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## **INDEPENDENCE OF THE ARCHIVAL SERVICE IN KOSOVO**

### **Abstract:**

*In the article, the author presents the organizational and structural transformation and development of the archival service in Kosovo. In Kosovo, like in other post-communist countries, the independence of the archival work is a condition and a guarantee for the successful accomplishment of archives' missions, not only during the transitional period but also in the period we are going through. This issue has been supported by the European Office for Coordination the Program of the International Council of Archives (ICA/EUR). For the successful functioning of archives, the author considers and presents as necessary the organizational and operational independence regarding their professional, scientific and financial activities, and provides concrete examples regarding this issues.*

### **Key words:**

*operational independence, archives, archives service, political-administrative independence, professional and scientific work*

### **Izvleček:**

#### **Neodvisnost arhivske službe na Kosovu**

*Avtor v prispevku predstavi organizacijsko in strukturno preobrazbo ter razvoj arhivske službe na Kosovu. Na Kosovu, tako kot v ostalih postkomunističnih državah, je neodvisnost arhivov pogoj in zagotovilo za uspešno izpolnjevanje arhivskih nalog, ne le v času tranzicije, temveč tudi danes. To problematiko je podprl tudi Evropski urad za koordinacijo programa Mednarodnega arhivskega sveta. Za uspešno delovanje arhivov je po avtorjevem mnenju potrebna organizacijska in operacijska neodvisnost arhivov v strokovnih, znanstvenih in finančnih aktivnostih. Prispevek predstavlja tudi konkretne primere v zvezi s tem.*

### **Ključne besede:**

*operacijska neodvisnost, arhivi, arhivska služba, politično-upravna neodvisnost, strokovno in znanstveno delo*

Following the war of 1998/99, conditions were created in Kosovo for a gradual and proper establishment, and for the functioning of the institutions on the basis of legal, professional and scientific principles and standards.

The archives in Kosovo are an institution of a particular importance for the new country and its society. In this context, after the war, the archives and archiving activities received commitment and support for its structural reorganization and for more efficient functioning towards the fulfillment of the role and mission they have as it is the case in other countries.

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It is known that until recently, in totalitarian communist system, the archival system used to be conducted by and controlled by politics. Many of the archives were closed, at least temporarily, for certain categories of researchers, let alone for a wider public. History was written by certain persons, on orders, based on a certain ideology and under a strict scrutiny of a totalitarian government. There was some archival material that nobody had access to; the material was given for use in a selective manner.

The first element of control or censorship of archives was the policy of appointing the staff. The policy of appointing the leading staff was determined by policy makers.

The second element of controlling the archives in totalitarian states was the selective access to archival material. Many documents dealing with personalities, who were against the system, were hidden. Likewise, when presenting documents in exhibitions, primary documents related to events that were presented and were against the system of that time were hidden. Thus, the historic truth was kept in secrecy.

In Kosovo, like in other republics of former Yugoslav Federation, in the field of archives, the communist ideology was not only present, but was dominant. Particular importance was given to documents regarding the activities of communist organizations. At the beginning, at the level of communist committees, archives were established, which operated within such committees. Such an archives was also established at the Provincial Committee of the Communist League of Kosovo. This archives acted independently until 1987, when the archival material was handed over to the Central Archives of Kosovo.

Structural organization and the activities have suffered changes during the post-war period.

Initially, archival service and activities in Kosovo were developed within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, but it was seen that it did not yield the needed results, and was not in compliance with the international archival standards.

Based on the experience of some European countries, and in compliance with the Law on Supplementation and Amendment of the Law on Archive Material and Archives (Law no. 02/L-80, dated 13.VII, 2006), functioning of archives as a Directorate of Kosovo Archives gained a new level of organization but it did not prove to be a good solution from the viewpoint of operation independence. Archives were a separate Directorate within the Office of the Prime Minister. Therefore, following the experiences of transformation of archival services in the world, from the viewpoint of organization, functioning and modernization according to the Law no.03/L-077, dated November 7, 2008, the Directorate of Kosovo Archives was converted to Kosovo State Archive Agency, as a central institution within the Office of the Prime Minister.

Experiences and expertise regarding archival activities confirm that the independent operation is a necessary prerequisite for organization and in particular for efficient and professional activities. Archives must undoubtedly be spared from political interferences and influences.

Therefore, with the new Law and organization, the archives gained autonomy regarding professional and scientific operation. We say they gained the autonomy because the archival activities and organization are exclusively conducted according

to the law. The Law and other sublegal provisions determine the rights and obligations, including procedures of collection, processing, selection and systemizing and the management of the archival material; and what is very important, for providing this material for use to different users: citizens, institutions, for scientific publication purposes, always in compliance with the law. Thus, the law has given the full autonomy to this important activity, because from the Office of the Prime Minister it is required to supervise and control exclusively and only the implementation of the law.

As for other important issues regarding professionalism and independent work in view of influences and interferences of politics or different interest groups, in the Kosovo State Archive Agency, as foreseen in the point 1 of the Ethics Codex of Archivists, approved by International Council of Archives, (translated into Albanian language) is the principle that *"Archivists preserve the integrity of archival material and thus they provide security that it represents permanent and authentic evidence of the past... Objectivity and neutrality of archivists are the measure of his/her profession."* With this codex it is required that *"Archivists come against any pressure, regardless where it comes from, if the aim is manipulation with testimonies or hiding and falsifying the facts."*

Hence, in order to preserve the integrity of archival material, meaning, its entirety and impartiality throughout the process of creating documents, it is necessary to ensure independence in accessing archives. Any kind of ideological or political influence on the archival service is unacceptable, this means in selecting, preservation and use of archival material. Accordingly, it is necessary to ensure all the preconditions to reach this goal. On the other hand, it is required also by the Ethics Codex of Archivists, point 8: *"Archivists do not allow anyone outside from their field to interfere in their work and tasks."*

Independence in the work of an archivist, among others, ensures professionalism instead of political influence, impartiality instead of "decorating" the past because of due to a certain political ideology, as it happened during the time of the Communist Party. The archivist ensures comprehensive protection of archival materials instead of highlighting a certain segment of the past, equal access to all researchers of the archival materials instead of favoring a particular person. In a word, the independent work of archives and archival service leads to "impartial protection and use of world treasure of archives," thus archives, by preserving the evidence of the past, do not become a tool of any propaganda or ideology. Finally, archival service can and must provide for the new generations, the truth about the past, if we approach it in a professional, complete and independent manner. Because, nobody has the right to hide the truth about the past by destroying the traces of the historic memory or by transforming the truth: mankind has the basic right to know the whole truth about itself.

In the Draft Recommendation of the European Council for access to archival material, it is said that "one state has reached democracy only when every citizen of that state has the possibility to learn parts of his/her own history in an impartial way."

As for the independence of archival work, in several professional meetings of archivists at the world level, multidimensional discussions took place. In particular, the following aspects were discussed:

1. Independence in the professional and scientific work in archives  
Now, archiving as a profession and as a science requires an independent approach both from a professional and scientific point of view. This independence is needed in order to achieve impartiality and professionalism regarding the categorization of archival material, the planning, regulating and processing of the archival material, in selecting permanent valuable material and putting aside the documents which do not have permanent archival value, in planning reception of archival material from its creators, in ensuring equal access to archival material by all categories of material users etc.
2. Independence of administration  
Independence of archival work would not be possible without the independence of archival administration work and without its professional profiling. Archival service is inter-ministerial. It does not belong to only one single Ministry but it belongs to the entire state. Therefore, in most world countries, archives operate within the Government. The same is the case with Kosovo; archives now operate as independent, comparatively as a Ministry, but with the name of State Agency.
3. Financial independence  
The fulfillment of set objectives according to the Law on archival material and archives, international standards and norms of archiving and the development or operational goals as defined by the Development Strategy and in compliance with the work plans would be impossible to implement without necessary financial means. Financial means would be planned not only for the fulfillment of professional work, but also for building up professional capacities and training professional archival personnel continuously, and for ensuring the required space and other logistic activities.
4. International cooperation  
By ensuring "supply" with documents and exchange of archival material, possibilities are provided to shed light to the past, in different areas and times. Such exchange is enabled thanks to the international archival cooperation among different countries in this region, in Europe and in the world.

In this regard, the Kosovo Archives have achieved certain results. Kosovo Archives are a member with full rights of the International Council of Archives, in A category.

As a National Archives, the Kosovo State Archive Agency is also a member of the Council Memory of the World, which operates within the UNESCO. Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts has signed cooperation Protocols / agreements with: General Directorate of Archives of Albania, Directorate of State Archives of Turkey, Macedonian State Archives, Croatian State Archives, Bulgarian State Agency of Archives and the Austrian National Archive. The signing of such Protocols also with Slovenia and Montenegro and other world countries is at a preparatory phase.

These Protocols have opened possibilities for mutual exchange of archival material, experiences and to extend cooperation in the field of archiving.

## CONCLUSION

Independence of archival work and archival service is a relevant condition and factor for quality and efficiency of work of these institutions in order to achieve the final goal and the mission of archives: provide possibilities to learn about the past, the history of a country and its people, in an impartial and objective way.

Countries in transition must as soon as possible pass the inertia of the past including the field of archiving.

It remains a necessity to ensure proper financial support for archival institutions in order to increase the role and importance of the archives.

In Kosovo, these goals are moving in a proper direction of development and realization.

## LITERATURE

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## POVZETEK

### NEODVISNOST ARHIVSKE SLUŽBE NA KOSOVU

Neodvisnost arhivskega dela in arhivske službe je pomemben pogoj in dejavnik za kakovost in učinkovitost dela arhivskih institucij za dosego končnega cilja ter njihovih nalog: omogočiti možnost spoznavanja preteklosti, zgodovine države in njenih prebivalcev na nepristranski in objektiven način.

Potrebno je zagotoviti zadostno finančno podporo arhivskim institucijam z namenom, da se poveča njihova vloga in pomembnost.

Na Kosovu se ti cilji premikajo v pravi smeri razvoja in realizacije.