & research: 2012-2013 “Position of internally displaced women in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina: A study in situational gaps and good practices related to access to employment”

As a novice policy researcher, Adnan valued the experience of moving beyond the theoretical and actually doing primary research – seeing policy issues first-hand and seeing the lives of people affected. This allowed him to see the value of the research process, far beyond an academic view. He describes his experience:

“The programme was great, because it gave us opportunity to work closely with the people, to have one year research experience...And this is actually the main advantage of this programme, because it gives you real experience...I have been attending many programmes and they were focused mostly on theory, but this research is all about the process of doing research...So when I went to Tuzla, I was doing qualitative analysis about the position of displaced women, and that was my first real research experience. I was there conducting qualitative research, working with the people, organising meetings...everything included in the research process. This programme allows you to actually understand the roots of public policy analysis and to really go through that process.

Here in BiH, at least from my point of view, we don't have any practical experience...When I was studying, we only had this theoretical overview of everything, and when I went to the programme, everything changed in my head.”

Adnan was also appreciative of the support he received throughout the programme from mentors:

“The mentors gave us some interesting insights and really supported us in the research process...After I organised meetings in Tuzla, I sat with Eoin Young (ICPA) and he gave me some instructions that were very important to me: how to approach the interviews, how to talk with people, not to be scared or not to make them feel scared. And that was really making my job so much easier than it was.”

Adnan also gained confidence through newly acquired skills, especially when it came to advocacy. He describes the impetus for shifting his thinking and his new willingness to engage in advocacy:

“When I used some of these techniques that Eoin proposed to us, something really happened. Something really shifted in my head, something changed. I was really willing to go further, to penetrate into the discussion, to actually present my paper.

We will get paid and we will finish - this is usual pattern of thinking, but then when he really gave us some insights, some information on how to present our research...when we actually presented our research during the workshop, we were really amazed with the reaction. People started to include in the discussion, and ask us what do you mean about this, and about this. And that was really changing your way of thinking, changing this pattern, “ok I'm not just only getting paid, I'll actually do my job!”

Additionally, having a tangible output from the fellowship is important for Adnan and he explains the value of the two policy papers produced through the programme in enhancing his credibility and reputation:

“One of the positive outcomes of my fellowship is that I established a little think tank.”

“You finally have something to show to people. You see that policy paper which is completely a product of your work. When I go somewhere and I say I was on that programme and this is our final result, people are really amazed with that. When they see this paper, when they go through it, they can see if I have managed to successfully implement this project or not. Basically, when I only have certificate or something, it’s completely insufficient. But here when you go with your paper and your policy brief, it’s something. And it’s published on the website...that gives you something, something to hold onto when talking with the others.”

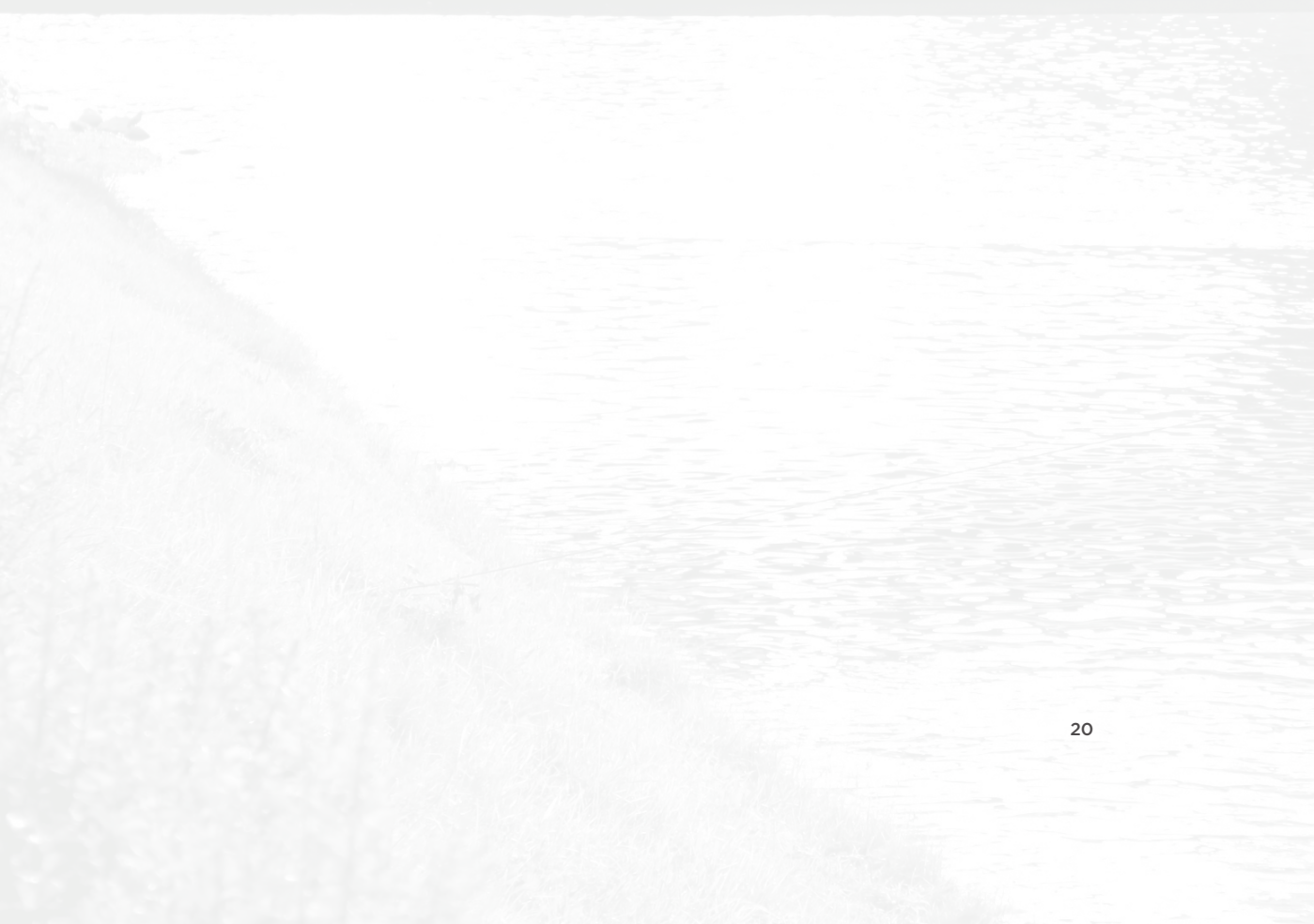
Adnan has built on the learning from the fellowship and continued to be engaged in the field of public policy, academically and practically. He describes the role of the fellowship experience in this chain of developments:

“When I finished PFDP, many changes happened in my life: I got accepted to my second master degree in University of Bologna and Sarajevo (ERMA programme). When I applied for my second master study, I was evaluated with really good grade. When they saw my policy paper, they were amazed by what we achieved through the programme...Also I got accepted to Slovak Public Policy Fund Research Fellowship, and that was completely a result of the PFDP programme. Also, I got two project proposals for my organisation, they are both evaluated good. So, this is mainly the result of this programme. The project matrix that was developed for this fellowship programme - I used it for applying for other project proposals.”

The organisation Adnan refers to above is the think tank he has established, ‘Centre for Regional Research’. Through this vehicle he is currently developing, Adnan acts as a convenor by drawing in people interested in public policy and supporting their capacity development:

“One of the positive outcomes of my fellowship is that I established a little think tank. I have managed to gather a couple of people from different educational backgrounds...I managed to include a various number of people from both fellowships (PFDP and European Fund for Balkans) and to work with them.

During the discussion with my colleagues from my master study, they asked me a very simple and honest question: ‘How can we do something that we don’t know how to do?’ We were sitting, we were having roundtables, discussing and talking how to implement something without any real knowledge on how to conduct good research, and basically I disseminated all these books given to me by my mentors and I used my policy paper as a tool to get their attention. And really I had some positive reactions from them. They saw that you can really do that, and that was only a one year programme - we were studying for five years! And after that one year programme, I had something to show to them...And some real knowledge how to approach this.”





Ahmet's story shows how evidence-based policy research can be really helpful in reframing and calming down divisive policy debates. It also shows how developing policy skills and thinking can be a key addition for an expert who wants to be more involved in debates outside the academy.

"I can contribute much more – people feel I'm not just an academic, talking theory."

Ahmet Alibašić

Director of Center for Advanced Studies & Assist. Professor at Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of Sarajevo

Fellowship year & research: 2008-2009

"Religious education in public schools in B&H: Towards a model that supports coexistence and mutual understanding"

“There’s a demand for policy advice and writing. People don’t name it that way, but now I realise that’s what they need.”

Ahmet describes his transition from conducting purely academic research to applied research, and explains how the staged fellowship programme and multiple opportunities for input and navigation by mentors were important in supporting this transition:

“This programme really stands out, there’s so much added value in it for me as an academic. This was really an eye opener. The distinguishing feature is that it lasted over a period of time...and it’s two-way: not just I write and someone gives me marks, but I have a mentor who comes back at three stages. And at each stage, I have learned so much both theoretically and practically. I had experienced, accessible mentors who gave a lot of their time commenting. They take you step by step, so that next time you can do it on your own. It took me time to separate academic from policy

research, to realise the differences.”

Ahmet credits producing an evidence-based paper as pivotal to building his reputation and contributing to the discussion of the issue he researched (religious education):

“You can see you can make a contribution. It was a real match: I was able to take the opportunity and I was lucky to have the skills. That paper I wrote promoted me, in the sense I can talk differently about issues, not just give my preferences off the top of my head. I can contribute much more – people feel I’m not just an academic, talking theory. Somehow it was a turning point: in the year following that, I recorded 47 media appearances, just in 2011! Part was religious education and part was Arab Spring...almost once a week! That was immediately after the fellowship. I cannot attribute everything to the programme, but I felt it was a transformative change in my professional career.”

Ahmet reveals the key factors leading to this achievement, notably: reframing the debate by bringing a more balanced and reasonable line into the discussion around such a divisive issue; and decreasing the emotional level of the debate, thereby promoting a constructive rather than polarising discussion.

“The outcome of the policy paper is I have used it and others have used it repeatedly because the topic was a hot topic for a number of years (religious education in public schools). Discussions before were not based on evidence or arguments...Others have used my arguments to try to find a common ground. I tried to argue for that middle ground. I argued that having religious education in public space is a window for change for religious

communities. State authorities can have a look at what's taught. Many people found the argument reasonable and popularity for the policy is around 90%. My aim was to reduce the radical proposals from both sides, because this would lead to further polarising...Years after completion of the report, it helped make the debate more constructive and more focused on the outcomes, not just on making sure we win."

Additionally, Ahmet outlined how simply mapping decisions already made was useful in helping to move the discussion forward:

"We've gathered some ground....together with OSCE already reached some agreements. Recording these helped move the discussion on...not back to day one, to the starting point! No serious people or religious institutions like taking steps back."

However, Ahmet also acknowledges the challenges faced in introducing an evidence-informed approach into a culture where decision makers show strong resistance, as they are not used to such an approach.

"Our decision makers are not very fond of this approach. But the time comes when you have to adopt this approach...have to find an alternative approach because there are too many interests. You can't do things the usual way because it's not working. But let's be realistic about political culture, whether it's power of argument or argument of power! Here in this society, still argument of power is overwhelming and it usually wins debates. But thanks to a programme like this, we multiply the number of people who get to know how others do things."

Finally, Ahmet describes some pragmatic insights he shares with decision makers in an effort to shift their thinking and how his NGO contributes to this shift:

"In the end you will get what you want - this is my point to them. It doesn't mean if it's well researched, that you won't get to your political goals. You don't have to sacrifice all of your interests. But you may have to take a different route. You may have to compromise short term over long term. Very often that's the only compromise.

One of our aims (in Center for Advanced Studies) is to develop a policy research programme to go a step beyond academic research and provide policymakers with more accessible and useful research...give them something more soluble and digestible...There's a demand for policy advice and writing. People don't name it that way, but now I realise that's what they need."



INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

TRANSFER TO INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE

POLICY INFLUENCE



Aleksandar's story shows how adding the policy analytic approach to a strong academic background and an existing expertise in local government development was instrumental in getting proposals adopted in the Law on Territorial Organisation of the RS. Further, positions developed in his paper have led to support in a large benchmarking project for local governments. Aleksandar also went even further in trying to influence change within the government by working as an in-house policy development mentor with UNDP.

“This fellowship offered me a competitive advantage over others.”

Aleksandar Draganić

Expert in Policy Development, Eda Development Agency
Banja Luka

Fellowship year & research: 2004-2005 “Benchmarking in local
government – Path for Bosnia and Herzegovina”

Aleksandar came to the fellowship in 2004 with a strong academic grounding, having completed an MA in Economics in Staffordshire University, UK. He describes how participation on the fellowship influenced his development in a policy direction:

“I was the first generation and this was rather new for all of us, and we were thinking it’s another training where we will participate and gain some capacity building and skills that we can translate to others. Because in the beginning it looks like that. But after we got the mentor and went deeper into the process, I saw this is related to translation of our academic or semi-academic thoughts into real action and figuring out how to find the proper tool for doing that.

I was seeing that for me it can be a professional future. I was not a parachuter into that field, but I was actually rather somebody who was more academic at the time, but now let’s use this scientific approach to change something.”

After completing the fellowship, Aleksandar continued working with Eda, but directly as a policy researcher and analyst. In this capacity, he was in a position to build on the fellowship experience as well as contribute to policy thinking in the organisation and projects. He also describes the new policy dimension he brought to government actors which opened new doors for him:

“The good thing is I was in Eda who is a leader is local self-governance reform and for many fields they lacked the background documents regarding the future policy option. After the fellowship, firstly I start to deal with territory (two-year project)...thinking over how the territorial organisation of Republika Serbska and the Federation of BiH would look like in the centre of a new decentralisation initiative. I was a project leader but mostly I was policy researcher. We firstly applied this policy options and it was something new to the government, because we are firstly analysing fact-based what will happen if they go in this or that direction...We applied a certain aspect of RIA and nobody did that at that time. And as a consequence, I was chosen to be a member of a working group for development of a law on territorial organisation in Republika Serbska.

My policy solution managed to have a law for the last four years without any changes and everybody is happy...It means I was really thinking how to solve things.”

Through his position in Eda, Aleksandar was also very successful in taking the research he conducted for the fellowship further. He tells the story of how he worked to ensure CAF was adopted as a benchmarking system in RS and how this work has had a lasting impact:

“My fellowship topic was the introduction of CAF, or benchmarking into local self-governance. I produced an individual study and since I’m working for Eda in Banja Luka, we applied for a project which we got and we worked with 30 municipalities across Bosnia. We introduced CAF within

“I saw this (fellowship) is related to translation of our academic thoughts into real action and figuring out how to find the proper tool for doing that.”

the public administration reform as a tool...We developed tools, concepts, guidelines and we actually established ourselves as a European contact point for that methodology developed through this policy fellowship. And when the project expired it was taken over by the OSCE for the next three years.

Through that policy study, we actually triggered benchmarking but then we actually applied benchmarking and through Eda's effort and OSCE, we created thematic networks where municipalities exchanged their knowledge. Even now those networks are existing: it means 10 years after the process started, there is an impact of that policy study as a practical aspect of the study...And this is in Europe the most promising quality system tool for public administration.”

Interestingly, Aleksandar also temporarily switched sector to work on a UNDP initiative, Strategic Planning and Policy Development (SPDP), a path also pursued by other alumni fellows. Aleksandar explains his motivation and the contribution he made:

“I went to UNDP to see what is happening in the government...I need to see to whom we will actually sell our products but the situation was devastating! I was trying to have empathic relation with them, not to be a consultant...To see what I can actually do to help them...technical knowledge or connect them with somebody.

The call was to assist ministries regarding policy development. It was something exactly where I saw myself...and also 10 other colleagues (from the fellowship). SPDP project was fine. I was mentor for various sectors, entrepreneurship and SME development, because I'm an economist per se.”

Aleksandar goes on to describe the contribution he made, by navigating government officials through new analytical processes and thinking:

“Everything starts for them from the annual plan...with no policy aspect. This was rather something new. I introduced RIA to them: If we introduce this law, how will it effect other economic aspects? What will it mean on social aspect? We went on a number of aspects: What does the budget say? Can we actually introduce this programme?

For one year, I was always asking questions and they were trying to find answers and they were learning. They realised one thing is to write a law and it's another thing to push for policy. I was like a preacher, explaining why this policy aspect is needed. You cannot just accept EU directives without analysis. You can, but then you will have problems!”





Amer's story shows how the adoption of a policy perspective through the fellowship changed the direction of his own career choices and has become central to his work in promoting media freedom through an international NGO, and also his university teaching. Interestingly, he has also started a media policy fellowship programme in his NGO.

"I saw the value of working with people regarding this way of policy thinking."

Amer Džihana

Director for Media Policy and Research, USAID's Strengthening Independent Media (SIM) Project in BiH implemented by Internews

Fellowship year & research: 2007-2008 "The Public Broadcasting System in B-H: Between Ethnic Exclusivity and Long Term Sustainability"

“Before that (fellowship), if somebody told me ‘you need to study public policy’, I would ask what this really means.”

Amer’s experience of the fellowship programme shows how introducing a policy perspective and thinking to a specialist at a crucial point can help focus their engagement, in his case in the field of media policy. Amer describes the role of the fellowship in his career choices and how the fellowship gave him the impetus and foundation for his MA in Public Policy:

“The fellowship was the first time that I met with this new way of thinking, this policy way. Later on I decided to go on another MA programme, policy programme in Budapest and I took specifically the media policy stream. I

would really say that this programme helped me decide to take this brave decision, because I already had an MA degree and naturally, I actually wished to get a PhD in BiH (which I’m doing now). But after this programme, I realised I miss something and that there’s one potentially very rich area, media policy area that’s completely neglected in Bosnia Herzegovina.

So, I decided to go to CEU and take an MA degree. Before that, if somebody told me ‘you need to study public policy’, I would ask what this really means. Because if you are coming from journalistic community, from media environment, you are not too close to these administrative things and management. You consider yourself much closer to the NGO sector than to the government. But I would say that the programme truly helped me make that decision. Being a part of the CEU helped me focus my interests even more and confirm that media policy is a very rich field.”

After returning from post-graduate studies in CEU, Amer started working with an international media organisation, for the SIM Project and helped reshape programmes to have a more direct policy focus. He explains how his aim in designing programmes was to respond to the new policy needs in a changing policy landscape in BiH:

“I saw the value of working with people regarding this way of policy thinking. Previously, in BiH we had a completely different situation in policy terms: the international community came and introduced all those new things. But that phase is now finished and each organisation, each institution must think about how to influence other policy makers. Some media organisations are still using the old model, but now they need to have a better outreach. I realised that it’s important that they think about the new environment and that they need new skills.”

Amer is among alumni fellows who have taken on the role of policy capacity developer, establishing a media policy fellowship programme in 2013 in the SIM Project to support researchers enhance the policy relevance of their work. He describes the development of the programme and his vision:

“We had some references to media policy in our project but they were not too extensive. For example, we had some resources to send some people to Oxford and to Budapest summer schools but without a clear idea what to expect from these people upon their return.

So, after several changes in the programme, we designed a new programme - which fully follows a certain logic and which therefore includes: sending people to these two summer schools, asking them to propose certain area for policy research, then having workshops with Eoin (Young, ICPA), and working on their papers. In the end, the final result could be published in an edited volume or just as a separate policy paper. It is precisely this year, since we are entering into the digital media issues, that we consider most of these papers as a kind of agenda setter for this area. We want to introduce new topics and invite other relevant people to think about them.”

In addition to working with practitioners, Amer has developed an initiative to introduce academics to policy thinking while still engaged in their studies. Amer has built up a programme ‘media law clinics’ in an effort to promote the introduction of the field of media policy in BiH:

“When we worked together with young people from academia, I saw a real need for them to accept and understand this way of thinking, because it is closely connected with applied science, which we desperately need in BiH.

In our programme, we also established a cooperation with law and journalism faculties with the idea to introduce a new subject in their curricula - media law. And we had quite successful cooperation with them organising what we call ‘media law clinics’ composed of 3 to 5 workshops. When we have 5 workshops, then one of them is the introduction to media policy. And the idea was to introduce the students to new thinking.”

This initiative has proven successful and Amer shared his plans for expansion:

“These clinics are very successful. Now they have entered their third year, and we in fact have more clinics than we have capacities to conduct them. We now work with seven universities, because most recently we started working in Banja Luka, too - for the first time in Republika Srpska. My idea is to combine media policy and media law, to introduce the idea that it’s not only about current laws but that we need to think about and question logic behind those laws, too.”





Irena's story shows how a practical policy focus for an economist can be a game changer in how they view their role. In addition, she shows us how a systematic analysis of options can really ensure a long life in a policy discussion.

“A very valuable contribution of the whole programme is definitely making us think and write from a policy perspective.”

Irena Jankulov

Senior Economist, International Monetary Fund

Fellowship year 2006-2007: “Strong Fiscal Council: Magic Solution?”

The first benefit of participation on the fellowship Irena identified was gaining a policy perspective which has informed her work as an economist today and helped her ‘integrate better’ into her institution (IMF):

“A very valuable contribution of the whole programme is definitely making us think and write from a policy perspective...being able to think better in terms of how to write with policy language. Whenever you have an idea, the idea is not enough. Or it’s not enough to simply run a million regressions and then present the regression analysis. But you actually think what’s next, and outline the sequence of these steps, pros and cons what you think of any policy angle you want to do.

Here in the region, academics or analysts, we talk long and extensive: we define problems, at least we pretend to define problems, we pretend to understand the issues. We talk history and we stop at the day yesterday. We do not talk about the present. We do not talk about the future. Or we rarely present options, we rarely think of the sequence of events that can come after you implement one or the other option. And that was something that was definitely beneficial from the policy fellowship.”

The second benefit Irena outlines is the effects of networking which occurred through the fellowship. She uses the example of a fellow from her year, Majda Becirevic, to show how the experience helped broaden her horizons and how she benefitted from exposure to people outside of her usual circle:

“The second thing was networking: I did meet people of different backgrounds I do not normally talk to, in my generation and fellows from subsequent generations. I’m an economist, I meet economists and lawyers... We don’t go in different circles. For example I never would have met Majda... she’s a social science person, working with local government...let’s put it this way, different lives.

The benefit is knowing that there are other stories. All of us are into our way of thinking. If it is economics, then you think about economics...micro, macro, or laws, that’s it. It was interesting to think about the issues from different perspective, to think about kids, what it means for Roma kids.”

Irena’s topic for the fellowship and that she has been professionally engaged in is fiscal policy, specifically “the idea that some institutions are needed in a society that take the lead over fiscal policy.” She describes the contribution of her mapping study to the introduction of new legislation on a fiscal council:

“When people were thinking of creating this law, there were a lot of words and there was not that much constructive black and white documentation about it. So I think the value added was writing it down, putting the options down, and saying what are the pros and cons of any of the options you decide to choose. And I think that’s the value added of the research.

“There was a personal benefit (from the fellowship), there was a professional benefit, and I hope I will tell there was a policy benefit as well.”

And the policy angle of it was to try and foresee what the other countries have done in terms of this legislation and what it means for them. And all of that written in one document...I looked at various laws that existed in the world and I presented a summary of these legislations that are out there.”

When evaluating the success of her research and advocacy, Irena identifies the double-edged sword of having predicted weaknesses that in fact turned out to be reality of the law implemented, and she shares her experience of challenges faced in tackling a highly politicised issue:

“I would dare to say that I made a positive contribution, but again it comes down to politics... it comes down to do you choose something that can be easily addressed or do you chose

something you know is difficult to be addressed. I don't know how to answer that.

It was ok, because the weaknesses of the chosen system are there. Can you say that that's good? Of course not. But it's good because it was recognised in the policy document...And I see that they have not addressed the issues that I told them they should address. Some of the weaknesses that any law should address were not addressed. But I also know that it was a politically challenging issue. So, maybe it's rather because of the political decision rather than the design.”

The issue is on the agenda again, and while she recognises the politicised nature, Irena remains engaged and has a long-term view:

“The fact that the crisis has hit the country has helped the issue resurface, so it became again quite popular and quite topical. And I guess I knew pros and cons. When the law was designed, I was able to talk to my colleagues and point out some of the deficiencies of the law...And now I think there is the general idea that the next step is needed, but that depends more about politics...it's a political issue now rather than a policy issue. When you talk to analysts and practitioners now they would agree to say that there are deficiencies in the chosen system. But then it's a political issue whether to take it to the next level or not.

There was a personal benefit (from the fellowship), there was a professional benefit, and I hope I will tell there was a policy benefit as well.”





Majda's story shows us how the practical policy approach to research can be a vital addition for experienced researchers in social sciences, and how this has shaped her own career path as an NGO leader. Further, she has transferred policy thinking to much of the research, project, and advising work she has done subsequently.

"I had quite a lot of space to inform my organisation's work and thinking..I think I reinforced this idea of working on policy issues."

Majda Halilović

(Bećirević during the fellowship)

Head of research and policy, Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo

Fellowship year & research: 2006-2007 "Schools in BiH know how to include Roma children"

“My knowledge really helps me recognise and talk more confidently about policy and I wouldn't be able to do that had I not done the fellowship.”

Majda's experience illustrates that, for an academic at the right time in their career (in her case, while completing her MA), participation on the fellowship programme added value by building on and complementing existing skills and knowledge. She reflects on the new policy understanding she gained, especially the insight that there doesn't have to be a dichotomy or tension between academic and policy research and how this appreciation helped steer Majda's career in a policy direction:

“It was a real novelty and moved me a little bit away from academic-style research and writing, but at the same time, it showed me that it didn't lack depth or application in the real world. So, it did really complement my knowledge and skills in that I learned new things and

I built on something I already knew...I knew how to do research generally, but to move it towards policy was something I managed to learn during the fellowship. The fellowship showed me you can do academic work and be policy oriented. I didn't think about that before.

And that was important for me because, later on, I focused my work very much towards the policy level. I realised how vital this policy level is and how much impact you can have. And I actually carried on to do my PhD in 'policy and practice'... for children with disabilities in Bosnia and Bulgaria - a comparative study of policy and practice in both countries.”

Majda goes on to explain in more concrete terms how the fellowship complemented her existing skills by adding a new layer of insight and depth, as well as confidence:

“I used my existing research skills in interviewing people for the fellowship research. Before the OSI programme, I was also fairly decent in writing and reporting, and in presenting data and analysing and so on. But this showed me how to critically evaluate different policy options, which I hadn't done before...to look at something that exists and critically evaluate it and say, 'well I'm proposing this and that.' That was totally new and something that was so nicely taught during the programme. It complemented my research and analysis and the way I thought about things later on in my work...to look at what's out there, what exists, and to see what's missing in that puzzle and what I can add with my research. My knowledge really helps me recognise and talk more confidently about policy and I wouldn't be able to do that had I not done the fellowship.”

In addition to her own research, Majda shares insights into how she helped set a policy agenda in the NGO she joined after completing her PhD. The Atlantic Initiative was founded in 2009, and she started working with them as a consultant in 2010:

“I was there (at the Atlantic Initiative) fairly early on in developing our gender programme. I had quite a lot of space to inform my organisation’s work and thinking...I think I reinforced this idea of working on policy issues. I used some of the policy briefs from Soros, and I informed my colleagues about recommendations and about policy-making. Maybe I sometimes pushed things in that direction, to be more policy oriented. And we want to orient ourselves even more in that direction.

As a lead researcher Majda is currently finishing a major piece of research on gender and judiciary, and describes how it is “very much policy-oriented”, outlining the policy objectives of the research:

“It will hopefully build something completely new within the BiH judiciary on the level of policy; not changing laws, but institutional policies. My colleagues and I constantly advocate for these institutional policies. I recognised this after my fellowship research - this problem of how many institutional policies are lacking in BiH. For example, in schools, courts, they talk about laws and applying laws but they don’t really have developed policies on the levels of the institutions...It’s quite problematic in pushing things forward and creates gaps.”

Majda has also been engaged in bringing policy thinking and skill development into academia, as she considers that the “best way to carry on this policy-making education is through universities”. She has worked with students on two large research projects through her NGO, the Atlantic Initiative, and describes the collaboration with academia:

“For a gender and security sector reform project, I trained a group of students to be researchers...12 students from different faculties in BiH, and we trained and mentored them to conduct this research. The second project was a large opinion survey on NATO integration in Republika Srpska, with a 1000-person sample. We worked with 6 students and I trained them in interviewing, so that they did the interviewing. They don’t have much opportunity to get concrete experience....They say they really appreciated that kind of research.”





Marko's story shows how the fellowship helped to consolidate and deepen his skills as a researcher and NGO professional. The experience also helped to set a clear policy research agenda for his NGO as well as a more strategic focus in the choices they made in setting their new direction.

“The fellowship was a real trigger, because without it I'm not sure I would have been active in that (policy) field.”

Marko Martić

Executive Director, GEA – Centre for Research and Studies, Banja Luka

Fellowship year & research: 2010-2011 “Driving in the ‘idle’ of Employment Bureau in RS and the FB&H”

Marko had extensive experience before participating on the fellowship, including policy research and analysis; yet he described the fellowship experience as new learning. He gives an interesting account of the main insights he gained which deepened his knowledge and skills:

“The methodology that I learned through that process was new at that time even though I’m a relatively long time in my NGO and I did several studies before. First thing: when we start with problem description and problem analysis...how to choose the problem. I made several mistakes before because I tried to solve everything with one study. Eoin (Young, ICPA) was our mentor that year and he said ‘pick your problem that you could solve or that should be very concrete’. So, when you pick a good problem, you feel relief. Everything becomes easier: options are reasonable, you can do easier all the steps later.

Another aspect: options. Honestly, I wasn’t very familiar with the research methodology which was proposing the approach if you want to explore one aspect of social life or any problem, you have to find many different solutions that you should put on the table. Before, when I addressed some problems, I already had a solution in mind and I’m going with that solution from the beginning. Sometimes it’s good because you are focused on that particular solution, but you are blind for everything else...and for other stakeholders, other opinions and other options. That was second thing that was practically very useful for me: try to find different options, try to look wider.”

Learnings on advocacy also filtered through to Marko’s own organisation, especially the approach adopted to conducting advocacy:

“The third part was advocacy: We didn’t spend so much time on advocacy, but communication with target groups should be developed according to the policy recommendations. It’s not a universal thing. You have to chose your advocacy approach depending on the policy issues that you are solving. We take it into our work in GEA: We have different policy studies and each study has a different advocacy approach. One is like watchdog - you have to speak loud and have the public aware about that problem, and sometimes it’s behind the doors and you just have meetings with the policymakers. And if you can solve it with them, there is no need to speak loud about it.”

As evident from the last point, participation on the fellowship had a broader impact than just his own professional development, and Marko says the fellowship was one factor involved in changing the focus of GEA. He also explains the other factors contributing to GEA making the shift to a policy-oriented NGO and how research now frames the NGO’s work:

“The fellowship programme was also one of the reasons we decided to shift our organisational activities from a classic NGO towards a think tank”.

“We attached ‘centre for research study’ to GEA because we want to put focus on research, on policy analysis. The fellowship programme was also one of the reasons we decided to shift our organisational activities from a classic NGO towards a think tank. My colleague was also a fellow and both of us have some experience in policy analysis and policy development. So, we see the opportunities and the need for promotion of argument-based policy dialogue, especially in Banja Luka and Republika Srpska. Unfortunately, there are not so many people enabled to do such policy analysis. So, we want to use that knowledge we got through the programme and to go on in that direction.

Policy study or policy analysis usually serves as an initial base to target a real problem and following from that, we are trying to make projects. And if you look at our projects (things we are doing like traditional NGO), it’s always connected with labour market or employment, especially youth because we found it’s a very vulnerable group in BiH...So we are trying really to combine those two things, not to do separate things.”

Marko shares an insightful analysis of how this consolidation and more integrated and strategic approach between research and project work has made the organisation more sustainable:

“After research we are really focused on one or two issues that we should cover with projects. The difference between then and now is huge! In the beginning, we were just looking for funding opportunities...if we see a call for proposals, we are proposing an idea as a result of our brainstorming and there were ideas from tourism, ecology...from different sectors. We were very wide and it’s very hard to cover everything, to be experts in everything. We experienced that as very very problematic. Maybe for some time you will get some financing from donors, but in the long term it’s very hard to keep on track all those issues at the same time. So we changed our approach: first we choose the focus, sectors that we are interested in, then made initial research to find real problems, and try to use those problems as a basis for our projects.”





“In every aspect of my decision making and decision making that I can influence, I have a policy perspective.”

Miroslav’s story shows how the policy approach has become a core pillar in his work since the fellowship as Deputy Mayor of Sarajevo and also in agenda setting in the political party he is a member of - the Social Democrats. He has pushed for the adoption of a policy approach in public administration, as well as at the core of his party’s thinking.

Miroslav Živanović

Director, Forum of Left Initiative, Sarajevo

Fellowship year & research: 2006-2007 “Education and training in public administration”

You have no doubts when you start with this programme that it's going to be something of a huge impact on your professional life."

Miroslav came to the fellowship programme as an actor who bridged across sectors, from civil society to politics, with a particular interest in public administration after completing a post-graduate programme in State Management and Humanitarian Affairs. He explains his research focus and experience of the fellowship:

"I found out about the Policy Fellowship Development Programme and I understood on first look that this is going to be a serious programme, serious in terms of content, serious in terms of funds invested in people to be part of that and I decided to apply. At that point I was very very much involved and thinking about the role of public administration and of course, I was aware of the fact that we need

more training and education in the public administration and I decided to apply with this topic...and I was accepted.

You have no doubts when you start with this programme that it's going to be something of a huge impact on your professional life. This was my experience and impression."

The experience of the fellowship programme solidified Miroslav's commitment to the field of public policy and also contributed to him becoming more active in the political arena again. Miroslav explains how he was motivated to engage directly in politics in order to overcome limitations he experienced first-hand in his work in other sectors:

"Everything is very much connected with the fellowship, with my experience of the fellowship. Till that point, I was aware of the policy development mechanisms and everything, but I wasn't practising that quite in its totality. Now it's a different thing.

After the fellowship, I started to think more policy-oriented and I find out that again from the area of civil society and academic community, our impact on government decision making is seriously limited, and this was actually my additional motivation for political engagement. I'm politically active since 1997. When I was very young, I decided if you want to change something, you have to get politically engaged. So, I decided at that point to join the Social Democrats. But I was more active in civil society and academic community. But after this policy development programme, and together with some additional activities, again I was more politically engaged."

Miroslav tells of his journey to be elected deputy mayor of Sarajevo, and how he saw an urgent need for policy development in the administration upon realising that policy capacity was lacking:

“In 2010, I was asked to be a deputy mayor of the city of Sarajevo, and I was proposed by the Social Democrats which had at that moment majority in the city council...This was an excellent thing from the perspective of all the knowledge and skills I gained and everything. And I really decided to push forward this policy concept in the administration. And then I have confirmation of all the knowledge I had from the previous period, that their capacity for policy framing all their activities and everything is zero. They were completely unaware, not only of the policy development process, but of strategic decision making.”

Miroslav shares insight of how he set a policy agenda for the administration’s work and the success in seeing a comprehensive strategy adopted in 2012. However, this policy work and ambition was cut short when his party lost local elections.

“One of the things that I did as deputy mayor of Sarajevo was to initiate this strategy development...strategy of development of Sarajevo till 2020. And we tried to do this process by the book, with the socio-economic analysis, with all the communication with the civil society etc etc. It was really difficult because I had to pursue the administration to follow what I wanted to do and many other obstacles but nevertheless, by the end of 2012, the strategy was adopted. But what happened were these local elections: we lost the majority in the city council. And although I’m a member of the city council, we’re an opposition there and without really having an opportunity to pursue what we started there with the strategy.”

Since then, from the position of being in opposition, Miroslav has remained committed and active in setting a firm policy agenda in his political life. His description shows how his political and policy aims are aligned, especially regarding work in his party to establish a comprehensive policy development process:

“In the Social Democratic party, we have this particular board which is dealing with the development of social democracy in civil society and I’m also helping there in the policy development process. What I’m actually advocating for is the establishment of the policy development infrastructure within the party. I think at the moment this is also underdeveloped. We have some bodies which are responsible to define directions that we will have to follow and pursue, but it’s not a policy development. In the 2010 elections, we had this election programme based on five policies and this was a very important first step: based on consultations with the citizens, we defined certain policies. But when it comes to the content and the organisation of that content, it was an election programme, and not so much concrete policy.

And now I believe we have to go a step forward to pursue process which will lead to the formation of concrete policies. 2014 is the year of general elections in Bosnia. Maybe we will have a list of 30, 40, or 50 items we would like to introduce to the citizens. I would like to see policy behind each of these items, and this is my political ambition in this regard: to support building of this party infrastructure that will manage this process.”



Rijad's story shows how the fellowship made the space for him to learn practical policy research approaches and how as a government official, he was able to bring a new depth of insight and evidence to his discussions of effective evaluation approaches within the administration. Further, through these discussions, he could see the constraints of possible change which also got him interested to start, with a group of enthusiasts, an NGO, "Evaluation Society in BiH".



"It (conducting advocacy) is much easier because you have arguments, you have data, you have research behind."

Rijad Kovač

Director, Forum of Left Initiative, Sarajevo

Fellowship year & research: 2006-2007 "Education and training in public administration"

Rijad's case is an interesting experience of a public servant conducting policy research for the first time through the fellowship programme. Rijad explains how the fellowship provided impetus, space and means for him to actually go through the process of doing policy research:

"I had some idea about policy oriented research, but actually I had never participated in one, and I didn't go through formal training....the fellowship is almost like formal education, like learning in university. I did this research because I was interested in what's going on within the M&E area, but I never actually had time or resources...I was always in a rush, always busy, and I could never do that on my own. It was a good thing because it forced me to do the thing that I wished to do."

Rijad's research was directly tied to his position as Head of Department for Preparation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Documents in the Bosnian Directorate for Economic Planning. Rijad speaks of how the research conducted helped him to identify what was missing in the system towards institutionalising evaluation theory and practice:

"We all know in Bosnia there are almost no evaluations done. This is something that is not happening in Bosnia. The reasons: we had some assumptions about reasons but I tried to do that through research and analyse through research what are the real obstacles and real problems, why and what can be improved through evaluations as a tool of public policy. Evaluation theory and practice can be improved within government and society as a whole.

The topic of that year was accountability and I connected evaluations to accountability and I did research on capacities within government from legal framework, institutional framework, human resources and technical preconditions. Also, I started to think about building an evaluation society through practice and theory in a more systematic way. I also realised that some of the skills are there, but some are completely missing, and the perception and knowledge about evaluation and knowledge about policy research is also very limited."

In addition to identifying key gaps, Rijad also spoke of the benefits of conducting the research, especially in systematising his knowledge on the issue and how insights gained from the research pointed out the direction for taking his work forward:

"I knew many people in ministries and in NGOs, and I had an idea what's going on within this area. But it's one thing to have an idea, and another to have research done. So, this is what the fellowship actually helped me to do... Research also gave an idea of the state of the art what's going on within public service and what we need to do. And it was also summing up and making a frame for the bunch of knowledge I had picked up from different sides and different sources. So it was very useful."

Rijad provides an interesting glimpse into how research evidence can be used to conduct advocacy work within the government structure and the advantages of having such data:

"I had policy briefs and I had the opportunity to give them to people, people who work within...who are not decision makers in the sense that they are ministers, but they are highly ranked public servants. And also I had myself

“It (fellowship research) was making a frame for the bunch of knowledge I had picked up from different sides and different sources.”

a chance to impact on different working groups, through different meetings. Whatever working group I was in, I tried to impact, to ask for more of monitoring, more of evaluation, to ask for more of learning in that area. And what is important, I have data! It's not just that I'm telling in a meeting 'we don't have this' and 'we don't know what to do'. It's important to have data when you can tell them, for example, there are almost no databases within ministries which are a pre-requirement for any meaningful analysis or monitoring or evaluation, that only 15% of ministries have some capacities, and so on. It is much easier because you have arguments, you have data, you have research behind. Then they simply have to talk... they can say it is ok or not, but they have to

engage.”

In addition to continuing his work in public service, Rijad, with a group of enthusiasts, also set up an NGO “Evaluation Society in BiH” two years ago to advance the process of building an evaluation culture and practice, which he says “is a huge thing.” He describes the NGO as a ‘professional organisation’, focused on promoting the theory and practice of monitoring and evaluation as a tool to accountability. It also aims at helping to professionalise public service in the area of monitoring and evaluation. Rijad describes why the organisation was established, its ambition and describes an important capacity building initiative:

“It's a small group of enthusiastic people and we could not do much through the public service, through the government. If you want to get funding through the government, it's almost impossible...very difficult. You have so many procedures. So we decided: let's register this society as an NGO and then we can do things much quicker!

We had one big training in December 2013, which we brought among best lecturers in the world in the field of monitoring and evaluation to Bosnia: it is basically a mini-one week IPDET course which we call BADET Balkan Development Evaluation Training. IPDET is based in Canada, and it is a four week course. But we brought them to Bosnia for a much shorter course and we made it available to people in the region, and for public servants...And that's very important for me: Many public servants went through this training. It's high quality, certified training - you can go to Australia, Europe or Africa with this certificate, if you apply for a job in UN, WB or USAID...it's internationally recognised. We are thankful to USAID mission in Bosnia who supported the training in 2013 and provided scholarships to public servants and people from academia. We had people from 7 countries in the training and we plan BALDET 2014 in November 2014. Through this training we want to expose as many people as possible to the ideas of accountability in spending tax payers money, and to teach them the way how to improve current practice.

Basically what we want to do is make Bosnia a regional centre of excellence in this area.”



Mentor Reflections on the PDFP



Mentoring the BiH Fellows Program: Reflections



Leslie A. Pal

When I was asked – a decade ago! – to participate in the BiH OSF Fellowship program as an instructor and mentor, I was both eager and cautious. I had taught in a similar OSI program in Budapest, with outstanding candidates from around the region, so knew some of the challenges. But paradoxically, precisely because the Budapest program had such a wide variety of participants, it was possible (indeed, necessary) to be generic about the skills and aptitudes in developing policy papers. The BiH program would be BiH – the fellows would come from that country alone, and focus on national issues. And of course, the program was designed to do just that – attract some of the best and brightest, and help them do research and

publications and advocacy that would help the country move forward from its difficult past. So I had a toolkit and some skills to share, but they were going to be applied in a very specific and complicated context. BiH is gorgeous and wonderful and maddening, but it is also very, very complex.

And so we had a capacity building project around the research and writing of policy papers. Fair enough. I'd been doing that in my teaching in Canada and the US for years. The toolkit, or recipe book, is pretty simple. Pick a policy area, develop a focus on a key dimension, think about some causal variables that are making bad things happen, and develop recommendations to make

things better. I had piles of Canadian, US, and western European examples I could use, but I knew very little about BiH. For me, as a “mentor” that was **the first lesson – I had to learn something about the country before I could share any toolkits for solving its problems.** Fortunately, fellows were more than happy to educate me. **A second lesson** drew from the first – **the toolkit only goes so far. It has to be adapted to the problems you’re facing.** What do you do when statistics are unreliable? When you can’t do interviews because of “sensitivities”? When there is a slow, suffocating pessimism about getting anything done at all? So, for me, the early years were a process of learning, adapting, finding cases and illustrations, and building on what fellows themselves brought to the table.

The program was premised on the need to build policy analytic capacities – the sort of skills that are routinely taught in MPP and MPA programs in Europe and North America. These programs didn’t exist in BiH, and weren’t being taught. On the other hand, the international community was thick on the ground – governments, agencies, NGOs, foundations, consultants, think tanks, aid programs, international scholarships and bursaries, studies abroad. As a result, our fellows often had graduate degrees of one sort or another from BiH and leading European and American (few Canadian, alas) institutions, as well as some policy related experience. This was less true at the beginning, but intensified over the years. I also taught in a similar program in Mongolia, where these opportunities were not as abundant. The **third lesson** from this fact was that **one had to think carefully about what kind of capacity one was building.** Our BiH fellows needed much more tailored and specific training than their counterparts in Mongolia, who had almost no familiarity with policy development and advocacy. That said, it continued to be a pure pleasure to help fellows hone their usually brilliant ideas into something I call “do-able.” This meant a focused question, a clear line of argument, strong support, and implementable

recommendations. Don’t try to save the world in 30 pages.

A **fourth lesson** was that **no topic was too small for a policy analysis, and indeed, that small topics and small problems often were the best for this sort of exercise.** It allowed more focus, and gave some hope that something might be done – fix a school district, or amend history texts, rather than try to fix the educational system itself. A **fifth lesson** (for would-be fellowship designers) is that **group or teamwork yields richer results.** In the early years all projects were individual ones, but in later years we moved to joint or cooperative projects. I think the fellows got more out of the experience, and could leverage their combined resources into deeper work.

Personally, it was an unparalleled experience. I learned some of the limits of so-called universal best practice techniques in policy analysis. I met outstanding people possessed of passion and purpose. I spent time – all too little and limited – in a small town in a small country that was and will be a pivot in European history.



Eóin Young

International Centre for Policy Advocacy –
PDFP Trainer/Mentor

The programme started in a context where often fellows not only had to sell the ideas and proposals from their research, but also the idea of using research evidence in decision-making. Over the 10 years of the programme, a continually increasing number of stakeholders understand and value evidence, but significant obstacles still exist in making this an institutionalised part of decision-making in BH. Further, the supremely complicated administrative structure of the country coupled with a highly politicised post-war agenda present a context where there are few easy answers and even fewer rational responses. Despite these tremendously challenging circumstances, I feel fellows helped to create a solid foundation in which expertise and research evidence

cannot be easily discounted in decision-making in BH.

My role over the 10 years of the programme was as a trainer and mentor to the fellows. From a capacity development perspective, the basic idea of the fellowship was to select enthusiastic, young people who had social science research training and some experience in the NGO, academic and/or government sectors and turn them into policy analysts. Sounds like a logical next step, but for most it is indeed a challenging process. Reflecting on these years of work with fellows, it was really difficult to arrive at (only!) five lessons from the experience, but here are the ones that some hard fought self-editing produced.

1. You need to go deep in the context, not wide in the phenomena.

The biggest challenge for fellows in the steps to effective policy research/advice (and the place I constantly seemed to be pushing them!) was not just to look at the best practice of ‘what works’, but also to see ‘what fits’ in the local context. For many fellows they seemed initially to see their job as the identification of technology, rather than its application. However, once you begin to engage with the constraints of available budgets, the capacity of implementers and political acceptance in the multi-layered administrative structure of BiH, unravelling a policy puzzle where you get the information, incentives and instruments right, turns out to be way more effort and way more valuable than only looking at what is working in the UK and Germany.

2. The policy input matters, even if the recommendations are not accepted.

In the highly politicised environment of BiH over the last 10 years, there has been a tendency to oppose whatever the opposition is proposing for the sake of political point scoring – you say black, so I say white. Accessible policy input that becomes part of the debate can be an effective counterweight to such an approach, where the choices available are not only informed by the analysis, but the debate is also constrained in the options. In this way, politicians are forced to talk about the issue at hand within a framework that seeks to solve the policy problem on the ground and not just play the political game. To be sure, this does not often mean that they choose the option recommended in the analysis, but the potential for such an analysis to set the parameters of the debate should not be underestimated. This is a rather idealised picture of how the policy process should work and undoubtedly, we were not successful in influencing as many of these debates as we would have wanted over the last 10 years. But we were one of the programmes that did start setting this type of debate framing agenda when opportunities arose.

3. Don't think you are starting from nothing and trying to fix everything.

One of the most common challenges for fellows was that little in the way of in-depth policy research on their chosen topics was available when they started. Because of this situation, the rather dramatic response that often came back from fellows was that no-one has ever done anything on this before! I gave this syndrome a name – “primordialising the problem”! Of course, once you begin to scratch the surface, fellows soon realised that they are not the first person ever to ask such questions, comment on the issue or even do research. Especially important was to get them out of just academic sources and realise that all kinds of policy thinking is out there from multiple sources local and international, and that all kinds of commentators and media have opinions on the policy issues of the day. Such input may not be part of an established canon of expertise, but they are key sources in understanding the narratives that frame and drive a policy debate.

Second, a key element of the fellowship thinking was the importance of putting forward proposals that are feasible and implementable. As Les Pal often said in his training, we should focus on the first five steps of the change and not step 100. By putting forward proposals that seem relevant and realistic, they immediately have more legitimacy than a restatement of an ideal outcome and as such, it is much harder to ignore them in an advocacy discussion.

4. Connecting learning and doing from task to task was the key to success in the PDFP.

One of the biggest capacity development lessons was to need to design the overall capacity development approach by focusing on the task that is next in the programme for fellows, e.g. research design to policy analysis to writing and then advocacy planning. By always combining the learning (through training) and then supporting the doing (through mentor feedback on multiple drafts), we found fellows stayed engaged

throughout and continually built up their layers of understanding as we went from task to task.

During the pilot year in 2003, we assumed that fellows needed all the skills up front before beginning, i.e. do all the learning first and then let them at it. This is more logical of course, as it helps enormously to have all dimensions of the challenge ahead of you before you begin. But it just didn't work as a learning process, as all training and case work will hardly ever keep adults engaged - they need to see the direct relevance of the input to their own lives/work for meaningful learning to occur⁴.

The programme timeline (See table ?) is a reflection of these lessons learned. It should be noted that this version of the programme took us a number of years to work out. The flexibility, ingenuity and dedication of trainers, mentors and the programme manager was key in getting to this design.

5. Drafting and redrafting (and redrafting!) was where the real learning happened.

You can see in the numbers that each fellow produced and got feedback on seven draft papers (through research proposal, policy study and brief) in the fellowship cycle. The key issue in the development of policy skills is that the real learning does not come in the workshops, but in the fellow applying the knowledge to their own work and getting feedback on their next attempt. And then trying it again! I remember one fellow saying to me at the beginning of the process that she didn't understand why there was so much drafting in the fellowship - only to realise by the end that by digging deeper and deeper into drafts, this was where the real learning happened.

While BiH still faces many challenges in the future, the people on this programme never failed to impress me with their ambition, ingenuity and engagement and if they are any reflection of the calibre of future leaders in BH, these challenges will be met. However, if the fellowship has taught us anything it is that the route to delivering that change seems to be in staying realistic about the next steps and being engaged for the long haul.

4. Knowles, Malcolm (1978) *The adult learner: A neglected species*. 2nd ed. Oxford, England: Gulf Publishing.

Fellows & Research

2004

RESEARCH COMPLETED

Aida Spahić-Zekić	Impact of quality management standards to increase citizen participation in decision - making at the local level
Dino Đipa	Policy of testing students at universities in B&H: Testing Discrimination - The Case for Reform?
Rebeka Kotlo	Role of NGOs in building trust and good governance in Mostar
Aleksandar Draganić	Benchmarking in local government - Path for Bosnia and Herzegovina
Almir Maljević	The judicial approach to juvenile crime: Clarifying the application of educational recommendations in Sarajevo
Haris Abaspahić Nejra Nuna Cengić Mia Sidran	Adequate model of student participation in decision-making and quality assurance at Sarajevo University

2005

Adisa Omerbegović	Real exchange rate in B&H, the necessary adjustments in the context of macroeconomic stability and the EU accession
Adnan Efendić	Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path towards the European Union: macroeconomic challenges
Daria Duilović	Bologna vs. "vital national interest": Reform of Higher Education and European integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Darko Datzer	Prosecuting Corruption - what does not work?
Dejan Vanjek	Fighting corruption in B&H - institutional response?
Gorana Mlinarević	Initiate "taboos" and changing prevailing attitudes regarding gender (sex), sexual orientation, and people living with HIV
Natasa Zrilić	Economic Challenges for Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path of joining European Union
Reuf Bajrović	B&H municipalities and the European Union: the direct participation of citizens in policy-making at the local level

2006

Aleksandra Nikolić	Organic farming - Map of world food
Alija Mujčinagić	Electricity Market Review
Emir Dervišević	Fiscal equalization in the Federation of B&H
Irena Jankulov	Strong Fiscal Council: Magic Solution?
Lejla Huskić	Public Administration Reform in B&H dead letter
Majda Bećirević	Schools in B&H know how to include Roma children
Miroslav Živanović	Public administration reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Naida Trkić	Do you want to know how it spends taxpayers' money in B&H?
Nikolina Obradović	Registration of small enterprises in B&H: Implementation of the European Charter
Nisveta Osmić	Institutional infrastructure for the development of small and medium enterprises (SME sector) in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Taida Begić	Call to responsibly and professionally Civil Service in B&H

2007

Adnan Efendić	How many institutions are important for economic growth and European integration - Example of transition countries and Bosnia and Herzegovina?
Samra Šuškić Bašić	Allocation of Indirect taxes - the key to fiscal stabilization and efficiency in public spending
Aida Vežić	Participation of civil society organizations in the process of European integration
Naida Čaršimamović-Vukotić	From the lack of a single economic space within its boundaries to function in competitive EU market; Mission impossible for B&H?
Sanel Huskić	Bosnia and Herzegovina can be developed as the Republic of Ireland ... or not?
Milena Kozomara	What Bosnia needs to work on the issue of climate change?
Denisa Sarajlić Maglić	EU policy of democratization in B&H - Correct principles, wrong policy
Dragan Ivanović	Ethnic veto and the protection of minorities in the sub-national level in B&H
Amer Džihana	Between ethnic exclusivism and long-term stability
Nina Karađinović	Knowledge of the crime is the power to fight the crime
Šejla Mujanović	Step towards adequate continuing education of judges of the Court and the Prosecutor's Office of B&H

2008

Mirela Ibrahimagić	Taxation of labor in B&H
Svjetlana Derajić	The role of the B&H legislature in the process of joining the European Union "Euro-commitment and euro-capacity of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina"
Nina Branković	The recognition of foreign diplomas in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ognjen Đukić	Salaries in the public sector BH: harming the economy?
Selma Osmanagić Agović	Funding of civil society organizations from the budget of local institutions - case study Ministry of Civil Affairs
Amina Mulabdić	Religious involvement: Religious education for religious tolerance - steps toward a truly democratic society
Ahmet Alibašić	Religious education in public schools in B&H: towards a model that supports coexistence and mutual understanding
Emina Abrahamsdotter	Revisiting a model of religious education in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Sabina Čudić	Different religions under one roof: Towards inclusive education in B&H
Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović	"Small" religious minorities in the system of religious education in B&H: between invisibility and negative stereotypes

2009

Azra Bećirović Amer Demirović Rusmir Šabeta-	"The exercise of the conditions for membership in the European Union through better performance management in the courts"
Jasna Jelisić	Privacy public diplomacy: the construction of European support for B&H's EU membership
Arben Murtezić Mersudin Pružan Samir Husić	The fulfillment of the political criteria for EU accession: Improving the ethical standards of judges
Nebojša Kuruzović Slađana Jagodić	Poor coordination in the process of harmonization of B&H legislation with the Acquis Communautaire: a major cause of the slow process of European integration
Anđela Lalović	"Bosnia and Herzegovina - Radnilend" Capacity Assessment inspection work in protecting the rights of workers "
Lidija Pisker	"The quality of teaching in secondary schools in B&H: Teachers as object and subject of change"
Mirna Jančić Doyle	"To provide quality education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a new curriculum through the effective work of the Conference of Ministers of Education in B&H"
Jasmina Gavrankapetanović	Providing quality education in B&H: Quality Teaching in Higher Education-University sector "
Ehlimana Alibegović	Goro-Standards-based learning outcomes: Case study of the Agency for Standards and Assessment "

2010

Elma Demir	Supportive regulatory environment for civil society: social responsibility in the legal sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Adrijana Hanušić	Mechanisms for implementation of the decisions of the Constitutional Court
Jasmina Ivanović	Strengthening the accountability of parliaments in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the supervision of the implementation and harmonization of legislation
Marko Martić	Driving in the “idle” of Employment bureau in RS and the FB&H
Alma Šabeta	Regulation of lobbying in B&H: International standards and practices applying to the internal
Tatjana Slijepčević	Redefining and strengthening the role of NGOs in the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Amra Fetahović	Funding of political parties, transparency of donations
Amra Karačić- Hodžić	How to achieve transparency and accountability of government: Enabling Access to Information
Rijad Kovač	Improving accountability by strengthening the system of policy-making based on facts
Aid Smajić	Bosnia and Herzegovina looking for a civic culture of public accountability: The role of religious education

2011

Marija Lučić Čatić	The criminal prosecution of high-ranking politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Emina Čerimović	Strengthening accountability: Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Mirela Kadić	High quality and timely fiscal statistics as a key instrument for achieving fiscal responsibility of governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Davor Marko	The role of professional media organizations in the promotion of professionalism and accountability in the media
Damir Mehmedbasic	Monitoring Business Development of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Bank
Vanja Milašinović	Promotion of accountability in public spending through the establishment of appropriate control mechanisms
Jasmin Ramović	Improving accountability for Intelligence - Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina”

2012

Edina Vejzagić	Direct responsibility: Making the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina accountable to the citizens
Azra Atlić Smajlović	Method of forming municipal commissions for gender equality and improving capacity to monitor implementation of the B&H Law on Gender Equality and increase gender sensitivity at the local level
Merima Avdagić	Integrate the principles of gender equality and programming mechanisms of public finance: Birth responsible budgeting as a good economy
Emina Ćosić	Cultural practices / policies and social changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Snježana Đuričić	Culture management at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Challenges and Opportunities
Edina Đurković	The role of public testimony as a generator of cultural memory in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Adnan Kadribašić	Critical analysis of the level achieved real representation of the women interests applying quotas
Adnan Ovčina	Status of internally displaced women in Bosnia and Herzegovina today-Study of real shortcomings and policy framework related to access to employment
Predrag Puharić Herzegovina	Equable is not equality: women in the prison system in Bosnia & Herzegovina
Maja Savić	Bojanić-Capacity building in the public cultural sector: Improving the management of culture in performative and theatrical institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H SIU)

2013

Selma Mehmedić-Džonlić Mia Karamehić	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Ministry of Social Capital"
Jasmin Halebić Alma Bajrić Boriša Mraović	Nino Serdarević - Can migration networks substantially reduce foreign investors' information asymmetry?"
Aiša Telalović	A Small but Valuable Chance? Outsourcing in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Emir Skopljak Azra Pilavdžić	Free zones as a tool to attract foreign direct investments in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Nađa-Azra Uzunović Zana Karkin	Public-Private Partnerships in Health Care in Bosnia and Herzegovina

“The fellowship was a new way of thinking, and also a new way of training people.”

“This programme is one of several that have the reputation of being very important for developing research skills in this country.”

“If you check fellows CVs, you can see the fellowship was a really important step in their careers.”

“The combination of learning by doing through research and trainings really builds capacities of researchers.”

Quotes from alumni fellows focus group

