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## **THE ROLE OF FRANCE IN STRENGTHENING SCIENCE IN SERBIA AND THE WESTERN BALKANS: BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND SCIENCE DIPLOMACY\*\***

### **Resume**

France has a long tradition of cultural and scientific influence in the Balkan region, and historically especially in Serbia and in the countries formed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Kingdom of Yugoslavia). The aforementioned influence, which followed its economic and political influence, was founded not only on the basis of the Alliance in the Great War (1914–1918), but primarily on the basis of the education and training of the Serbs and Balkans at the Sorbonne and at other French universities. After returning to their homeland, they not only occupied key positions in the state administration and reached ministerial positions, but also founded scientific disciplines and continued cooperation with their French professors and scientists. This historically long scientific cooperation, which showed elements of „science diplomacy”, was also a foundation for

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\*\* The paper is the result of the author's activities on the projects of the Institute for Political Studies, financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, as well as activities realized within the project Strengthening and perspectives of scientific cooperation in the Western Balkans, financed by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, accomplished in cooperation with the INALCO (Paris, France), the Institute for Political Studies (Belgrade, Serbia), the Faculty of Philology (Nikšić, Montenegro) and the Faculty of Law (Bitolj, North Macedonia), as well as non-academic partners (EUROPANOVA Academia and Cercle).

creating France's scientific cooperation with Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania (the countries of the Western Balkans, under which France also includes Kosovo\*<sup>1</sup>). Through the analysis of available documents, press, interviews and statements of officials and diplomats, as well as scientists participating in joint projects, our main goal is to research the role of France in strengthening scientific cooperation in Serbia and the Western Balkans. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results of the "Pavle Savić" cooperation program, scientific cooperation in the Danube region and ES-Balk program, enable the observation of France's activities in the Balkans in the context of the scope of scientific diplomacy. Our research shows that since the Strategy for the Western Balkans (2019), France has been continuously committed to the development of political, economic and cultural cooperation with the countries in the Balkans, with more intensive scientific cooperation in accordance with the basic principles of France's science diplomacy strategy. It is observed that France insists on regional projects in the field of science, which contain a strong European component. Paper give recommendations for further cooperation in the field of science. The focus is on the special importance of the transfer of knowledge and the role of science in the framework of diplomacy, and therefore the role of France in the Balkans will also be research through this prism.

**Keywords:** France, Serbia, Western Balkans, science, scientific cooperation, science diplomacy

## INTRODUCTION:

### SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND SCIENCE DIPLOMACY OF FRANCE

France's scientific cooperation strategy shows a tendency to reach the power of influence in international relations based on the results of science and the involvement of scientists and university associates in the field of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. As a nuclear power

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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to status and is in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/1999 and the Opinion of the International of the Court of Justice on the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo

and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, as well as *the main engine* of the European Union, France is a key factor in the most advanced and fastest growing scientific fields, which are imperative for the future. The focus of science diplomacy is scientific cooperation and exchange, mobility of professors, scientists and students, as well as the transfer of knowledge and experience (Fähnrich 2015). France strives to improve the space for academic work and activities, as well as conditions and study opportunities, and the level of development of international cooperation is best illustrated by the data that 65% of scientific publications are produced in collaboration with researchers outside France or with partner countries, 400,000 foreign students are enrolled in French higher education in 2022, with France being the sixth host country for international students (ahead of the UK, USA, Australia and Canada).<sup>2</sup> Important lever of influence is the hosting international organizations, including ten with missions at least partially in the field of science and technology, such as the UNESCO and the European Space Agency. Developing student's exchanges and attracting students through the promotion of the French higher education is a pathway for France to create a political, economic and scientific elite that would create the diplomacy.

A characteristic of the French science diplomacy, as well as its educational, scientific and cultural policies, is the intertwined and strong cross-sectorial cooperation, especially between the line ministries – the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. France directs scientific cooperation through the framework of the EU and the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations. “In many states, French scientific counsellors and attachés are more numerous than those posted in the embassies of other world powers” (Ruffini 2020). There are five priorities of French science diplomacy. The first is aimed at increasing the visibility, influence and attractiveness of the French research at the global level. Establishing partnerships based on excellence and further strengthening France's commitment to global scientific issues is another priority. The third is the promotion of research for the development and connection of companies with French actions and financing. Promoting and financing the international mobility of researchers is the fourth priority, while the

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<sup>2</sup> Discours de Sylvie Retailleau à l'occasion des Journées du Réseau du ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères 2023.

fifth is strengthening support for the innovation network, through the development of public-private partnerships (Kolaković 2023b).<sup>3</sup>

Science diplomacy is one of the tools for global influence, as well as an instrument for deepening its bilateral relations (Ruffini 2017; Young, Flink and Dall 2020). In order to achieve the strategies of science diplomacy, different mechanisms, programs and activities are used. They include: support for the mobility of researchers or specific research programs, the establishment of higher education and research institutions abroad. All these elements are included in the French international cooperation in the field of science, as well as in the strategy of science diplomacy. The focus is on French expertise and assistance in research development. French initiatives in science are “in line with the principles which guide the diplomatic action of France: multilateralism, solidarity with the poorest countries, and support for an European response” (Ruffini). Of course, there are differences in the context of regions and countries, and special cooperation is organized with African countries. Also, in the period since the new Strategy for the Western Balkans (2019)<sup>4</sup>, there are noticeable tendencies for science to occupy a more significant place in diplomatic activities in the Western Balkans and in countries striving for the European integration (Todorović Lazić 2021; Todorović-Lazić, Kolaković 2022, 191–237; Kolaković 2023a).

An important reference of French excellence in science is the position of French universities in international academic rankings, such as the Shanghai Ranking. In 2023, France is in the fourth position in the world, and the university institutions ranked in the top 50 are: Paris-Saclay, Paris Sciences et Lettres – PSL and La Sorbonne.<sup>5</sup> France is also well positioned in other international thematic rankings, such as the Times Higher Education World University Ranking where France has two institutions in the top 50 in: physical sciences, arts and humanities (PSL and Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne). Also, France hosts two large scientific infrastructures – CERN and ITER, which are of global importance for the development of science and society. From all of the above, it is obvious that France combines fundamental research with technological development and innovation at a high level, which also implies cooperation with the economy.<sup>6</sup> French universities and French

<sup>3</sup> France Diplomatie, *Le rayonnement scientifique de la France à l'étranger* 2023.

<sup>4</sup> *Stratégie française pour les Balkans occidentaux* 2023.

<sup>5</sup> 2023 Academic Ranking of World Universities.

<sup>6</sup> France Diplomatie, *Le rayonnement scientifique de la France à l'étranger* 2023.

campuses abroad, established in a large number of countries, academically and financially supported through the program of inter-university cooperation, are a good way to use the excellence of the French higher education system. The role played by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the universities that send professors, experts and/or programs (tools) and create work platforms are recognized as very important. The international impact of the French higher education and university cooperation achieved within the aforementioned frameworks. Also, the French system of higher education and professional training of students is constantly being improved, which is also important for French society. “Diplomacy of influence” – “the promotion of the French language, especially through the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie and related institutions, is one of its major levers, as is the broader diffusion of ideas and norms” but also important institutions are: the Expertise France, the France Education, the French international technical cooperation agency, disseminates standards, working methods and best practices in about a hundred countries, as well as the France Alumni digital platform allows to unite, inform and guide foreign students who studied in the French higher education system (Ruffini 2020). All of the above is also important in the context of scientific cooperation between France and the countries of the Western Balkans.

## **SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION OF FRANCE WITH SERBIA IN THE PAST**

France was an important symbol of freedom, culture and intellectual inspiration even for the first generation of Serbs who created the modern Serbian state, and especially since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the systematic and planned education of the Serbian students began at the European universities. The foundation for the beginning of scientific cooperation between two geographically distant countries had been created when education of the Serbian students began in France in 1841. Researches systematized the contacts and connections that Serbian scholars and professors built in France in the period from 1894 to 1914 (Trgovčević 2003; Kolaković 2016), as well as the way of forming an elite (political and cultural) that brought Serbia closer not only to France, but also to the countries of the West. On the French side, the greater political and economic interest in the Balkans since the Crimean War (1856), and especially since the Franco-Russian Agreement (1893), influenced

the bigger support for learning the French language, which is an important component of the development of scientific cooperation (Kolaković 2021a; Kolaković 2023). Financial support for language courses, as well as the work of the French Alliance, were enabled due to the return of the former students who took positions in ministries, state administration, schools, faculties (later from 1905 the University), and joined in the Associations of Friends of France (Kolaković 2020). Rise of scientific and cultural cooperation between France and Serbia created a base of scientists who later collaborated in crucial years for Serbia (the Annexation crisis, the Balkan wars and the Great War) (Kolaković 2012, 199–212; Kolaković 2017, 330–352; Kolaković 2018, 83–106).

The cooperation between French and Serbian scientists, at the turn from the 19<sup>th</sup> into 20<sup>th</sup> century, created the foundation for the study of several scientific fields in Serbia, and it was similar with other countries in the Balkans as well. The basis for such an important influence of France was the result of the education of young Balkans at French universities. During their studying, they built connections with their French professors, and further improved themselves and gathered around associations, such as L'Association franco-slave (the French-Slavic Association) and L'Association des étudiants serbes à Paris – Zora (the Association of Serbian Students in Paris – Zora) (since 1911). Being limited by the scope of one article, we will mention only a few examples. By establishing the Department of Mineralogy with Geology at the Great School in Belgrade and by launching the journal “Geološki anali”, Jovan Žujović, the first Serbian educated geologist under the auspices of cooperation with the School of Anthropology in Paris and the College de France laboratory, affirmed geology as a science in Serbia. Also, he was the very first among Serbian scientists who fully understood the importance of cooperation with scientists from other countries (Đurić 2014). Gabriel Millet, who discovered the first great “Paleologue epoch” in art and the first of the French researchers who included the monuments of post-Byzantine art, connected with Grgur Jakšić, a French student and Serbian diplomat. After visiting Serbia in 1906, introduced numerous knowledge about Serbian medieval monuments into the French and world science (Ćirić 2007; Preradović 2021). Mihailo Petrović Alas, the first Serb to attend the famous L'École Normale Supérieure, was a student and later a colleague of the distinguished French mathematicians: Charles Hermite, Émile Picard and Paul Painlevé. His doctorate, in the field of differential equations, caused great interest in professional circles. Émile

Picard, a French mathematician and member of the French Academy, collaborating with his student Alas, contributed to the theory of differential equations. Mihailo Petrović was also a member of the French Society of Mathematicians, in whose newsletters he published 14 papers, in cooperation with his French colleagues. Within the *Comptes rendus* of the French Academy, Mihailo Petrović published 30 professional texts, and this cooperation enabled the construction of the Belgrade mathematics school, which is still of great importance today (Trifunović 1982).

Cooperation in the field of social and humanistic sciences did not have an exclusively scientific character, because most scientists in Serbia also held various state functions or had a significant role in social life (for example, Milovan Milovanović, Milenko Vesnić, Jovan Žujović, Jovan Cvijić, Bogdan Popović, Albert Malet, Émil Haumant, Ernest Denis and Gaston Gravier) and participated in diplomatic missions in France, Serbia and the Balkans (Kolaković 2016). The interweaving of socio-political cooperation and the Masonic ties with purely scientific cooperation is a characteristic of the relationship between French and Serbian scientists and professors until the Great War period and represents an important basis for deep French political, economic and cultural influences in Serbia and alliances in the war, where the struggle was fought on the front of scientific propaganda (Kolaković 2017). Until the interwar period, the cooperation of the French and Serbian scientists as a multidirectional process, not only resulted in the strengthening of diplomatic activities, but also contributed to the emergence and development of scientific disciplines and the appearance of new discoveries, promoting the importance of education and science as the basis of progress.

During the Great War (1914–1918), the scientists of France and Serbia played an important role in the defence of national interests and in reconstruction of the post-war world, especially in the context of the new state of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) and its multiple ties with France, which were not only scientific and cultural, but also political and economic (Dimić 2005; Sretenović 2008; Sretenović 2018; Krivokapić 2012; Kolaković 2020). France also awarded scholarships for education in France, whereby a significant part of the scholarship holders obtained the highest scientific titles and awards for their doctoral dissertations, continuing the paths of scientific cooperation from the era of the Kingdom of Serbia, and the scientific cooperation from the era before 1914 was also continued. The Institute of Slavic Studies in Paris, which was founded in 1923 in the



house of Ernest Denis, played a major role in facilitating scientific cooperation (Kolaković 2020). The idea of eternal French-Serbian friendship, which arose on the basis of joint warfare and the acceptance of Serbian students and refugees in France during the Great War, transformed into French-Yugoslav friendship and became the driving point of French cultural and scientific activities in the new state (Kolaković 2022). The importance of French scientific thought for the development of the Serbian (Yugoslav) science in the interwar period is evidenced by the texts of Ivan Đaja, Siniša Stanković, Vojislav Arnovljević, Jovan Đorđević and Božidar Marković, which were published in the book *France on July 14, 1938* [*Francuska 14. juli 1938*].

Their perceptions of the French academic life and its specificities are best described by the words: “French science bears the hallmarks of the French spirit. It is characterized by several precious features that are especially dear to those who do not imagine it for themselves, but who see in it the progress of humanity on the path of good and betterment. In almost all sciences, at the very beginning, we find the great names of French scientists” (Đaja 1938, 109). Đaja, Stanković, Arnovljević, Đorđević and Marković were role models for the development of the scientific disciplines they dealt with and tried to develop in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (biology, medicine, physiology, chemistry, law, sociology, etc.). At the time of complex events before the Second World War, former French students emphasize the contribution of France to world science, its individualistic spirit as “the first condition of scientific originality”, as well as “the clarity and simplicity of experimental means” (Đaja 1938, 110). They highlighted physiologist Claude Bernard, chemist and biologist Pasteur, Pierre and Marie Curie, Louis de Broglie, the founder of wave mechanics, as guideposts needed in the development of science in the Balkans. Positivism in science, as the spirit of the epoch, is transmitted in this way to the Serbian (the Yugoslav) science and influences its further development. This is visible both, in the development of experimental medicine and laboratory research, as well as in the application of the methods of sociology and other social and humanistic sciences, where Émile Durkheim, Henri Berr and Marc Bloch were the role models. Jovan Đorđević, writing about the social sciences in France at that time, says that “the wealth and value of data about society and man [...] the method and the spirit with which they are imbued” are one of the “most brilliant victories of the mind” (Đorđević 1938, 136). He especially emphasized the presence of an “international spirit” and



“humanism”, i.e. “service to man” (Đorđević 1938, 138–139), as well as that “Science is a great thing in itself. But it is even greater if it is directed towards universal human goals. French science has always been all about the progress and improvement of humanity” (Đaja 1938, 111).

Although there were attempts and even good examples of cooperation in the period after 1945, scientists did not remain such an important part of public diplomacy in the framework of Franco-Yugoslav relations. Again, even here in the time of the new Yugoslavia (SFRJ), the main role retained connections, contacts and scientific cooperation achieved before the Second World War. A special place in the cooperation of French and Serbian (Yugoslav) science after 1945, which has its influence to this day, is reflected in the career, scientific discoveries and activities of the Serbian physicist and chemist Pavle Savić (1909–1994). He collaborated with Irene Joly-Curie, daughter of Marie Curie, for five years to solve the problem of the origin of radioactivity, during which he was expected to receive the Nobel Prize. Their work became the basis for the calculation of chain reactions in nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons (Samardžić 2019). A former scholarship holder of the French government (in 1935) at the Radium Institute (today’s Curie Institute), as a professor of physical chemistry at Belgrade University after 1945, not only continued to push the boundaries of science through new scientific discoveries in cooperation with his French colleagues, but also institutionally developed science in the new state, by founding the Institute in Vinča (1948) (Bondžić 2016, Bondžić 2022).

Although it seemed that the new era at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which symbolically marked the fall of the Berlin Wall, would lead to changes that would enable a more developed overall and especially scientific cooperation of the Balkans with European countries, including France, the events of the war denied these expectations. For Serbian science, this was a particularly challenging time because many young scientists left the country, scientific journals and cooperation were closed because of political sanctions and lack of financial resources (Lolić 2006, 122). The bloody end of Yugoslavia, together with the political attitudes of France in this period (Mladenovic 2015), also shaped scientific cooperation, which was losing its importance, although good examples from history, of which we mentioned only a few due to the scope of the work, remained alive to remind us of the rich tradition.

## **SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION BETWEEN FRANCE AND SERBIA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, France shown an interest in developing scientific cooperation with the countries of the Balkans, based on the traditions from the past. Depending on the transition processes and strategies of the European integration of the countries in this area, connecting of scientists, organizing cooperation and mobility took place with variable intensity. France, during the mandate of Emmanuel Macron, continues to nurture science diplomacy as an essential part of its positioning in international relations and achieving influence, and sees education as “the best defense against obscurantism because it forms minds. Education gives future generations, especially women, the freedom of choice: the choice to continue their studies, the choice to train for a job” (Chahed 2018). Therefore, a significant part of the activities during the first, but also in the second mandate, is directed towards the development of scientific cooperation and student mobility, and from 2019, when the Strategy of France for the Western Balkans was published, scientific cooperation has a special place in the development of relations between France and the countries in the Balkans. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Europe of the Republic of France, in cooperation with Campus France and France Education National, as well as through partnerships with the respective ministries (of foreign affairs, education and science, technological development) of other countries, is the framework of scientific cooperation, which has a role of, not only transfer knowledge, technology and exchange of scientists, but also of science diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> Projects of university exchange, joint degrees or other mobility programs such as Erasmus are supported financially. France is recognized as a country of science, developed international cooperation and new technologies. Therefore, in addition to economic and political cooperation, this segment is also important for Serbia and the other countries of the Western Balkans. However, there is no signed Agreement on scientific and technical cooperation between France and Serbia, and therefore scientific and technical cooperation is carried out through two programs. Cooperation is legally regulated on the basis of a contract between the Ministry of Science, Technology and Development of the Republic of Serbia (the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation) and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign

<sup>7</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs 2023.

Affairs of the Republic of France. In addition to this Agreement, between the Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia (the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation) and the National Center for Scientific Research of the Republic of France CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique) there is also an Agreement on scientific cooperation (Kolaković 2021a).

Based on these legal frameworks, in every two years, within the framework of the Hubert Curien – Pavle Savić program, a competition for co-financing of scientific and technological cooperation is being announced. Since the publication of the Strategy for the Western Balkans in 2019, in addition to various segments of political and economic cooperation, as well as cultural, France has also initiated a new scientific cooperation, which is evidenced by its inclusion in the multilateral projects of the Danube cooperation (Kolaković 2023a) and later in bilateral and multilateral scientific cooperation projects ES-Balk projects from 2021.<sup>8</sup> The mentioned projects are aimed at starting new scientific partnerships between French and foreign scientific teams, as well as promoting the mobility of young researchers. Projects are being selected by a joint commission (composed of representatives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and/or the diplomatic mission and the foreign partner – usually representatives of the ministries of science and/or education) based on scientific excellence and the fund allocated for financing. Projects cover all scientific fields, and a multidisciplinary approach is supported, as well as establishing new collaborations. In order to gain a complete insight into French-Serbian scientific cooperation, it is important to analyse the bilateral cooperation in the field of science and technological development known as the Hubert Curien – Pavle Savić, which has been going on since 2003.

This year marks the twenty-year anniversary of bilateral cooperation projects between France and Serbia in the field of science and technological development. Recognized as Hubert Curien – Pavle Savić partnerships (PHC), they are one of the ways of achieving scientific cooperation between French and Serbian scientific research institutions

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<sup>8</sup> The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Solidarity Funds for Innovative Projects, civil societies, Francophonie and human development. Higher education in the Western Balkans, ES-Balk CALL FOR PROJECTS 2021 2023.

and faculties.<sup>9</sup> France has been implementing this type of project for over 30 years, in coordination with 60 partner countries, and if we talk about the Western Balkans, which is particularly important in contact with European integration, this kind of cooperation exists only with Serbia. In the period from 2006 to 2020, 353 project applications from various scientific fields were submitted, of which 134 were selected for funding. The data show that the number of applications and funded projects increases with each public call, as well as that 17 new research groups from France and Serbia received funding during each call (Scientific impact of the program PAVLE SAVIC (2006-2020)).<sup>10</sup> So far, ten invitation cycles have been organized, lasting two years each, and a larger number of applications have been present since 2014. Teams are formed on the basis of earlier contacts and cooperation, which is evidenced by the fact that 85% of earlier partnerships already existed in the format of commentaries, joint publications and conferences.<sup>11</sup> Analysis of the participation and success of realized projects shows that developed cooperation dominates in the field of natural and technical sciences. For example, in the period 2018/2019, 19 projects were implemented, one of those being from the social and humanistic field, and in the 2019/2021 cycle (extended from 2020 to 2021 due to the corona pandemic), two of the total 20 projects were from the social and humanistic sciences. One of the good examples of traditional cooperation are the joint projects of the Institute for Nuclear Sciences Vinča with French institutions. Projects and cooperation within medicine and pharmacy are also common, and will likely have more support in the coming period, as well as projects covering cooperation in the fields of ecology, electrical engineering, robotics, new technologies and physics. Out of a total of 134 funded projects, in the period 2006 – 2020, 19% each are from the fields of biology and chemistry, 14% from agronomy and ecology, 13% from physics, 10% from electrical engineering, 8% from astronomy, while at the back are humanities 7 % and social sciences 1%, as well as mathematics 5%. There is a noticeable smaller number of projects in the field of social and humanities, and most of them are focused on history, political sciences

<sup>9</sup> France Diplomatie 2023; Ministarstvo nauke tehnološkog razvoja i inovacija Republike Srbije 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Le ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche 2023; MEAE 2021, 2–4.

<sup>11</sup> Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de l'Innovation - DAEI / Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères 2021, 6–8.

and language. Among the project managers, who mostly work at universities, 61% are between the ages of 40 and 55, and only 17% are under 40, which is possibly the result of earlier partnerships, and the data also indicate that progress into higher scientific and teaching positions followed the course of project implementation.<sup>12</sup> It is very important to emphasize that 26% of project leaders were women, which is a slightly better result compared to bilateral cooperation within other PHC projects (24%).<sup>13</sup> Data on mobility, which in most projects was up to 15 days, indicate that about a third of younger researchers were involved, as well as that more men scientist completed a research stay in France (52%), as well as in Serbia (69%), than women scientist. Nevertheless, when these data on gender representation within projects, project management and mobility are compared with the other 44 projects of bilateral cooperation in science, the results are much better.<sup>14</sup>

When it comes to the results of the projects, the available data show that 57% of the projects managed to publish at least one joint publication of the results, as well as that 75% of the cooperation continued even after the end of the project financing, and that 36% applied again for the invitation the Hubert Curien – Pavle Savić, and 20% for COST projects.<sup>15</sup> This shows that the funded projects within the Hubert Curien – Pavle Savić program have contributed to the development of cooperation between French and Serbian science in the form of new scientific results and partnerships that have a perspective in the future, and the results of their analysis can be a guide to strengthening scientific cooperation between the two countries. Encouraging the mobility of researchers and international research cooperation, the simplicity of the project application process, getting to know the partner country, encouraging the exchange that enables the creation of scientific results and the training of young researchers – are recognized as good components of these projects. Improvement is needed in the domains of: increasing financial resources, increasing mobility time and duration of the project. French and Serbian scientists, as part of their research stays in France and Serbia, had the

<sup>12</sup> Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de l'Innovation - DAEI / Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères 2021, 10; 12–13.

<sup>13</sup> Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de l'Innovation - DAEI / Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères 2021, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de l'Innovation - DAEI / Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères 2021, 18–19.

<sup>15</sup> Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de l'Innovation - DAEI / Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères 2021, 27–29.

opportunity to research in laboratories, libraries, archives and museums, as well as to establish contact with other scientists, who are not participants in the project, and who come from the non-academic field and state institutions, which in time, changed the framework of cooperation and gained greater importance and also influenced the strengthening of capacities and the multiplication of cooperation programs.

In addition to the projects within the Hubert Curien – Pavle Savić partnership, there are also Multilateral Scientific and Technological Cooperation in the Danube Region, while the French-Serbian cooperation in the field of science today includes initiatives of a diverse nature that are implemented through projects financed through the European funds, such as: H2020, ERASMUS, ERASMUS + and COST, and partly, Creative Europe. This encourages the cooperation of individuals and smaller research groups from France and Serbia, as well as wider research groups at the European level. Since 2020, France has joined multilateral technological cooperation in the Danube region, which is in line with its and the European strategy (Kolaković 2023; Todorović 2023). A total of 15 projects were financed, and the French scientists cooperate with the Serbian in six projects and all projects are in the field of natural sciences: mathematics, physics, chemistry, technology and medical sciences.<sup>16</sup> France joined Serbia, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia in order to support their already existing cooperation, which is an indicator that on the French side there is a permanent need to strengthen not only bilateral cooperation with Serbia in the field of science, but also to connect the Central European and the Western Balkan scientists with the presence and support of the French scientific centers. From 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Europe of the Republic of France finances bilateral and regional projects through the ES-Balk call for projects 2021. The projects were financed from the Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects, Civil Society, Francophonie and Human Development of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France. The main goal of this public call is “supporting the initiative for academic cooperation of French higher education institutions and research centres in the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as already started cooperation, helping them with the analysis of the situation at the local level, better identification of local needs for study and professional training, promoting the French education system that could provide adequate education, while maintaining the European

<sup>16</sup> Ministarstvo nauke, inovacija i tehnološkog razvoja 2023.

dimension in order to be included in European projects, as strongly as possible".<sup>17</sup> The focus here is on two components – the French and the European. Therefore, in addition to the development of cooperation between the French and Serbian partners, the Eurointegrative significance of the approved projects is also observed. In accordance with the idea of reconciliation, the strategic determination of the Western Balkans countries for the European integration and place of the Balkans in the French foreign policy plans, we can conclude that France recognized the significance of cooperation between partners in the Western Balkans, which includes: the transfer of knowledge, information and technologies, the improvement of the methodological framework and the mobility of scientists. Ten projects have been approved for funding, and the Serbian scientists are participating in two (one bilateral and one multilateral). The projects are from the field of social and humanities, and the conferences, meetings and webinars are the result of the work of French and Serbian scientists (a project of the University of Bordeaux and the Faculty of Law from Belgrade)<sup>18</sup>, as well as regional cooperation through the multilateral project *Renforcement et perspectives de la coopération scientifique dans les Balkans occidentaux* (with the idea of a doctoral regional school in the Balkans)<sup>19</sup>, implemented by L'INALCO (Paris), the Faculty of Law from Bitola, the Faculty of Philology from Nikšić and the Institute for Political Studies from Belgrade.

The cooperation and culture services are responsible for the design, implementation and coordination of activities, and the branches of the Campus France, the French Alliance and the local network of former students work to promote the attractiveness of France in the context of science, training and study in all the countries of the Western Balkans. The exchange of knowledge includes all scientific disciplines, and in recent years there have also been specialized invitations. In addition to the call for the training of philologists whose main language is French and of course their specialization in translation, which creates a good basis for the possibility of scientific exchange, other programs are also important. Serbian doctors and pharmacists are provided with paid specialization in France, of course, with prior knowledge of the language and other

<sup>17</sup> The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs Solidarity Funds for Innovative Projects 2021.

<sup>18</sup> See: Conference call – Rethinking the European Union's reforming power in the Western Balkans – legal and political aspects, 26th and 27th May 2022.

<sup>19</sup> See: EDBALK 2023.



necessary scientific qualifications. The programs last from six months to one or three years. This continued the long tradition of connecting Serbian medical workers and pharmacists with French medical science and related fields. At the same time, through scientific cooperation, in all areas, and through the support of the French Institute, science popularization projects are also implemented. Most of them update the topics of European integration, climate change, environmental protection, human rights and democracy, rights of women and members of marginalized groups (Kolaković 2021b). The focus is on young people, as well as on the networking of scientists and on joint projects, which, on the one hand will create space for joint applications for new projects, of course with other partners from Europe as well, and on the other hand, the development of cooperation between scientists itself creates opportunities for the development of science diplomacy.

A significant focus in all cooperation projects is on: the French language and the promotion of French culture and education, as well as on strengthening civil society, and the French Institute is an institution that mediates communication between scientific and university institutions and scientists. For the purposes of financing scientific cooperation, within the framework of official development assistance, France used: Solidarity Fund for innovative projects, civil society, the Francophonie and human development. For instance, the implementation of the “Welcome to France” project began in 2021. The goal of this program is to respond to the challenges associated with the globalization of the area of higher education and research, as well as to help to a half a million foreign undergraduate and postgraduate students, to come to France by 2027 (Highman and Gayardon 2022). The plan is that after returning to their countries, they will not only contribute to the transfer of knowledge and technologies, but also to permanent connection with France and its academic community. The opening of new funds, the launch of new initiatives, which have a multilateral dimension of cooperation – is an indicator of France’s determination to develop cooperation in the field of science not only with Serbia, but also with the entire region, which is also support for the European integration processes of the countries of the region. Analysis of projects and statements of officials and diplomats, as well as project participants, shows two components. The first is scientific (publications, lectures, mobility, personnel development, transfer of knowledge and ideas). The second is science diplomacy, which, through cooperation and exchange, enables better understanding and

opens up new opportunities for the development of the French-Serbian relations, as well as the relations of France with other countries of the Western Balkans on a political and economic level.

## **CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER, SCIENCE DIPLOMACY AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION**

Science diplomacy strategies are traditionally important for contemporary France, and especially in line with the changes in international relations, caused by the Covid19 – crisis and the war in Ukraine. The data shows that 65% of French publications were created in cooperation with partner countries, as well as that 400,000 foreign students are enrolled in French higher education<sup>20</sup>, on the basis of which France took the sixth position as a host country for foreign students, and also that 3 billion euros will be spent *to build or consolidate French leadership in key scientific areas, such as: health, ecological transition, sustainable food, energy, digital technologies (quantum, artificial intelligence, microelectronics, etc.), space or ocean studies* (Lorenzi 2021).<sup>21</sup> In addition to the developed research infrastructure, the concept of *the science without borders* and the combination of fundamental research and technological development at a high level, France is a member of several large organizations or infrastructures with a global reach and the host country for two: CERN and ITER. Apart from this platform for the development of science, innovation, artificial intelligence, research and higher education, there is also a branched and systematized network of institutions and inter – sector cooperation in the implementation of the strategy of science diplomacy and its main goals. The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Higher Education, Research and Innovation respond to the needs of the diplomatic network abroad and cooperate with international and European organizations, local authorities, universities, research institutions, as well as with public and private partners. During the French presidency of the Council of the European Union (January – June 2022), the Marseilles Declaration was adopted (March 8, 2022), which proclaimed nine key

<sup>20</sup> See: Campus France 2023.

<sup>21</sup> See: Évaluation des politiques publiques la stratégie nationale de recherche en intelligence artificielle. Une stratégie à structurer et à pérenniser Rapport public thématique 2023.

principles and values for global scientific cooperation, such as: academic freedom, scientific integrity, open science and Social Responsibility.<sup>22</sup> For France, these principles are long-term starting components for a new multilateral dialogue on science, scientific cooperation, research and higher education. In that matter, in the long term, they represent a new benchmark for science on the international level. This framework forms the way of working of French diplomacy, which is also applied in the Balkans, where the tradition of education in France has existed for a long time, as well as cooperation with the French universities and scientific institutions.

Cooperation between France and Serbia in the field of science is traditionally an important component of diplomatic relations. Science in Serbia had been developed on the cooperation and under French influence. Since the democratic changes in 2000 and the Summit in Thessaloniki in 2003, which indicated the European perspective to the Balkan states (Gajić 2020; Vukadinović 2021), it has progressed gradually, and from 2018, rapidly. The scope of scientific cooperation also depends on the personnel in the Services for Science and Technology and the Services for Cooperation and Cultural Action at the embassies, as well as on the general development of bilateral relations with certain countries. The traditional connection and academic cooperation between partners from France and other countries are also important due a strong impact on raising awareness and promoting the French science and technology. This would be the framework for cooperation in the future. Local partners, laboratories and research centres will play a significant role in the future as well, in addition to the proclaimed strategies for the development of science, scientific cooperation and science diplomacy. The focus will be on innovation and investment in research and development, especially in the attractive and fastest-growing areas of artificial intelligence, space exploration, robotics, biotechnologies. The

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<sup>22</sup> The conference in Marseille is a continuation of the Council conclusions on *Global Access to Research and Innovation* of September 28<sup>th</sup> 2021 and the Council Recommendation on the “Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe” of November 26<sup>th</sup> 2021. It has been revised due to the international context, with the aim of reaffirming values and principles of international cooperation in the fields of research, innovation and higher education, as well as to strengthen cooperation between EU member states and EU member states and its partners.

See: Déclaration de Marseille relative à la coopération internationale en matière de recherche et d’innovation 2023.

establishment of the Serbian-French Innovation Forum (2022)<sup>23</sup> is one of the components that indicate the future directions of scientific cooperation. However, this does not mean that the development of scientific cooperation in the social and humanities will be out of focus. This traditional partnerships that enable the penetration of the influence of the French language, will remain present and also powerful, as the foundation on which all other, and in the future, scientific cooperation, will develops. Since the goals of the development of science in France are to achieve entrepreneurship and create innovative companies, start-ups and facilitating access to financing, accelerating technology transfer, which would attract foreign investments and encourage the emergence of dynamic innovation ecosystems, the cooperation of Serbia and the countries of the Western Balkans with France has great potential in the future. Deepening of cooperation in the field of science between Serbia and France was the topic of conversation between Jelena Begović, Minister of Science, Technological Development and Innovation in the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and Sylvie Retailleau, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in the Government of the Republic of France, during the event called *Mission France* in June 2023, and the focus of their conversation was on the presentation of French programs that support innovation and the Serbian BIO4campus and innovation ecosystem (Simić-Miladinović 2023). Therefore, along with the continuation of cooperation on joint projects of fundamental research, mobility of researchers and bilateral and multilateral connections, the direction of future cooperation between France and Serbia is moving towards innovation.

Important actors in the process of implementation of scientific cooperation and science diplomacy will remain, therefore: embassies and cultural centres, i.e. The French Institute, as well as local actors: university professors, scientists, students, ministries, non-governmental organizations and citizens' associations. The cooperation of embassies and universities, as well as other scientific institutions that they create programs, projects and organize joint activities is necessary and possible to improve in accordance with the new challenges of humanity. The creation of new institutional frameworks and the support of successful projects and research groups in all scientific fields can be the way to develop cooperation in the future. The Minister of Higher Education and Research of France also spoke about this subject, during her address to

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<sup>23</sup> Forum za inovacije Srbija Francuska 2023.

French ambassadors and diplomats: “The teams of my ministry, and especially DAEI<sup>24</sup>, which I welcome and thank for today’s action, are here to provide you with the necessary connection with our institutions and our business departments. Your exchanges are daily and reveal the importance of dialogue between our two ministries, at all levels”<sup>25</sup>.

In the period of the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Serbian science lost contacts and connections with science in the world, with new ways of observing science and scientists, especially in the sphere of social and humanistic sciences. For Serbian scientists most important is to learn how to network, how to develop innovations, to enter the international scientific scene and how to develop the excellence and competitiveness of the projects they compete with at the European level. The coronavirus pandemic, as well as the announcement of new similar pandemics in the future, European integration and changes in international relations from February 2022 are additional motives for the cooperation of scientists. Living in the age when the strength of a country is also measured by the development of science and technology, the development of scientific communication and cooperation with France is of great importance for Serbia and the countries of the Balkans. If we consider that only by 2027, under the initiative from 4 years ago – Welcome to France, 500 thousand foreign students will have the opportunity to study in France, the French scientific and university environment is important for Serbia and the Balkans in a wider international context. On the other hand, the French scientific scene also needs access to sources and research results of other scientists, as well as communication. The development of scientific cooperation between France and Serbia, as well as its flow into the sphere of higher education, must be recognized as essential in the strategic plans of France in the Western Balkans and in the future as well. Geopolitical circumstances and the European integration also shape this sphere in which cooperation and diplomacy are interwoven. Based on the analysis of Pavla Savić’s projects, cooperation projects in the Danube region and ES Balk projects, a group of older and younger researchers

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<sup>24</sup> The Delegation for European and International Affairs of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation was established in July 2018 with the aim of implementing the European and international policies of the Directorate General for Research and Innovation and the Directorate General for Higher Education and Professional Integration.

<sup>25</sup> Discours de Sylvie Retailleau à l’occasion des Journées du Réseau du ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires étrangères.

has been already created, and they are collaborating and achieving excellent results. The transfer of knowledge and technology in the future will certainly be extremely important for the economic strengthening of countries, and positioning in international relations. Examples from the history of scientific cooperation between France and Serbia can be an incentive in the direction of further development, and cooperation can be improved on the platform of current projects.

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## **УЛОГА ФРАНЦУСКЕ У ОСНАЖИВАЊУ НАУКЕ У СРБИЈИ И НА ЗАПАДНОМ БАЛКАНУ: ИЗМЕЂУ НАУЧНЕ САРАДЊЕ И НАУЧНЕ ДИПЛОМАТИЈЕ**

### **Сажетак**

Француска има дугу традицију политичког, економског, културног и научног утицаја у региону Балкана, а историјски посебно у Србији и државама насталим на простору некадашње Југославије (Краљевине Срба Хрвата и Словенаца, Краљевине Југославије). Поменути утицај настао је не само на основу савезништва у Великом рату (1914–1918), већ и на основу школовања и усавршавања Срба и других Балканаца на француским универзитетима. Они су по повратку заузимали кључна места у државној управи и на универзитетима, покретали научне дисциплине и сарађивали са колегама у Француској. Препознавши научнике као битну компоненту дипломатије, Француска је делом и на основу историјског искуства формулисала и актуелну сарадњу са Србијом, Црном Гором, Северном Македонијом, Босном и Херцеговином и Албанијом (земљама Западног Балкана, под којима Француска подразумева и Косово\*). Анализа садржаја доступних докумената, штампе, изјава и интервјуа званичника, дипломата и научника, омогућава да сагледамо улогу Француске у оснаживању научне сарадње у Србији и на Западном Балкану. Како је ове године 20 година програма билатералне сарадње „Павле Савић”, анализа резултата овог пројекта, као и програма научне сарадње у Дунавском региону и ES-Balk, омогућава да се активности посматрају у циљу вредновања домета научне дипломатије Француске на Балкану. Од прокламовања Стратегије за Западни Балкан (2019), Француска је систематски посвећена развоју политичке, економске и културне сарадње

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\* Овај рад је примљен 15. септембра 2023. године, а прихваћен на састанку Редакције 27. новембра 2023. године.

са Србијом и другим државама на Балкану, при чему, као што показује наше истраживање, њене активности прати интензивнија научна сарадња, која је у складу са основним принципима стратегије научне дипломатије Француске. Уочава се да Француска инсистира и на регионалним пројектима у области науке, а који садрже снажну европску компоненту. Закључак истраживања јесте да је фокус Француске на оснаживању научне сарадње у региону, иновацијама, трансферу знања и технологија, а традиционално су научници и актери дипломатских активности што ће у складу са досадашњом сарадњом и великим променама у међународним односима захтевати увођење нових оквира сарадње и имати утицај на позиционирање Француске на Балкану, а посебно у контексту евроинтеграција региона.

**Кључне речи:** Француска, Западни Балкан, Србија, наука, научна сарадња, научна дипломатија