
SERBIA INCREASINGLY ACTIVE WITHIN NATO'S SCIENCE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY PROGRAMME

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25.12.2018

European Western Balkans (24 December 2018)

This year has marked the 60th anniversary of the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, which offers funding, expert advice and support to security-relevant activities that respond to NATO's strategic objectives.

SPS aims to promote practical cooperation between NATO member states and partner nations based on scientific research, technological innovation and knowledge exchange.

Over the last years, Serbia has become increasingly active within the framework of the SPS Programme and has identified many areas for practical cooperation with NATO. Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development is in charge of coordinating and implementing the SPS.

Serbia has benefited from several NATO SPS activities since it has joined that Programme in 2007, including projects on defense against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear agents and counter-terrorism, and raising the profile of women in peace and security.

NATO SPS projects have contributed to many scientific areas in Serbia and the region and have, for instance, helped produce seismic charts for the Western Balkan countries, improve the protection of the Sava river water resources, and Serbian and German scientists, for example, are working on developing a decontamination and demining robot.

Currently ongoing projects also include cyber-defence, environmental safety and energy security.

Eight Serbian scientists are leading a three-year research project in order to develop the commercial production of bio-fuel from algae. This project is carried out by Belgrades Institute for Multidisciplinary Research in cooperation with Manchester University in the United Kingdom and Baylor University in the United States.

Since 2007, Serbia has included more than 35 Programme activities of the SPS Programme which are implemented in three different parts – multi-year projects, training, as well as advanced research workshops.

Each of these areas is implemented in several priority areas of this program, such as cyber-defence, energy security and many others. Over the past five years, the SPS has launched over 450 global joint activities in more than 40 countries.

During the latest NATO exercise held in Serbia, the largest disaster relief simulation conducted by the Alliance, two systems developed in the framework SPS Programme were presented.

During the event, the Next-Generation Incident Command System (NICS), a modern communication tool which provides situational awareness for widely dispersed first responders and facilitates collaboration among them, as well as through a project based on NATO's multinational telemedicine capability, which puts first responders in direct contact with medical specialists who can assess patients and provide real-time recommendations.

Given that since 2007 Serbia has participated in a large number of activities within the framework of the SPS, one can conclude that the scientific community of Serbia is adequately informed about the possibilities offered by the program, states Belgrade Centre for Security Policy researcher Marija Ignjatijević, but the public discourse on Serbia and NATO relations is reduced to official statements, and the topics remain largely in the domain of high politics.

That is why the wider public in Serbia remains deprived of information on concrete forms of cooperation, such as those that take place within the framework of the Science for Peace and Security Programme, Ignjatijević highlighted.

She has also assessed that availability of information on projects carried out by scientific-research institutions in Serbia in this program would contribute to a better understanding of the civilian aspects of cooperation with NATO and their benefits to both the professional community and citizens.

SPS Programme is very useful because it enables networking and cooperation with experts and related institutions from different countries and their combined work on projects through which the exchange of knowledge and experience is facilitated, as well as greater visibility of scientific research institutions from Serbia on the international scene, Ignjatijević concluded.

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