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1 / 1

business dialogue · **MILICA DJURIĆ-JOVIĆIĆ,** ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE SCIENCE FUND OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Science is Key to a Better Future

Science Fund
of the Republic of Serbia

The best investment is an investment in intelligent, educated and talented people with visions for a better future. Through its programmes, the Science Fund supports the best projects, ideas and teams contributing to the development of technologies and solutions to improve our lives

Early in her career, after earning her Ph.D. in electrical engineering and computing, Milica Djurić-Jovićić managed the Innovation Centre of a technical faculty, which has since grown to become a successful company that connects research and industry, while contributing to society through innovations, applied science and new technological solutions.

She has been heading the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, a government institution dedicated to supporting research and development based on scientific excellence, since its founding in 2019.

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia is a young institution that is developing very quickly. What do you consider as being the Fund's main achievements since it was established?

Our funding programmes are highly selective, with only the top 10-20% of submitted proposals receiving funding. In order to ensure objective, high-quality assessments of each proposal, we engage only international experts that have success-ful professional careers in research. Our pool of experts includes more than 1,300 international peer reviewers from over 60 countries. The projects selected are those that rank highest according to scientific excellence, impact and implementation potential. As a result, the Science Fund will be also funded by the World Bank and EU.

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia has to date approved 177 scientific projects for funding, which includes more than 800 researchers from 75 scientific and research organisations. With the new programmes being implemented, we expect to have up to 2,000 research-ers included in our programmes in the next year.

How do you plan to strengthen cooperation between scientists from Serbia and Serbian scientists from the diaspora?

Connecting our researchers will introduce additional international visibility and pos-sibilities for partnerships. By supporting collaboration among them, we also con-nect research institutions and promote Serbia as a partner open for cooperation in science, technology and innovation. In order to support and inspire connec-tions and collaboration among Serbian scientists around the world, the Science Fund has established the LinkedIn group "Science without Borders". This group serves as an open professional network for collaboration between Serbian sci-entists in Serbia and abroad, and aims to enable the exchange of knowledge, ideas, experience and opportunities for collaboration. Such connections are im-portant for the development of science, but also the development of the economy, entrepreneurship and Serbian society.

In parallel, we are currently imple-menting the first mobility collaboration programme - the Serbian Science and Diaspora Collaboration Programme. Through 92 mobility projects, we connect researchers who live and work in Serbia with our researchers in 22 countries. In the coming years, the Science Fund will enable further cooperation with the Serbian scientific diaspora by introducing collaboration programmes for exchanges of knowledge and joint research.

What is the plan of the Science Fund in 2021?

We plan to open a new programme for col-laboration between science and industry, as well as special programmes address-ing research topics that the government, science and industry have identified as being of strategic importance. The new programmes in 2021 will strive to help some of the identified needs and chal-lenges of contemporary Serbian society. Our researchers can contribute directly to Serbia's development in many areas.