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CALL FOR PAPERS
INTERNATIONAL (HYBRID) CONFERENCE
“SCIENCE MEETS PUBLIC POLICIES”
11-12 APRIL, 2022
Novi Sad – SERBIA

**Co-organized by the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad and Public Policy
Secretariat of the Government of Serbia
under the Erasmus+ CBHE project Public policy making and analysis (PPMA)**

Today's society encounters big and complex challenges which policymakers must try to address. For example, the reaction to Covid pandemics across the world has shown the conflicting nature of policy problems and solutions. It is similar with other important global issues related to sustainable development, climate change, energy transition, food security and migration. Similar issues apply to more local problems faced by middle income countries like Serbia, such as high air pollution, low access to basic facilities including drinkable water and sanitation, depletion and suboptimal management of natural resources, depopulation, high poverty, low technology absorption etc. Policy problems are often complex due to opposed priority values of different groups in the society reflected in their different understanding of underlying policy goals (e.g. health or income in case of Covid related policy measures). To deal with these and similar societal challenges, policymakers need to use evidence obtained by scientists. In addition, policymakers from their side can even streamline the directions for research by suggesting the relevant priority research questions. Moreover, the technology and data availability has progressed to the extent that they offer new possibilities to solve some important policy problems. Big data, artificial intelligence, virtual reality can become a new tool to support policy analysis and design of novel policy solutions. Although the science-policy dialogue has been highlighted and put on high level by many developed countries, the level of dialogue is on more rudimentary level in the rest of the world. In Serbia, for example, very few policy decisions rely on ex-ante evaluation and scientific evidence. The most evident cases in recent period are related to sustainability issues, and have resulted in massive escalation and public mobilization. For example, the official decisions to issue permits to businesses for exploitation of natural resources faced controversy. In one case, this centered on building of mini hydropower plants, in another it was the construction of a lithium mine; both were strongly opposed by the scientific community, which brought evidence to the public, warning of the harmful effects on the environment.



Science and public administration have two very different cultures. Scientific research is produced in an academic environment with almost no hierarchy, and characteristics like creativity, innovation, and experimentation are highly valued. Researchers are motivated by desire to produce objective evidence and publish it after peer review process. Science uses formalized, often mathematized, abstract way of communicating findings including a reserve in terms of level of certainty. In contrast, politicians are driven to answer questions of public policy promptly. They are sensitive to public mood, and to often conflicting interests of different groups that they try to reconcile through acceptable solutions. These policymaking tasks are supported by civil servants, who operate in highly hierarchical environments and are primarily concerned about the legitimacy of decisions made through the official rules. Driven by this main concern, public administration develops a rather conservative culture, with low level of openness for innovation and flexibility while strongly relying on predefined procedures and regulations. Unlike scholars, civil servants are rarely specialized for specific narrow topics, as they are expected to deal with a large range of policy problems. The significant differences between these two cultures has recently been represented in a paradox manner in the sarcastic movie “Don’t look up” which quickly gained global popularity.

In order to face societal issues which are often complex, sometimes described as wicked problems, the two worlds – science and policy – must approach to collaborate. Civil servants and politicians need to learn how to get, interpret and use the relevant scientific results. On the other hand, scientists need to understand the functioning of the state and the overall political dynamics around decision process linked to public policy, as a precondition for channeling their results and data in a way that could generate impacts on the society. A part of the solution is proper educational programs at all levels of education.

Faculty of Sciences of the University of Novi Sad has developed novel lifelong learning programs in public policy analysis under the Erasmus+ KA2 project for capacity building in higher education “Public policy making and analysis”. These courses are delivered by the interdisciplinary team of university professors and civil servants working in the area of public policy from the Public policy secretariat of the Government of Serbia. They cover topics on policy making from both academic and practitioners’ perspective. The curricula include topics such as policy cycle and related concepts, economics of public sector, policy evaluation and critical thinking, quantitative methods for public policy analysis, and public policy in the area of environment, agriculture and food. The courses are designed for different groups participating in policy process: civil servants, researchers, representatives of the civil society and business sector. The rich experience resulting from the delivery of the courses over the previous year brought valuable insights on the state and places for improvement of science-policy links in Serbia and in the region. The conference is intended to initiate the discussion and present the potential for science-policy dialogue. It should be used as a place for exchange of experiences and ideas on how to improve the outreach of knowledge produced by scientific community for better addressing public policy problems. This is the first conference of this kind in Serbia, offering unique perspective to the relevant knowledge and skills important for both policymakers and researchers.



Call for Papers

This conference will focus on topics on a crossroads between science and public policy which can put more light on the ways to strengthen these links.

We welcome the contributions on the use of scientific evidence to improve specific policies in the broadest framework of sustainable development topics like environment policy, climate related social responses, sustainable use of natural resources, demographic issues, migration, health policy, and local economic development.

We also encourage empirical and theoretical contributions related to the use of data science methods and other scientific and innovative approaches (e.g. experiments) to strengthen the quality of evidence based decisions on public policies.

Last but not least, we encourage contributions reflecting on specific education and governance topics which highlight the practices and methods for making scientific evidence more “consumable” to policy makers and “impactful” for the society in Serbia and beyond.

Interdisciplinary contributions combining different scientific fields from both “hard” sciences notably data science, physics, geography, environmental and agricultural studies, chemistry, biology, as well as social sciences and humanities like economics, demography, public health, political sciences, sociology, history, psychology are particularly welcome.

The program will include the following sessions (final program will be communicated in the second circular, by mid-March):

- Big data, surveys and experiments for public policy
- Science for public policy: sustainable development issues
- Education for public policy

Preliminary list of keynote speakers:

David Mair, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission
Dimitar Toshkov, Leiden University, The Netherlands

Submission of Abstracts

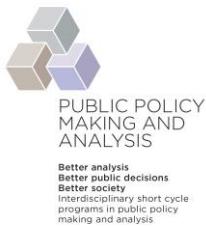
Submissions should be made in the form of abstract (max. 500 words) including the aim of the paper, the proposed methodology and the expected results, in word document format;

All submitted abstracts must include authors' full name, affiliation and contact details for corresponding author, such as address, phone, and e-mail.

Contributions should be sent by email to:

Jasna Atanasijević: jasna.atanasijevic@dmi.uns.ac.rs

Tatjana Tanasijević: tatjana.tanasijevic@rsjp.gov.rs



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Publishing Opportunity

The special issue of the Sustainability Journal (<https://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability>) “Science and Education for Public Policy – Towards Sustainable Development”, IF 2020: 3.51, JCR Q2 (environmental sciences), Q1 (guest editors Prof. Jasna Atanasijević and Prof. Slobodan B. Marković) will be dedicated to selected papers presented on the conference.

Important dates

Abstract submission deadline: **March 1st, 2022**

Decisions will be communicated: **March 20th, 2022**

Submission of selected papers for publication in special issue of the Sustainability Journal: from **February 1st to July 31th, 2022**

Location

The Conference will take place at the following physical address:

University of Novi Sad – Rectorate building – multimedia hall 1st floor
Dr Zorana Djindjića 1, 21002 Novi Sad

and online via webex link which will be communicated to all registered participants. Introductory and final sessions will be streamlined to broader public.

Registration

Formal registration is automatically approved by acceptance of the submitted abstract. There will be no conference fee.

For participants physically present at the conference location, a conference dinner and an excursion visit of Novi Sad (European capital of culture 2022, <https://novisad2022.rs>) will be organized.

Scientific Committee

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