

MINUTES

RSAI Council meeting, Wednesday 27th August, 13:00, Athens (Greece)

AGENDA

1. (Hiro) Apologies

Apologies received by email from Prof. Elisabeth Mack, Prof. Hidehiko Kane, Prof. Martijn Smit and Prof. Rosella Nicolini

Attending online: Prof. Sarah Low and Prof Mina Akhavan

Attending onsite: Prof. Hiro Shibusawa, Prof. Eveline Van Leeuwen , Prof. Andrea Caragliu, Prof. Roberta Capello, Prof. Katarzyna Kopczewska, Prof. Andre Chagas, Prf. Azzoni, Prof. Hans Westlund, Prof. Sebastian Bourdin, Prof. InKwon Park, Prof. Camila Lenzi, Prof. Daniela Luminita and Prof. Ana Vinuela

2. (Hiro) Approval of Minutes from the previous RSAI Council Meeting (Annex I)

Minutes from RSAI Council in Sri Lanka are approved.

Requested by Prof. Roberta Capello, point 8 in the Agenda is moved up.

8. (Roberta) Report/summary on other topics discussed in the LRPC meeting

Prof. Roberta Capello briefly summarizes the main topics discussed in the LRPC meeting as a way to improve the communication between the LRPC and the RSAI council. She focuses on three topics: the application received by ERSA to create the Serbian RegSci Section; the 2 members of the LRPC suggested to be part of the Selection Committee for the new RSAI President and the political issues that RSAI has to confront at times.

Regarding the joint application received by 2 institutions to create the Serbian RegSci Section, Roberta remarks that after one year and a half of guidance/work by ERSA, several meetings and a joint conference, these 2 institutions -that initially applied separately- have put an application together and morally/ethically there is no reason to reject this application (although being conscious of many issues to come in future when a Kosovan application is received).

In relation to the 2 members of the LRPC to be part of the selection committee, during the LRPC it was decided that Prof. Budy Resodurmano and Prof. Eduardo Haddad will be invited (after contacting them, the invitation was accepted).

The political issues linked to RSAI and its Sections, a topic raised by Peter Nijkamp during the LRPC- were briefly pointed out.

3. (Ana) Call for candidatures for the future RSAI president

RSAI Executive Director Prof. Ana Viñuela informs that by-Law 4 of the RSAI Constitution says that “the Council establishes a “Nomination Committee” comprising the RSAI President, the RSAI Immediate Past-President, three members RSAI Council (one each from among the council members who are appointees of the three superregional organizations), and two members of the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) recommended by the LRPC itself”.

The committee will comprise RSAI President (Prof. Hiro Shibusawa); the RSAI immediate past-president (Prof. Hans Westlund), the 2 members of the LRPC recommended by themselves (Prof. Eduardo Haddad and Prof. Budy Resosurdamo).

There is a need to decide on the 4 members of the RSAI Council (one from each supranational). Onsite agreement was reached regarding Prof. InKwon Park (from PRSCO), Prof. Andre Chagas (from LARSA), but decision could not be taken in relation to NARSC representative. An email to NARSC President Prof. Neil Reid will be sent by RSAI and hopefully then this Selection Committee will be approved by email by RSAI Council (It was approved afterwards).

4, (Ana) Opening for council representatives from supranationals

RSAI Executive Director Prof. Ana Vinuela informs that it is the end of term for Prof. Lise Bordeaux-LePage (23/25) and Prof. Eveline Van Leeuwen (20-25) from ERSA; and Prof. Patricio Aroca (20-25) and Prof. Carlos Azzoni (20-25) from LARSA) and that an open call will be released early in September for new candidatures (by ERSA and LARSA councils).

5. (Ana) Opening for one at-large councillors

RSAI Executive Director Prof. Ana Vinuela explains that it is the end of term for Prof. Daniela Constantin. A position will be opened on the month of September, and a voting procedure will be carried out in October with an online ballot by RSAI.

6. (Ana) NNT Program: Selection Committee and changes proposed in the Application Form (Annex II)

Following the changes approved during the last RSAI meeting in relation to the NNT Program, we will start to receive Nurturing Talent proposals for events taking place from January 2026 to December 2026 (before November 1st 2025; and then for events taking place from June 2026 to December 2026 before June 1st 2026

The RSAI Council needs to approve the composition of Committee in charge of evaluating the NNT applications received: the following members were contacted/invited and none has rejected being part of the Committee: Prof. Hiro Sibushawa (RSAI president), Prof. Ana Viñuela (RSAI Executive Director); Prof. Roberta Capello (ERSA president); Prof. Hidehiko Kanegae (PRSCO president); Prof. Andre Chagas (LARSA president); and prof. Neil Reid (NARSC president). This Committee is officially approved by the RSAI Council.

Then, following the conversations initiated by Prof. Rosella Nicolini in the last RSAI Council meeting regarding the nature/philosophy being a NNT event, a new Application Form has been created trying to reflect: i) the need of having PhD students/Young researchers sharing their work; ii) the need to generate interactions/links among new researchers; iii) the potential to use NNT Program to create new RSAI Sections; iv) the need for the event and LOC to have other sources of income (RSAI co-funds)

New Application Form for the NNT Program is approved (and it will be available in RSAI web page)

7. Applications to create new RSAI sections: Serbian Section

- a) Summary (Ana) **(Annex III)**
- b) LRPC's opinion (Roberta)

c) RSAI Council's opinion and evaluation (all RSAI Council members)

RSAI Executive Director Prof. Ana Vinuela explains that Prof. Roberta Capello's intervention reflected opinions from the LRPC in relation to the Serbian Section, but that this topic needs to be discussed in depth by the RSAI Council members and then the application can be approved or rejected. If approved, they (applicants from Serbia) need to make an oral presentation during the RSAI Council at NARSC, where they might become a new RSAI Section.

Only one application was received (by Serbia). There is no application by any Kosovan institution. RSAI has no single objective reason to reject the application as it is but we need to be aware of future political issues that might raise (in future).

The need to inform all institutions about the existence of "the other initiative" was remarked by Prof. Roberta Capello, as so far they are not aware of one another.

As the LRPC's opinion on the topic has already been explained, now the RSAI Council members should talk and manifest their opinion. Prof. Azzoni points out that the Serbian RegSci Section application should be approved and then we will take decisions in the future (regarding Kosovo or many other issues). Prof. Andrea Caragliu remarks the strong motivation detected on the Serbian researchers to belong to ERSA and RSAI (attending many meetings and many conferences)

Serbian application is approved by the RSAI Council (with no need for a speech in the following RSAI Council).

9. (Ana) Any other business (AOB)

Prof. Azzoni takes the word to express his gratitude to have belonged and worked in the RSAI Council. Also Prof. Daniela Luminita participates in the same fashion. Applause received from all RSAI council members.

RSAI Executive Director Ana Viñuela requests the RSAI Council consent to send a very simple email to all RSAI Sections (as an update of information) asking basically: who is the president, affiliation, email and year that was elected; name of secretariat, affiliation and email; link for the official web page; brief information on the name of the last national conference organized, place, dates, web link and number of attendees.

Many RSAI council member agree with the initiative after explaining the general aim of it.

10. (Hiro) Next meeting

Next meeting will take place in Denver during NARSC.

RSAI Council Members

2025 RSAI Council Members

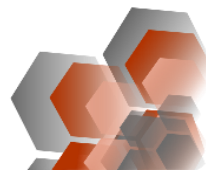
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1	Hiroyuki Shibusawa		President	2025-2027	shibusawa.hiroyuki.dc@tut.jp
2	In Kwon Park		PRSCO President	2024-2026	parkik@snu.ac.kr
3	Hidehiko Kanegae		PRSCO Representative	2024-2026	hkanegae@sps.ritsumei.ac.jp
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6	Haifeng Qian		NARSC Representative	2024-2026	haifeng-qian@uiowa.edu
7	Sarah Low		NARSC Representative	2025-2027	salow2@illinois.edu
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9	Lise Bourdeau-Lepage		ERSA Representative	2023-2025	lblepage@gmail.com
10	Eveline Van Leeuwen		ERSA Representative	2020-2025	eveline.vanleeuwen@wur.nl
11	Fernando Perobelli		LARSA Representative	2024-2026	fernando.perobelli@ufjf.edu.br
12	Patricio Aroca		LARSA Representative	2020-2025	patricio.aroca@unab.cl
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18	Sebastien Bourdieu		Councillor at large	2025-2027	sbourdin@em-normandie.fr
19	Ana Viñuela		Executive Director	2019-2024	avinuela@uniovi.es

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1	Peter Nijkamp	President	1991-1992	pnijkamp@hotmail.com
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9	Elisabete Martins	Finance Director	Elisabete.martins@apdr.pt



PRESENT APPLICATION

1. Proposed title of event

Please provide a title of your workshop/summer school

2. Dates and venue

Please provide information on the dates when the workshop/summer school will possibly take place.

3. Intended target (PhD students, young researchers)

Please describe which audience your proposed workshop/summer school is targeting.

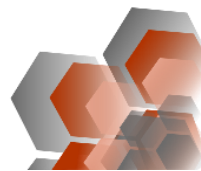
4 How the proposal fits the RSAI Nurturing New Talent programme

Please provide a justification of the event in the context of the scope of the “Nurturing New Talent” program (<https://www.regionalscience.org/index.php/programs/nurturing-new-talent.html>).

5. Detailed breakdown of budget

Please provide information about the following items:

- Total overall expenditure, including co-financing from your home institution;
- Breakdown of likely expenditures, by individual item (e.g. tickets for instructors; room rental; dorm fees; etc.).



NEW TEXT: PROPOSAL

1. Proposed title of event

Please provide a title of your event (workshop or summer school and then the name)

2. Dates and venue

Please provide information on the dates (days or week, month and year) and the place (town/University/Faculty) when the event will be taking place.

3. Organizers and teachers/speakers

Please provide information on the LOC (ie local organizers' names, email and affiliations), and if possible a detailed list of intended speakers/teachers and their affiliations. Confirmation of their availability and/or acceptance to participate would be strongly appreciated.

Scientific Assistance can be requested to RSAI to find suitable speakers/teachers related to the proposed event and topic. In such case, the Local Organizers should contact the RSAI secretariat (rsai@apdr.pt) asking for “Scientific Assistance” either before or right after submitting the application for the Nurturing New Talent Program. RSAI will not support by any means the associated costs of the names suggested.

4. Intended target (PhD students, young researchers)

Please describe the audience that the proposed workshop/summer school is targeting and the expected number of attendees/students.

5 Structure of workshop/Summer School

Please describe the possible structure of the workshop (plenary sessions, parallel sessions, lectures, presentations, etc) or of the Summer School (lectures, practical classes, presentations, problem solving, etc) and a tentative timetable structure.

6 How the proposal fits the RSAI Nurturing New Talent program

Please provide a justification of the event in the context of the scope of the “Nurturing New Talent” program. An event co-funded by the NNT Program should provide substantive training to pre-doctoral researchers, including the presentation of their work and receiving feedback from senior scholars and their peers.

(see <https://www.regionalscience.org/index.php/programs/nurturing-new-talent.html>).

7. Detailed breakdown of budget

Please provide detailed information about the following items:

- Expenditures that will be covered by the LOC (e.g.: accommodation, dorm fees, travelling expenses, meals, coffee breaks, class materials, etc.)
- Expected income by the LOC (e.g.: co-financing from home institution, fees charged to attendees/students, sponsorship from private institutions, etc.)

Please notice that Nurturing New Talent Program RSAI provides financial support to Regional Science events (not to individual's expenses) and the quantity granted does not necessarily have to match the quantity requested.

Annex III

To: Regional Science Association International (RSAI)

Subject: APPLICATION for establishing Serbian section of RSAI

Dear Madam/Sir

We are writing on behalf of the Section of the European Regional Science Association in Serbia (ERSA Serbia), an association dedicated to advancing regional science in Serbia, whose institutional membership includes the Faculty of Economics at the University of Niš. Through this letter, we express our strong interest in becoming the officially recognized Serbian section of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) and in joining the global RSAI and ERSA networks.

SECTION OF THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION IN SERBIA, Based on the unanimous decision of the Assembly of the Association and in accordance with Article 30 and Article 8 of the Statute, the following decision is hereby adopted:

D E C I S I O N on joining the international associations ERSA and RSAI

The Association shall initiate the procedure for joining the European Regional Science Association (ERSA) and the Regional Science Association International (RSAI), with the aim of enabling more active participation in the global regional science community and fostering stronger connections with related organizations. The Assembly adopted the decision unanimously. We look forward to the possibility of joining ERSA and RSAI and collaborating with other institutions and researchers dedicated to advancing regional science. Please find enclosed our detailed application. Thank you for considering our application. We are enthusiastic about the prospect of contributing to RSAI's mission and working together to promote regional development in Serbia and beyond.

In Novi Sad, April 24, 2025

Yours sincerely,

Valentina Ivanić, President of ERSA Serbia,
Member of the Executive Board, and
Research Fellow at the Institute of Economic Sciences /



Economic Institute, Belgrade
Prof. Dr. Edvard Jakopin,
Member of the Executive Board of ERSA Serbia,
Professor at the Faculty of Economics and Finance,
Union-Nikola Tesla University, Belgrade



Prof. Dr. Vladislav Marjanović,
Member of the Executive Board of ERSA Serbia,
Head of the Program Committee
of the ISC Conference "Regional Development and Demographic Flows"



The application for membership in RSAI ERSA

I. Background (max 1 pages)

Republic of Serbia is characterized by significant regional disparities, making it one of the countries with the largest regional disparities in Europe. These disparities are manifested in various socio-economic dimensions, including income, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and access to essential services. Addressing these issues is critical for achieving balanced and sustainable development in the country. The practical solving of regional issues has always been lagging and inadequate. As a result, regional disparities have grown so much that today they are one of the most significant development problems that the Republic of Serbia will be fighting for a very long time, as they are primarily structural in nature. Ignoring the social and demographic dimension, today we find that regional development problems are inextricably linked to social inequality and very negative demographic trends. There is a need to involve an institutional component in the new regional development strategy, as experience and trends clearly indicate that inadequate regional development is not just a result of poor economic structure, but primarily a lack of systemic and regulatory mechanisms.

Regional development has traditionally been treated as a secondary policy concern in Serbia, often lacking strategic coordination and scientific support. More importantly, regional underdevelopment is increasingly recognized not only as an economic and social issue, but also as a national security concern—affecting social cohesion, internal migration, and institutional trust.

Despite growing expectations under Serbia's EU accession process—particularly within Chapter 22 – Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments—the country still lacks a dedicated, institutionalized research platform for regional science that could bridge academic expertise and policy-making needs. While each NUTS II region in Serbia hosts at least one Faculty of Economics that deals with regional development to varying degrees, there is no overarching scientific coordination, no shared methodological standards, and no national-level structure dedicated to building and connecting this capacity across sectors and regions.

The Ministry for EU Integration and the Office of the Minister for Regional Development in Serbia have identified critical needs in regional development. These include addressing gender equality, preventing violence against women, and promoting the economic and political empowerment of women, as outlined by the Ministry without Portfolio in charge of Gender Equality, Prevention of Violence against Women, and the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women. Furthermore, the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, the Innovation Fund, and the Association of Accredited Regional Development Agencies of Serbia (SARRA) have expressed specific needs related to enhancing regional innovation and development capacities. The National Convention on the EU, a powerful network of over 800 civil society organizations spread across all regions of Serbia, has called for evidence-based advocacy for Chapter 22 (Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments).

In response to these pressing needs, and after extensive dialogue among the quadruple helix actors—including government, academia, industry, and civil society—the demand for a research institution solely dedicated to regional science in Serbia became evident.

II. Motivation for a new RSAI section (max 2 page)

Key contributions to RSAI from the inclusion of Serbia can be understood through several layers, each reflecting the integration of contemporary paradigms, conceptual advancements, and methodological innovations in regional science. In summary, Serbia's contributions to RSAI will be multi-faceted, spanning paradigm shifts, conceptual development, and methodological innovations. These contributions will enrich the global discourse on regional science, providing practical solutions that are adaptable to various regional contexts and capable of driving meaningful, impact-oriented regional development.

Taking into consideration that the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) is a global network dedicated to fostering the study and application of regional science, establishing of RSAI section in Republic of Serbia can offer several important benefits: (i) Networking and Collaboration, (ii) Raising Awareness and Addressing Regional Disparities, (iii) Access to Resources and Publications, (iv) Capacity Building and Education, (v) Filling a Critical Knowledge Gap, (vi) Professional Development, (vii) Influence on Policy and Practice, (viii) Global Visibility, and (ix) Supporting EU Integration Efforts.

The motivation for establishing the Serbian RSAI section is therefore clear: to systematically leverage these benefits and address Serbia's critical needs through a strong scientific foundation, improved public policy alignment with EU standards, and expanded professional development opportunities.

Scientific Motives

The scientific motivation for establishing an RSAI section in Serbia is deeply rooted in the evolving demands of regional development, particularly within the context of Serbia's EU integration process.

EU and Balkan Context: In the broader European and Balkan context, the upcoming programming period after 2027 introduces a new paradigm in regional development, with a focus on strengthening the NUTS II level across member states and candidate countries like Serbia. This approach represents a leapfrogging strategy to shift regional science in Serbia and the surrounding regions from traditional, linear paradigms of innovation towards transformative, dynamic paradigms. This shift is crucial not only for Serbia but also for regions in other Western Balkan countries, enabling them to move from static development models to those that emphasize adaptability, interaction, and innovation-driven growth. All quadruple helix actors expect regional science to demonstrate the capacity to lead EDP processes and foster transformative innovation, reshaping regional structures in Serbia and the broader region. Additionally, it is anticipated that regional science will provide models enabling each region, including its academic community—both educators and researchers—to actively participate in the internationalization of smart specialization strategies, as outlined in the findings for the programming period beyond 2027.

Interdisciplinary and Methodological Perspectives: To effectively respond to the EU there is a pressing need for an interdisciplinary approach in regional science that integrates insights from various fields, including social sciences, technology, and innovation studies. This approach should blend both etic (external, comparative) and emic (internal) perspectives to ensure that research methodologies are not only informed by international best practices but also tailored to the unique characteristics of Serbia's regions. Such a comprehensive methodological framework is crucial for developing regional strategies as well as PRI related strategies that are both scientifically rigorous and practically applicable to the specific needs of the Serbia.

Nurturing New Generations of Researchers: The focus on interdisciplinary research and methodological diversity must also extend to nurturing the next generation of regional scientists. In Serbia, the current academic landscape is heavily skewed towards teaching, with relatively few research initiatives in regional science. This imbalance limits the ability of Serbian academia to contribute meaningfully to the scientific discourse on regional development. Establishing an RSAI section would serve as a pivotal step towards revising academic curricula, encouraging young researchers to engage in rigorous, context-sensitive studies that directly address the regional challenges outlined in the EU.

Addressing Paradoxes in Regional Science and Regional Development: The scientific motivation also encompasses the need to resolve the institutional, innovation, and entrepreneurial discovery paradoxes that currently hinder regional development in Serbia. These paradoxes, such as the misalignment between policy goals and implementation realities, are critical barriers to effective regional development. The RSAI section would be instrumental in researching and proposing solutions to these paradoxes, ensuring that regional development strategies are both theoretically sound and practically viable.

Public Policy Motives:

From a public policy perspective, the establishment of an RSAI section is crucial for aligning Serbia's regional development strategies with EU standards, particularly those outlined in Chapter 22. This chapter is focused on strengthening the capacity of regions, specifically at the NUTS II level, to plan and implement regional development programs. It emphasizes the importance of establishing institutions capable of effectively utilizing European Structural and Investment (ESI) funds. However, Serbia currently lacks the research infrastructure necessary to program the specific needs for these funds and to direct them in a way that ensures every region in the country is adequately represented and that regional inequalities are reduced.

The RSAI section would provide the necessary research and analytical foundation to inform and shape public policies essential for transitioning Serbia's NUTS II regions from statistical entities into functional actors capable of driving their own development. This involves building the capacity of regions to plan for the use of ESI funds effectively and ensuring that these funds are utilized in a manner that addresses the specific needs of each region.

Moreover, Serbia faces the challenge of overcoming the institutional paradox where regions that need the funds the most often lack the capacity to plan for their use or to successfully access them. This is particularly relevant to the Smart Specialization Strategy, which in EU member states is an ex-ante conditionality for accessing ESI funds at the NUTS II level. The RSAI section would play a critical role in preparing Serbia to meet this requirement by fostering the development of research-driven strategies that enable regions to build the necessary capacity, thereby overcoming these institutional barriers.

Professional Motives:

Professionally, the current academic landscape in Serbia is heavily oriented towards teaching, with limited emphasis on research, particularly in the field of regional science. This imbalance significantly hinders the development of robust, evidence-based public policies necessary for addressing regional disparities. Establishing an RSAI section would shift the focus towards research, encouraging academics to engage more deeply in regional science and providing the justification needed to revise academic curricula. This shift would also help position Serbia as a leader in regional science within the Western Balkans, fostering cross-border collaborations and enhancing professional growth in the field.

Serbia's involvement in the RSAI will significantly advance the evolutionary and relational paradigms of regional development, emphasizing the dynamic and interaction-based nature of regional growth. Serbia's efforts to address regional disparities—where some areas have GDP per capita as low as 50% of the national average—offer valuable case studies for applying these modern paradigms in practice. With over 23 consistently underdeveloped local government units since 1971, Serbia's unique context, characterized by asymmetric administrative capacities and significant economic disparities, provides fertile ground for interdisciplinary approaches in regional science. Methodologically, Serbia will introduce models for policy-oriented research, ensuring theoretical robustness and practical impact, particularly in regions with limited administrative capacities, impacting millions of citizens across the country.

III. Estimate of the number of new members (max 1 page)

Membership in the Serbian section of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) offers a dynamic and collaborative environment for individuals at various stages of their academic and professional careers. The section welcomes a diverse range of members, including PhD students, professors, and practitioners, each of whom brings unique perspectives and expertise to the field of regional science.

In order to recruit significant number of active members, after preliminary presentations and informing, main introducing of Serbian section of RSAI is going to be organized at traditional conference dedicated to the regional development, *30th ISC Regional Development and Demographic Flows of Southeastern European Countries* that is going to be held at the Faculty of Economics University of Niš, in June 2025. This conference, bringing together scientists, policy makers, PhD students, practitioners etc., creates unique opportunity to present and disseminate RSAI goals, values, possibilities of networking and to attract new members to Serbian section.

Significant pool of potential new members could be found among doctoral students in the fields of Economics, Regional development, Urban planning etc., interested in scientific work. PhD students benefit greatly from membership by gaining access to a wide network of researchers and academics, which can be invaluable for developing and refining their research ideas. Number of PhD students involved during first year is estimated at 20, lately to be improved to 40+.

Membership in the RSAI Serbian section allows professors to leverage their expertise to influence regional development policies and strategies. Through the RSAI, they have a platform to disseminate their research findings to policymakers and contribute to shaping the future of regional science in Serbia. This can lead to joint publications, research grants, and the development of innovative regional policies. Expected number of members among professors is approximately 30, during first year, later to be significantly improved (70+).

Membership offers practitioners opportunities for continuous learning through workshops, seminars, and conferences. These events can enhance their skills, broaden their knowledge, and help them stay updated on new methodologies and approaches in the field. Practitioners gain access to a network of academics who can provide theoretical insights that complement practical experience. This collaboration can lead to the development of more effective and evidence-based regional policies. Estimated number of members from the practice is going to be provided through professional associations, enterprise databases etc. and is foreseen as 40 in first and 100+ in following years.

In developing the membership base, special attention will be given to ensuring balanced territorial representation across all NUTS II regions in Serbia, reflecting the structure of institutions actively engaged in regional development. Faculties of economics in Belgrade, Niš, Kragujevac, and Novi Sad, together with 17 accredited Regional Development Agencies, Science and Technology Parks in Niš, Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Čačak, and regional branches of the Chamber of Commerce, will serve as institutional entry points for membership growth.

This territorial anchoring guarantees that the Serbian RSAI section will not be concentrated around a single center, but will represent a decentralized, territorially balanced, and nationally inclusive structure. In doing so, the section will directly address the institutional paradox: that regions most in need of support are often those least equipped to access or implement development policies. This approach will strengthen the legitimacy, sustainability, and long-term relevance of the Serbian RSAI section, enabling it to serve as both a national platform and an internationally connected hub for advancing regional science and policy.

To sum up, the Serbian RSAI section aims to reach approximately 90 members in its first year, including around 20 PhD students, 30 professors, and 40 practitioners, with projections exceeding 200 active members in the following years—reflecting a well-balanced structure across academic, research, and professional sectors essential for advancing regional science and policy.

IV. Organization (max 2 pages)

In Serbia, two parallel initiatives emerged with the intention of becoming the official RSAI section—one led by ERSA Serbia, and the other by the Faculty of Economics at the University of Niš. As ERSA Serbia had been formally established earlier, in 2022, and given the RSAI requirement that only one national application can be submitted per country, it was mutually agreed that the Faculty of Economics in Niš would join the already registered non-governmental organization. Furthermore, the Dean of the Faculty was appointed as a member of the Association's Board of Directors. These changes have been formally adopted, and this application now represents the unified and official proposal for the recognition of the RSAI section in the Republic of Serbia.

ERSA Serbia is an existing registered non-governmental, non-profit association established in accordance with Serbian law. It now seeks to become the official Serbian section of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI), building upon its internal governance structure, professional legitimacy, and broad institutional partnerships.

ERSA Serbia, operating as a non-governmental and non-profit association, is governed in accordance with its Statute, which defines a transparent, participatory, and territorially balanced internal structure. The Association is composed of both individual and corporate members, including academic institutions, development agencies, and professional organizations engaged in regional science and policy.

The governance and operational structure consists of the following bodies:

- **Assembly** – The highest decision-making body composed of all members. It adopts strategic and financial plans, elects and dismisses members of governing bodies, decides on admission and exclusion of members, and approves amendments to the Statute.
- **Board of Directors** – The executive body consisting of **three members**, responsible for managing the Association's activities, implementing Assembly decisions, initiating cooperation, and supervising the work of the Secretariat and branches. The **Dean of the Faculty of Economics, University of Niš**, is currently one of the members of the Board of Directors, ensuring academic anchoring at the highest level.
- **President** – Elected among the Board members, the President serves as the **legal representative** of the Association and chairs the Board of Directors. The President coordinates strategic development and external relations.
- **Secretary** – Implements decisions of the Assembly and the Board, manages operational tasks, and maintains administrative and financial records. The Secretary acts as a key liaison between the central body and the branches.
- **Program Council** – An **advisory body** consisting of leading national and international experts in regional science, development policy, and related disciplines. It supports the strategic and thematic orientation of ERSA Serbia.
- **Ethics Committee** – An independent body responsible for safeguarding ethical standards, managing potential conflicts of interest, and overseeing integrity-related matters within the Association.
- **Territorial Branches** – In accordance with the Statute of the Association, ERSA Serbia is permitted to organize branch offices to support the decentralization of activities and ensure territorial inclusion. Branches will be established in each NUTS II region of Serbia, with planned locations at faculties of economics in Belgrade, Kragujevac, and Subotica (University of Novi Sad). While these branches will not have separate legal status, they will operate as decentralized units with designated coordinators and full participation in the implementation of programs, outreach activities, and regional coordination.

The Program Board shapes the association's work program and consists of five members, all of whom are distinguished scientists in the field of regional development, elected by the Executive Board. Members of the Program Board do not need to reside in the Republic of Serbia. The Program Board consists of Prof. Dr. Blagoje Paunović, Faculty of Economics, University of Belgrade; Prof. Dr. Petar Veselinović, Faculty of Economics, University of Kragujevac; Prof. Dr. Milica Uvalić, University of Perugia; Prof. Dr. Boban Stojanović, Faculty of Economics, University of Niš. The members of the Program Board also reflect the NUTS structure in Serbia

Basic activity is development the science researching, education, sustainability development, international cooperation. Following, the activities are improving regional science, urban economy and policy, circular economy.

The next step of development RSAI section is to actively participate in networking with institutions from region: from Kosovo (Kosovska Mitrovica), Croatia (Zagreb, Rijeka), Montenegro (Podgorica), North Macedonia (Skopje, Ohrid), Bosnia and Hercegovina (Sarajevo).

Table 1 Actions to Be Taken After Official RSAI Section Status Is Granted

Strategic Step	Key Partners / Institutions	Timeline
Official recognition of ERSA Serbia as RSAI section¹	RSAI Secretariat and Council	Q2 2025
Formalization of cooperation with RSAI sections in neighboring countries (e.g. Croatia, Hungary, etc.)	RSAI sections in the region, EU	Q2–Q3 2025
National-level promotion and visibility campaign	Universities, media, academic community, think tanks	Q2–Q4 2025
Engagement with the Serbian Parliament and national ministries	Parliamentary committees, Ministry for EU Integration, Ministry of Regional Development	Q3 2025 – Q2 2026
Membership formalization in all NUTS II regions in Serbia	Faculties of Economics, RDAs, development councils	Q3–Q4 2025
Establishment of regional branches (Belgrade, Kragujevac, Subotica)	Host faculties in NUTS II centers	Q4 2025 – Q2 2026
Partnership development with SARRA and LSG networks	SARRA (Serbian Association of Accredited RDAs), Local Self-Governments (LSGs)	Q3 2025 – Q4 2026
Cooperation with RCC, NALAS, and ReSPA in the Western Balkans	RCC, NALAS, ReSPA	Q3 2025 – Q4 2026
Inclusion in the European Research Area (ERA) and Smart Specialisation platforms	JRC, DG REGIO, DG NEAR, Ministry of Science, Science Fund of Serbia	2026–2027
Structured engagement with the private sector and civil society	Chambers of Commerce, innovation hubs, NGOs	Q4 2025 – 2027
Dialogue with National Bank of Serbia and Fiscal Council on regional economic indicators and monitoring	National Bank of Serbia, Fiscal Council of Serbia	Q3 2025 – Q4 2027

¹ The term “RSAI section” will be used throughout the text to refer to the applicant upon the granting of official status as the Serbian section of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI).

V. Planed activities during the first 3 years (workshops, congresses, meetings, networking) (max 2 pages)

Planned Activity	Year	Partners / Institutions	Expected Effects
Organizing 30th international conference at FEUN – official RSAI section launch	2025	FEUN, RSAI section, academia, RSAI, ERSA	Visibility, member recruitment, launch
Panel on Horizon UR-DATA project	2025	FEUN, Horizon Europe	Showcasing data-driven urban development
Participation in 9th Forum of Advanced Technologies	2025	Science Technology Park Niš	Promotion of innovation and networking
Inclusion in Horizon ERA CHAIR – UR WISE	2025	FEUN, Horizon Europe	Integration into EU research ecosystem
Workshops and thematic workgroups for PhD students and practitioners	2025	REAS section, academia	Broaden network, skill-building
Roundtable for launching Academy for Smart Specialization	2025	RSAI section	Introduction of institutional platform
Workshops for journalists on regional development	2025	Media partners	Awareness raising
Agreement with Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade	2025	Faculty of Geography	Academic cooperation
Organizing 31st international conference at FEUN	2026	FEUN	Research dissemination and networking
Workshops: Young economists – project development for regional goals	2026	Universities, students	Capacity building, innovation
Participation in 10th Forum of Advanced Technologies	2026	Science Technology Park Niš	Regional innovation networking
Panel on Horizon UR-WISE project	2026	FEUN, Horizon	EU project alignment
Formalizing agreements with Innovation Fund, SARRA, Science Fund	2026	Innovation Fund, SARRA, Science Fund	Project collaboration
Sessions with Serbian Parliament on regional policy	2026	Serbian Parliament	Policy advocacy
Cooperation with NAJU for civil servant training	2026	NAJU	Public administration capacity
Organizing 32nd international conference at FEUN	2027	FEUN	Regional science exchange
REAS inclusion in ERA CHAIR – UR WISE activities	2027	Horizon Europe, FEUN	Smart specialization support
Workshops for continuing education of existing members	2027	ERSA Serbia	Member retention and education
Maintaining partnership with UNDP and Karlstad University	2027	UNDP, Karlstad University	Research collaboration
Collaborating with Institute for AI Serbia	2027	Institute for AI Serbia	Digital transformation and regional policy
Participation in 11th Forum of Advanced Technologies	2027	Science Technology Park Niš	Networking and visibility

Tablea 2 Workshops, Congresses, Meetings, and Networking Activities²

Activity / Partner	Objective / Purpose
Regular meetings with the European Commission – Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)	Policy alignment, regional development strategy coordination
Consultations with the European Commission – Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)	EU accession alignment and support
Workshops and briefings with the Joint Research Centre (JRC)	Scientific support to smart specialization and regional innovation
Coordination meetings with the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia	Strategic programming, visibility, and funding alignment
Strategic dialogue with the Ministry for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia	Chapter 22 and Chapter 25 alignment, regional and research coordination
Workshops and funding discussions with the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia	Support for S3 and PRI research and pilot projects
Regional collaboration forums with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)	Western Balkans regional innovation and policy harmonization
Public administration training cooperation with the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)	Building LSG capacity and monitoring frameworks
Engagement with the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)	LSG networking, policy transfer, and best practices exchange
Academic partnerships with the Faculty of Economics in Novi Sad, University of Novi Sad	Regional research and thematic specialization
Academic partnerships with the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade, University of Belgrade	Knowledge exchange, policy-oriented research
Academic partnerships with the Faculty of Economics in Kragujevac, University of Kragujevac	Regional innovation system design
Establishment of online platform for the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP)	EDP facilitation, stakeholder engagement, tracking of smart specialization initiatives
Development of online platform for SDG monitoring and localization	Linking regional development goals with UN SDGs, promoting sustainable planning at the local level
Workshops with media and civil society	Raising awareness of regional development priorities
Joint events with chambers of commerce and innovation clusters	Strengthening linkages between research and the private sector

These activities are planned to take place annually throughout the 2025–2027 programming period and beyond.

² These activities are planned to take place annually throughout the 2025–2027 programming period and beyond.

VI. Financial plan for the first 3 years including the financial support asked for from RSAI. A brief plan for how the financial support from RSAI could be repaid. (max 1 page)

Finances for establishing and functioning RSAI section in Serbia are going to be provided from 3 main sources:

- **Institutional funding** (tbd by founders)
- **Project funding** 3000 eur per year, provided within European HORIZON project URWISE, starting from January 1st 2025, coordinated by FEUN.
- **Membership** 20 eur per member

Collected amount of membership is going to be redirected to RSAI and ERSa according to respective rules and total amount of budget will be used for supporting participation in RSAI and ERSa events, covering conference fees and Open Access paper publishing, as well as administrative operations and secretary salary.

Table 3 Financial plan for the first 3 years

Source	2025	2026	2027
Founders	≈ 1,000 EUR	≈ 1,000 EUR	≈ 1,000 EUR
Project UR-WISE	3,000 EUR	3,000 EUR	3,000 EUR
Membership	1,500 EUR	2,000 EUR	2,500 EUR
Total	5,500 EUR	6,000 EUR	6,500 EUR

All events organized within REAS will receive full organizational and institutional support by founders.