

# Strategic Plan 2024-2028

## Department of Political Science and International Relations

### Epoka University

#### I. Executive Summary

The Department of Political Science and International Relations (PIR), established in 2008, stands as one of Epoka University's foundational academic units. With full accreditation and a commitment to excellence, PIR has continuously advanced its mission of providing high-quality education and impactful research in the fields of political science, international relations, and public policy.

The Department offers a complete academic pathway through Bachelor, Master, and PhD programs, conducted in English and fully aligned with Albania's higher education standards, the Bologna Process, and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

PIR's faculty are actively engaged in teaching, research, and international collaboration, supported by a vibrant academic community and a growing network of global partners. The department's graduates have excelled in academia, public service, international organizations, and the private sector.

In line with Epoka University's Strategic Plan 2024—2028, PIR is committed to strengthening its academic offerings, advancing its research profile, expanding global engagement, and contributing to societal development.

#### Purpose, Vision, and Mission

##### Purpose

To provide a comprehensive and regionally relevant education that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary to address contemporary political, social, and international challenges.

##### Vision

To be a leading academic and research center in political science and international relations in the Western Balkans, recognized for excellence in teaching, interdisciplinary scholarship, global outlook, and civic impact.

##### Mission

- Educate future leaders and analysts through a rigorous, student-centered curriculum that integrates theory and practice.
- Research contemporary political, governance, and international issues through collaborative, evidence-based, and policy-relevant studies.
- Engage local and international communities through service learning, partnerships, and outreach that promote democratic values and social responsibility.



and staff are exposed to a multicultural academic atmosphere that values diverse perspectives and global thinking. The department regularly welcomes visiting scholars and organizes public lectures, panel discussions, and conferences, contributing to a vibrant academic community that extends beyond the classroom.

Graduates of the Department of Political Science and International Relations have demonstrated a strong record of success in the job market. Many alumni have gone on to pursue further studies at prestigious universities abroad, while others have secured positions in government agencies, non-governmental organizations, international institutions, think tanks, and the private sector. The department's emphasis on critical thinking, analytical skills, and communication—combined with a solid grounding in theory and practical knowledge—prepares students to navigate complex political and international environments with confidence and competence.

Overall, the department's growing academic strength, its focus on international collaboration, and the career readiness of its graduates make it a leading center for political science and international relations studies in Albania and the region.

### Key Stakeholders:

The Department of Political Science and International Relations (PIR) at Epoka University operates within a dynamic network of key stakeholders who play a central role in shaping its strategic direction, academic offerings, and institutional impact. These stakeholders include students, faculty, administrative staff, alumni, and a wide array of external partners such as governmental agencies, international organizations, diplomatic missions, civil society actors, and academic institutions both within Albania and abroad.

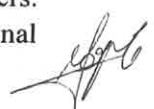
Students are at the core of the department's mission. They are not only the primary beneficiaries of its academic programs, but also active contributors to its intellectual life. The department encourages student involvement in academic events, research projects, and extracurricular initiatives such as student clubs, conferences, and debates. Through these activities, students gain practical experience, refine their leadership skills, and build professional networks that support their future careers.

Faculty members also represent a critical stakeholder group. As educators, researchers, and mentors, they drive the department's academic vision and uphold its commitment to excellence in teaching and research. Faculty members contribute their expertise to curriculum development, academic advising, and institutional planning, while also engaging with national and international research communities. Their collaborative efforts help sustain a vibrant academic environment and ensure that the department remains responsive to contemporary developments in political science and international relations.

Administrative staff play a supportive but essential role in the department's functioning. They facilitate the smooth operation of academic programs and student services, providing critical logistical, technical, and organizational support. Their contributions are vital in implementing departmental policies and maintaining effective communication across various units within the university.

Alumni are another important stakeholder group, serving as ambassadors of the department in diverse professional and academic fields. The department actively maintains contact with its graduates through alumni networks, events, and mentorship opportunities. Alumni feedback is regularly sought to inform curriculum updates and program development, ensuring that the academic content remains relevant to the demands of the labor market and emerging global trends.

Beyond the university, the department maintains close ties with numerous external partners. These include governmental bodies, such as ministries and public institutions; international



- Objective 3.3: Host at least one empowerment program per year (e.g., leadership training, mentorship programs, roundtable discussions) targeting women and marginalized voices in politics and public affairs.
- Objective 3.4: Establish or renew at least a collaboration annually with an external partner (e.g., public sector entities, NGOs, international organizations) for the codevelopment of community service projects.

#### IV. Action Plans:

##### Goal 1: Curriculum Enhancement — Action Plan

Objective 1.1: Introduce at least one new elective or interdisciplinary course each academic year.

Action Steps	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Expected Outcome
Conduct a needs assessment and gather student/faculty feedback on emerging topics	Department Members, Decanate	March—April (annually)	List of potential new course topics
Design the course syllabus and identify qualified lecturers	Assigned Faculty & Head of Department	April—May	Completed course proposal
Obtain approval from the Decanate, Permanent Commission on Quality Assurance, and Senate	Head of Department	May	Course approved and ready for registration
Promote the new elective course to students	Academic Advisors	October—March (depending on the course term)	Minimum enrollment target reached

Objective 1.2: Integrate practical components (e.g., simulations, field research, policy labs) into a minimum of 5% of core courses by the next academic year.

Action Steps	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Expected Outcome
Identify core courses suitable for practical components	Scientific Committee	May—June	List of target courses

Support students and faculty in the application process (funding, abstract submission)	Head of Department, Research and Project Office	2—3 months before event	Increase in successful applications
Allocate budget or apply for mobility funding (e.g., Erasmus+)	[nternational Relations Office, Resaerch and Project Office	Annually, aligned with funding cycles	Funding secured for participation
Document and disseminate outcomes of participation (presentations, reports, publications)	Participants, QA. Office; Public Relations Office	Within 01-month postevent	Increased visibility and academic engagement

## Goal 2: Enhance Faculty Research Engagement — Action Plan

Objective 2.1: Ensure that at least 70% of full-time academic staff actively engage in individual or collaborative research projects each academic year.

Action Steps	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Expected Outcome
Conduct an annual survey to assess faculty research interests and engagement	Head of Department, QA Office; Research and Projects Office	1 June	Baseline data on research participation

Provide internal grants or incentives for research project initiation	Head of Department, Research and Projects Office	October	Increased faculty motivation to engage in research
Create interdisciplinary research groups within the department	Head of Department, Faculty Members	October—November	Active collaboration and co-authorship
Organize annual departmental research presentation sessions	Head of Department, Events Coordinator	May	Dissemination of faculty research, peer learning

Objective 2.2: Initiate at least 1 applied research project per year that addresses policy challenges related to Albanian public administration, governance, civil society, or EU integration.

Action Steps	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Expected Outcome
Integrate research participation as a requirement in the program curriculum	Department Members,	Before the academic year starts	Formal requirement in place
Assign each MSc student to a research project or academic supervisor	Academic Supervisor; Scientific Committee	Beginning of academic year	Students placed into research projects
Organize workshops on research methods and data collection	Faculty Members, Guest Lecturers	October—November	Students equipped with practical skills
Track and evaluate student contributions to research projects	Scientific Commission	End of each semester	Full participation documented and assessed

### Goal 3: Integrate Community Engagement with Academic Programs — Action Plan

Objective 3.1: Ensure that at least 10% of graduate courses include a component involving community service, applied policy work, or partnerships with external organizations.

Action Steps	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Expected Outcome
Review undergraduate and graduate course syllabi to identify courses suitable for community engagement	Department Staff and Academic Advisors	May—June (annually)	Target courses identified
Collaborate with external partners to co-design practical components (e.g., fieldwork, case studies)	Faculty Members, Career Planning and Alumni Office, Dean of Students	June—August	Community-oriented modules integrated
Train faculty in servicelearning pedagogy and partnership coordination	Continuous Education Center	September	Faculty prepared to implement

- Engage part-time or visiting professors from partner institutions to support interdisciplinary courses and joint programs.
- Research Support Staff
- Hire at least one full-time research assistant to support grant writing, project implementation, and student involvement in research initiatives.
- Administrative and Technical Staff
- Increase administrative support by having one staff member focused on managing mobility programs, internships, and international partnerships.
- Provide technical training and support for faculty and students using digital learning tools and platforms

## Infrastructure Needs

To modernize learning and research infrastructure, the following upgrades are proposed:

- Classroom and Lab Improvements:
  - Renovate one seminar room into a "Policy Lab" equipped with collaborative tools, projectors, and flexible seating to support simulations and workshops.
- Online Learning Infrastructure:
  - Expand use of digital platforms (e.g., Moodle, Zoom, Turnitin) and invest in new software licenses for virtual simulations and data analysis.

## Partnerships and Collaborations

Strategic partnerships will play a vital role in supporting the department's goals through cofunding, capacity building, and international exposure. Targeted partners include:

- International Organizations and Donors:

- Leverage cooperation with entities such as the Erasmus+ Program, Horizon Europe, Western Balkans Fund, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and the Open Society Foundations to fund mobility, research, and civic engagement projects.

- e Government & Public Sector Entities:

- Formalize collaborations with Albanian ministries, municipalities, and public agencies to support applied research and student internships.
- Civil Society and NGOs:

- o Partner with local and regional NGOs on issues such as democratic governance, gender equality, and youth participation.
- o Academic Institutions:
- o Deepen ties with European and North American universities to enable faculty exchanges, joint conferences, and co-supervised theses.

## VI. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Aligned with Strategic Goals and Objectives (2024—2028)

To ensure accountability, progress tracking, and continuous improvement, the Department of Political Science and International Relations will adopt the following set of measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These indicators are directly tied to the department's strategic priorities of curriculum :enhancement, faculty research engagement, and community integration.

### 1. Curriculum & Academic Performance

#### e Graduation Rates:

Percentage of students who graduate within the expected timeframe (Bachelor: 3 years; MSc: 2 years; PhD: 3—4 years).

#### ● Course Success Rates:

Semester-based tracking of pass rates and average grades in core and elective courses.

#### ● Curriculum Innovation:

o Number of new elective or interdisciplinary courses introduced per academic year.

o Percentage of core courses integrating practical components (e.g., policy labs, simulations, fieldwork).

### 2. Student Development and Engagement

#### e Persistence Rates:

Semester-to-semester retention rates across all study levels.

#### e Student Engagement:

o Number and percentage of students participating in:

- Research projects (faculty-led or external)
- International exchange programs (e.g., Erasmus+)
- Community-based projects and civic innovation labs
- Extracurricular academic events (e.g., conferences, debates)

## 5. Infrastructure and Resource Development

- Technology & Facilities Improvement:
  - Upgrades in classrooms and seminar spaces (e.g., creation of a Policy Lab)
  - Access to digital tools, software licenses, and research databases
  - Number of new books or journals added to departmental library resources annually
- Human Resource Development:
  - Increase in full-time faculty or support staff
  - Training sessions or workshops attended by administrative staff or faculty

## 6. Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

- Timeline for Review:
  - KPIs will be reviewed annually at the end of each academic year, with a mid-term internal evaluation in 2026, and a comprehensive strategic review in 2028.
- Responsible Entities:
  - Head of Department — Overall coordination, reporting, and KPI alignment with strategic goals
  - Department Academic Staff — Data collection, curriculum input, student mentoring, and performance review
  - Scientific Committee — Research productivity, project tracking, and evaluation
  - Dean's Office / Decanate — Oversight and alignment with faculty-wide strategies and quality standards
  - Students' Registrar Office — Enrollment, graduation, and persistence data
  - Career Planning and Alumni Office — Graduate outcomes, alumni engagement, and feedback
  - Community Engagement Coordinator (or designated faculty member) – Coordination and monitoring of partnerships and social impact initiatives

## VII. Conclusion

This strategic plan reaffirms the Department of Political Science and International Relations' commitment to academic excellence, research innovation, and societal engagement. Guided by a clear vision to prepare regionally competent and socially responsible graduates, the plan outlines measurable goals in curriculum development, faculty research, and community service.

By aligning its efforts with national priorities and international standards, the department aims to serve as a dynamic hub of knowledge, dialogue, and policy impact. The successful implementation of this plan depends on the continued dedication of faculty, staff, students, and partners.

