

Periodic Assessment of Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities VER 2026

Final Report of the Visual Arts and Related Art Fields Sub-panel

Assessment of Research Outputs

- **Observations on the mix of publications (journal articles, books), and artwork portfolios.**

1. The quality of information provided by the institutions: there is a shared concern that some institutions provided much more administrative support and invested more time in preparing the submissions than others. This potentially has an impact on the final assessment, taking into account that

- The selection of outputs and cases is made by the institutions:

Applications with strong publications (in Slovak language and another language (such as English, French, German, Chinese) which clearly show extensive research and/or support art portfolios, and with an international connection are more convincing and in line with the evaluation criteria. Carefully and well-documented selection of outputs is a decisive factor for the assessment.

- there is a variety in quality and accessibility in the documents provided by the institutions: When PDF documents were provided, overall quality, was high. At times, when applicants relied on provided links, these were not always accessible, due, perhaps, to varied permissions across countries or links that were no longer operational.

2. Although the Sub-panel is aware of the importance of publication in languages operational in the context of production and reception of outputs, this remains difficult to

pair with the criteria for international outstanding standards according to the scientific community. It should be argued that the publication in another, other than internationally commonly used languages was a conscious choice that contributed significantly to the valorization of the output. Furthermore, the abstracts accompanying these outputs should clearly specify the research question, the state of the art, the methodologies and outcomes in a structured and explicit manner. This was not always the case and often seemed to depend upon the support received from the institution during the preparation of the assessment.

- **Practice-Based Research:**

1. Feedback on the effectiveness of the 750-word abstracts used to articulate research context and methods: Those outputs with abstracts in English on the front page of the output, with a clear statement of why a topic was chosen, along with purpose and goals and methods used, evidence and effects, scored highest. It was less effective, if the abstract was located within the body of the PDF document connected with each output, but not also placed on the first page of the output.

2. Visual material of practice-based research: the selection and quality of the visual material illustrating the practice-based research is of huge importance. It becomes problematic when the output concerns one or several pieces presented as part of an exhibition. In that case documentary evidence provided often included and was limited to a website or publication on the exhibition, giving no clear visual evidence of the output(s) that had to be assessed. Visual evidence of each output should always include high quality photographic evidence of the individual object. Adding further information and evidence on the exhibition context is recommended as it helps to contextualize.

- **Interdisciplinary outputs**

Unclear why these were considered interdisciplinary: the outcomes may have been interesting for different disciplines, but the methods used and the research objects and questions remained mostly within art practice and art history. No evidence of truly interdisciplinary work was found.

- **Summary of each of the quality level characteristics used by the Sub-panel**

When assessing the individual (200) outputs scores were administered according to three core criteria:

Originality, including the introduction of new ways of thinking about a subject; the production and interpretation of new findings; the development of innovative research methods or analytical techniques.

Significance, including the exertion of influence on a specific academic field; historic advances into a larger field of relevance and exposure; having a tangible impact on policy or practice of a subject or area; and demonstration of a capacity to make a difference beyond academia, when applicable.

Rigor, including the intellectual coherence, integrity, and robustness of research.

Given the context of VER “evidence of forwarding Slovak cultural, creative, historic advances into a larger field of relevance and exposure” was taken into account during the assessment.

Information on a (international) peer review process was useful when available and would be recommended.

- **Review process operated by the Sub-panel**

- For the internal process of the individual outputs a carousel-type passing of documents and scores between us was used, to ensure consensus, accuracy, and even distribution between our individual areas of expertise, viewpoints, and orientations, adding layers of meaning and understanding to the assessing process and looking for multiple perspectives. This multi-focal and multi-vocal approach ensures the preservation of a fundamental qualitative approach in a process that might otherwise easily be reduced to “a thick of boxes”.

- The overall collaboration within the Sub-panel was friendly and smooth with consensual division of work.

- **Calibration:**

Any details on calibration exercises used to ensure mutually consensual scores between us:

The Visual Arts and Related Art Fields Sub-panel shared clear Excel sheets with side-by side scores among members. A detail: members had to adjust orientation toward the score flight, as VER uses 1-5 points, 5=worst score and 1=best score; and UK REF uses 1-4 stars, 1=worst score and 4=best score. Also, this meant, if scores were rounded up or down, they become lower or higher, depending upon the direction, highest to lowest, of the score flight.

Assessment of Social Impact and Creative Environment:

- **Social Impact:**

1. General remark: Although for historical disciplines as art history it is not always easy to have direct and tangible social impact, all institutions managed to clearly define this impact. The inclusion of social impact creates more opportunity for the positive appreciation of local and regional initiatives and collaboration. It is clear this opportunity was seized by all institutions, and this section was overall well documented throughout the applications.

2. Assessment: The Sub-panel looked for impact that went beyond the academy; and the importance accorded in current societal questions, the UN SDG's, ... in research projects and collaborations. Positive influences and effects were scored high, regardless of the amount of the public reached. Awareness of the importance of social impact, and integration of this awareness in research and artistic practice was equally appreciated in the scores.

- **Creative Environment:**

1. Sustainability of workplace and facilities was weighted according to potential, as well as what is actual, knowing that certain less-funded institutions could exponentially thrive through the additional funding VER success would bring, and should not be penalized, as they hover between funding brackets.

2. It is very clear that all institutions mainly depend upon funding received from the government to support and enhance the sustainability of the workplace. Some applications raised concerns about recent funding strategies. It is a courageous act to do so within the

context of an evaluation by the government, and this should be encouraged in future evaluations by making more explicitly the feasibility of the strategic plan.

Insights into the research landscape:

Overall, the research landscape in Visual Arts and Related Art Fields is flourishing in Slovakia. The outputs cover a wide range of disciplines, methods and a broad chronological scope.

1. Both in research as in creative practices there is a strong incentive to connect with Slovak, and central European cultures and traditions while simultaneously embedding in global issues such as politics, climate change, gender Given the country's and region's complex past, the connection between global challenges and local culture / traditions is legitimate and extremely powerful. This "global" approach offers alternative perspectives to the western bias and helps to reframe and complexify the historiography of European art, as well as heritage studies, and the networks of artistic and design practices throughout the continent. Furthermore, it is clear that the primary source material related to the Soviet period (and the period immediately preceding and following it) is very rich and remains to be further explored, also within the context of the impact of this period on artistic education, know-how and historiography.

2. The wide diachronic approach is made possible by revisiting traditional techniques, by applying new methods and lenses to "classical" topoi, and by questioning the disciplinary boundaries in an age of increased digital advancement. While AI definitely should be critically used and addressed, the projects questioning its use, potential and impact, often tend to be less innovative in research question and outcome (which is not only a Slovak but rather a global limitation so far). Projects with a strong local / regional embedment on the

other hand not only foreground a huge potential for future development based upon well-established expertise but also benefit the social impact of research.

3. While the strong connection between research and local/regional economy is beneficial from a social impact point of view, some of the projects presented in the individual output with a strong connection with industry or tourism tended to be less groundbreaking at scientific / research level. Institutions and funding agencies should be aware that serendipity and slow science with uncertain return on investment are key to high level research and safekeepers of critical research environments.

4. Regarding the research environment, the institutions mainly rely upon the government. In these disciplines, a secure line of income which does not depend on free market competitiveness is essential to foster growth and further development. Investments in career support and project support will certainly benefit the fostering of new insights, the continuous anchoring of existing expertise and the continuous development of international collaborations. Many institutions mention European projects as part of their strategic plan. The successful applications, and even more implementation of such projects rely not only on the quality of the projects and researchers, but also on the support offered by the back office. As mentioned above, there is a clear differentiation between institutions and the support they (can) offer to the research staff, which unfortunately results in less well-prepared documentation. In the view of European and other international ambitions this should be addressed.

The quality of the research outputs/works submitted within the applications in VER 2026

Regarding the quality of the research outputs and works submitted within the applications in VER 2026, all Sub-panelists were impressed by the level achieved. In terms of quality bands, the number of outputs that were classified within World Quality, International Excellence, Internationally Recognized, and Nationally Recognized is significant. The core criteria of Originality, Significance, and Rigor were well met by most applicants, pushing into a benchmark against international standards that must be acknowledged. This merit was evident, also, in the categories of Societal Impact and Creative Environment. Assessors are encouraged that a Slovak impact in the arts and related fields is becoming increasingly supported, in reach and frequency, and we sincerely hope that this support will allow all applicants to continue to engage in both regional and global culture and discourse in impactful ways.

Regarding the Art Historical outputs two major lines of enquiry add significant contributions to the international state of the art: 1. The art historical studies on the artists, artistic production and artistic education during the Soviet period 2. The art historical studies on the early modern period and nineteenth century, positioning the Slovak production within important networks with a.o. Hungary and Austria and thereby showing the importance to write European art history from a transregional point of view.

In quantity, architectural historical outputs were rather limited, but qualitative, both in research as in lay-out. We would sincerely encourage further development in this field.

Finally, regarding artistic outcomes, three major tendencies stand out : 1. Strong know how in restoration practices supported by high level historical research and knowledge of materials, techniques and craftsmanship, 2. A will to root international developments, novel techniques and global themes in high standard historical practices and traditions, and 3. A

successful move towards high level international recognition by participation at European artistic collaborations and events such as the Venice Biennale.

Sub-panel members

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