

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

Final Report of the Philosophy and Theology Sub-panel

1. Outputs

a. Current State of Play

The overall quality of research outputs in Philosophy and Theology across Slovak institutions is variable, ranging from work that meets high international scholarly standards to outputs that remain primarily explanatory, locally oriented, or limited in originality.

It is possible to identify characteristic thematic patterns in the Slovak research landscape through a quantitative overview of the submitted outputs. Among the 418 creative outputs evaluated, theological topics constitute the largest share (around 42%). These include work in areas such as biblical exegesis, liturgy, iconography, empirical theology, religious education and literature, as well as studies on the history and development of the Church at both local and broader historical levels. Within philosophical research, the most prominent area is ethics, accounting for approximately 18% of the outputs, often focusing on contemporary themes such as ecological responsibility, human rights, and transhumanism. A further significant proportion concerns the history of philosophy (around 12%). Smaller but still notable clusters include work in logic, analytic philosophy, and philosophy of language (about 6%), as well as studies on ancient philosophy (also around 6%). By contrast, comparatively fewer outputs address areas such as aesthetics and philosophy of science (each around 4%), theoretical philosophy (about 3%), or political and sociological philosophy (each roughly 2–3%). This distribution suggests clear focus on theological scholarship and applied ethical research—particularly on contemporary social and

technological issues—while some areas that are highly prominent in international philosophical debate, such as political philosophy, aesthetics, and especially philosophy of science, appear to be less extensively developed.

A number of outputs demonstrate clear academic strength. Some publications justifiably appear in internationally recognised journals and venues, employ rigorous disciplinary methodologies, and contribute meaningfully to ongoing scholarly debates. Certain fields, particularly biblical studies, show strong international engagement and methodological competence. There are outstanding outputs on the Slovak Church under communist rule, which make a genuine contribution to international research on the place of Christianity in this part of postwar Europe. In philosophy, there are also examples of work that meets strong scholarly standards and addresses significant philosophical questions.

However, these stronger contributions tend to appear as isolated examples rather than representing a systematic pattern across the field. Much of the submitted work is published in lower-profile outlets or venues with limited international visibility. Some publications are primarily commentary, historical exposition, or explanatory summaries of existing debates, rather than clearly advancing new arguments or theoretical perspectives. Outputs are often written for domestic or regional audiences, including church communities or Slovak-language readerships, rather than targeting international scholarly discussions.

Another notable feature is the limited presence of collaborative research outputs, with most publications being single-authored.

b. Evaluation in Global Context

Relative to international benchmarks in philosophy and theology, the current profile of outputs suggests that the research community has the capacity to produce internationally competitive work but is not consistently orientated toward the highest levels of global scholarly competition.

At the global level, leading research outputs typically:

- introduce new methodologies, conceptual frameworks, or paradigms,
- contribute directly to international debates, and
- appear in high-impact journals or major academic presses.

Only a small proportion of the Slovak outputs currently meet this standard. A larger proportion fall into the category of internationally recognised or nationally recognised contributions, rather than world-leading or internationally excellent research.

Publishing in Slovak is entirely appropriate when addressing topics related to Slovak culture, history, or theology. However, for many topics with broader philosophical or theological relevance, the continued predominance of domestic publication venues limits international visibility, readership and impact. This is unfortunate, especially because excellent research into important moments in Slovak history remains inaccessible to an international audience.

c. Future Directions and Suggestions for Improvement

Several measures could strengthen the international competitiveness of research outputs:

1. Strategic publication practices

Researchers should increasingly target internationally recognised journals and book series, particularly those indexed in major databases (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science) or published by major academic presses. (To be clear, this is not because this is a proxy for research quality, but because this is where the forefront of academic discussion is to be found.)

2. Stronger engagement with international debates

Outputs should aim to move beyond exposition and commentary toward clear argumentative contributions that advance or reshape ongoing scholarly discussions.

3. Increased collaboration

Greater use of co-authored publications and collaborative research projects, including international collaborations, could strengthen research quality and visibility.

4. Language strategy

While Slovak remains appropriate for nationally focused research, broader topics should more frequently be published in international forum languages, enabling wider dissemination.

d. Quality-Level Summaries

1. World-leading quality

These outputs change debates in the world because of new methodologies, new viewpoints, new ideas and/or new arguments that lead to breakthroughs in research or the opening of new paradigms. These outputs should be read by all specialists in the field (and beyond).

2. Internationally excellent quality

These outputs are at the forefront of the international scholarly debate and advance research importantly. Most specialists in the field will likely read these outputs and react to it.

3. Internationally recognized quality

These outputs provide a good contribution to the international scholarly debate and are of clear importance to scholars outside the national context of the author(s).

4. Nationally recognized quality

These outputs live up to the (international) standards of rigor in academic research and concern subjects and questions that are mainly important within the national context of the author(s). They will not widely be read by specialists internationally.

5. Below standards of nationally recognized quality

These outputs do not live up to the standards of rigor in academic research, do not contribute to the scholarly debate, or have a very limited scope.

2. Social Impact

a. Current State of Play

The evaluated submissions demonstrate a clear commitment to public engagement and societal relevance. Activities include:

- public lectures and educational initiatives,
- collaborations with cultural and educational institutions,
- engagement with church communities,
- research in applied areas such as bioethics, education, and social thought.

Many theological faculties aim to operate within a triangle of academic research, church engagement, and societal contribution, reflecting the country's religious traditions and institutional structures.

However, the documentation and evidence of impact are often limited. In several cases, impact claims rely on anecdotal descriptions, modest online engagement, or small-scale outreach activities. While these activities are often valuable, the evidence provided does not

always demonstrate clear societal change, sustained influence, or measurable benefits arising from the research.

b. Evaluation in Global Context

Internationally, research impact is typically assessed not only through evidence of public engagement but also through demonstrable societal effects linked directly to underlying research. By these standards, many Slovak units appear to have strong intentions and promising areas of engagement, but the evidencing and structuring of impact activities remain underdeveloped. The connection between academic research and the claimed social outcomes is sometimes insufficiently articulated. Nevertheless, the presence of research areas with clear societal relevance, such as applied philosophy and ethics, suggests significant untapped potential for stronger impact in the future.

c. Future Directions and Suggestions for Improvement

Several steps could help strengthen the societal impact of research:

1. Professional support for impact development

Universities could benefit from employing impact officers or research communication specialists to help academics design, track, and evidence societal impact.

2. Improved evidence and documentation

Impact claims should be supported by clearer evidence of:

- sustained engagement,
- demonstrable social benefits,
- identifiable users or beneficiaries of the research.

3. Diversified dissemination strategies

Researchers could expand their outreach through:

- partnerships with public, private and civic non-academic institutions,
- policy engagement,
- educational programmes,
- media and digital platforms with broader reach.

4. Clearer linkage between research and impact

Impact narratives should more explicitly demonstrate how specific research outputs produced identifiable societal outcomes.

3. Creative Environment

a. Current State of Play

Overall, the creative environments within the evaluated institutions appear reasonably healthy, particularly given the relatively small size of many departments. Several positive features are evident:

- active doctoral training and support for early-career researchers,
- efforts to cultivate research culture and mentoring,
- the presence of thematic research focuses in some departments,
- examples of international collaboration and participation in research networks.

In theology, some initiatives aimed at internationalisation, such as efforts to develop journals and networks with broader scholarly participation, are particularly noteworthy.

At the same time, a number of structural limitations are visible. The range of philosophical subdisciplines represented is relatively narrow, with a strong emphasis on historical and

continental traditions. Areas such as analytic philosophy, philosophy of science, and formal epistemology are comparatively underrepresented.

In theology, some institutions appear to maintain strong confessional or institutional orientations, which can occasionally blur the boundary between confessional perspectives and academic inquiry. There are also indications that international collaboration and integration into global scholarly networks remain uneven across institutions.

b. Evaluation in Global Context

In comparison with internationally leading departments, Slovak institutions generally operate with more limited resources and smaller research communities, which is understandable. Nevertheless, globally competitive research environments typically exhibit:

- strong international mobility and collaboration,
- broader disciplinary coverage,
- well-developed research infrastructures,
- strategic concentration of expertise.

The current Slovak landscape shows positive elements but also institutional fragmentation, with multiple faculties attempting to cover a wide range of topics despite relatively small staff numbers.

c. Future Directions and Suggestions for Improvement

Future development of creative environments could focus on several strategic directions:

1. Greater institutional cooperation

Collaboration between faculties, particularly those within the same denomination or academic field, could help concentrate expertise and strengthen research capacity.

2. **Strengthening international networks**

Expanding collaborations beyond Central and Eastern Europe, including partnerships outside Europe, could increase global visibility and intellectual exchange.

3. **Broadening disciplinary diversity**

Encouraging development in underrepresented areas, such as philosophy of science, philosophy of law, or interdisciplinary research linking philosophy with natural and social sciences, would enhance the field's intellectual breadth.

4. **Research infrastructure and funding support**

Expanding institutional support structures for grant applications, project management, and international funding could significantly strengthen research productivity.

5. **Shared scholarly resources**

Greater cooperation in research infrastructure, such as shared libraries or research centres, could improve access to resources and strengthen the academic environment.

Overall Conclusion

Research in Philosophy and Theology in Slovakia demonstrates clear intellectual potential, committed scholars, and pockets of internationally competitive work. However, the system would benefit from stronger strategic orientation toward international publishing, more systematic approaches to societal impact, and greater institutional cooperation and international integration. With targeted structural improvements, the field is well positioned to increase its global visibility and scholarly influence.

Appendix: Detailed Quality-Level Characteristics Used in Assessing Outputs

1. “World-Leading”

Typical Characteristics

Outputs in this category demonstrated exceptional levels of originality, significance, and intellectual rigour, comparable with the most influential work produced internationally in the field.

Such work typically:

- introduced major new arguments, theoretical frameworks, or methodological innovations;
- reshaped or significantly advanced international scholarly debates;
- showed outstanding conceptual clarity, argumentative strength, and scholarly depth;
- was likely to have long-term influence on the direction of research in the field.

In many cases, these outputs appeared in leading international journals or prestigious academic presses, although publication venue alone was not decisive.

Requirements for Inclusion

To be placed in this category, an output needed to demonstrate that it:

- made a distinctive and substantial contribution to knowledge;
- showed exceptional scholarly execution and originality;
- would be recognised by the international scholarly community as a landmark or highly influential contribution.

Differentiators

Compared with the next category, world-leading outputs did not merely contribute to ongoing debates but significantly shaped or redirected them. Their conceptual innovation, analytical depth, or methodological sophistication clearly placed them among the most important contributions in the field internationally.

2. “Internationally Excellent”

Typical Characteristics

Outputs in this category represented high-quality scholarship that makes a strong contribution to international academic debate.

Typical features included:

- well-developed and original arguments engaging with current international literature;
- high standards of methodological or conceptual rigour;
- clear positioning within relevant scholarly debates;
- publication in reputable international venues or academic presses.

Such outputs frequently advanced existing discussions through new interpretations, careful analyses, or substantial syntheses, even when they did not fundamentally transform the field.

Requirements for Inclusion

An output was placed in this category if it:

- demonstrated clear originality and scholarly significance at an international level;
- engaged effectively with international scholarship;
- met high disciplinary standards of rigour and academic quality.

Differentiators

The key difference from the world-leading category was that internationally excellent outputs typically advanced existing debates rather than fundamentally redefining them. They represented very strong scholarship, but without the exceptional originality or transformative impact characteristic of the highest category.

3. “Internationally Recognised”

Typical Characteristics

Outputs in this category demonstrated solid and competent research that engages with international scholarship and contributes to ongoing academic discussions, though at a more modest level.

Typical characteristics included:

- clear engagement with established scholarly literature;
- sound methodological or argumentative structure;
- contributions that extend or clarify existing debates rather than significantly advancing them.

Many outputs in this category involved careful historical analysis, interpretation, or commentary, often addressing specialised topics within the field.

Requirements for Inclusion

To reach this category, an output generally needed to:

- demonstrate scholarly competence and intellectual coherence;
- engage with relevant international research;
- meet recognised academic standards of scholarship.

Differentiators

Compared with internationally excellent work, outputs in this category typically displayed more limited originality or scope. While competent and valuable, they tended to develop existing ideas rather than offering significant new conceptual contributions.

4. “Nationally Recognised”

Typical Characteristics

Outputs in this category represented scholarly work that meets acceptable academic standards but whose contribution is primarily situated within a national or local academic context.

Such outputs often included:

- studies focused primarily on national intellectual traditions, local historical developments, or regional issues;
- work aimed primarily at domestic academic or cultural audiences;
- publications in national journals or edited volumes with limited international circulation.

While these works could be valuable in their context, their engagement with international scholarship and broader debates was typically limited.

Requirements for Inclusion

Outputs placed in this category typically:

- demonstrated basic scholarly competence;
- made a contribution relevant mainly within a national or regional context;
- showed limited originality or international engagement.

Differentiators

Compared with internationally recognised work, outputs in this category tended to show:

- narrower scholarly scope,
- less engagement with global research debates, and
- lower levels of conceptual or methodological innovation.

5. “Below the Standard of Nationally Recognised Work”

Typical Characteristics

Outputs in this category did not meet the minimum threshold expected of recognised academic research.

Typical issues included:

- limited originality or scholarly contribution;
- insufficient engagement with relevant academic literature;
- weaknesses in methodological rigour or argumentative structure;
- work that was largely descriptive, derivative, or primarily pedagogical rather than research-oriented.

In some cases, outputs resembled summaries, introductory overviews, or teaching materials rather than original research contributions.

Requirements for Inclusion

Outputs were placed in this category where they:

- failed to demonstrate adequate research quality;
- lacked clear originality, significance, or scholarly rigour;

- did not contribute meaningfully to academic debate.

Differentiators

The principal difference from nationally recognised work was that these outputs did not meet the expected academic standards of research and therefore could not be considered recognised scholarly contributions even at a national level.

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