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SiDS SOCIÉTÉ
INTERNATIONALE
DE DEFENSE
SOCIALE
POUR UNE POLITIQUE CRIMINELLE HUMANISTE

iSSD INTERNATIONAL
SOCIETY
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society in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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**Statement related to the Infringement of academic freedoms and bullying
criminologists by the Croatian Science Foundation**

The International Society of Social Defence and Humane Criminal Policy (iSSD) is deeply concerned about what appears to be a grave infringement of academic and scientific freedoms and a severe case of bullying fellow scientists in Croatia. According to Croatian and international news reports and information received by the iSSD, the Croatian Science Foundation (CSF) has reprimanded Prof. Dr. Anna-Maria Getos Kalac and Zagreb University's Faculty of Law through punitive measures issued on the basis of a void ruling of CSF's Ethical Committee. According to the Faculty's Dean, the Chair of the Faculty's Ethical Commission and Prof. Dr. Getos Kalac, the timing and inconclusive content of the CSF's ethical ruling, as well as the grave breaches of procedural rules and basic principles guaranteed by the *European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* indicate that the ethical allegations are in fact an impermissible attempt to punish researchers for having conducted a legit, yet provocative criminological study. It is our understanding that such actions by CSF would constitute bureaucratic censorship of scientific research, aimed at publicly disciplining scientists for having studied a topic disliked by the CSF. Such censorship by institutions of power undermines the very idea of science and research and will not be tolerated by the academic community.

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The exploratory study in question focuses on “cyber bullying by faceless bureaucracy in the domain of national research funding” in Croatia and has been conducted early December last year by the Violence Research Lab that is co-funded through a CSF grant. The Violence Lab, led by Prof. Dr. Getos Kalac, conducted an on-line survey among project leaders whose research is also funded through CSF grants. Preliminary findings of the study detected potential cases of cyber bullying and thus a very high rate of dissatisfaction of project leaders with the way they are being treated by the CSF. The main conclusion of the exploratory study is that further research on the topic is needed and that all stakeholders should proactively get involved in suppressing this type of cyber bullying. The CSF has not commented on the findings itself, but has instead tried to argue that the study is not part of the project it funds, although the project team has provided clear evidence that the project’s work plan explicitly foresees the study of cyber harassment in Croatia. The iSSD is of the opinion that the empirical study of cyber bullying clearly falls within the realm of the sociological study of cyber harassment.

We trust that the relevant Croatian and European institutions will recognize the crucial importance of sociological research, esp. if it is critical towards institutions of power and thus detects harmful behaviour such as cyber bullying within the scientific community itself, including its funding institutions. We sincerely hope the matter will be resolved fairly and expediently and with respect for academic and scientific freedoms, and we hereby express our full support to University of Zagreb’s Faculty of Law, Prof. Dr. Getos Kalac and our fellow scientists in the Violence Research Lab.



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