

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

Final Report of the History and Archaeology Sub-panel

Introduction

Beginning in September 2025, the sub-panel History and Archaeology, assisted by Barbora Forkovičová on behalf of the Ministry and Professor Luis Lobo-Guerrero as representative of the superordinate panel Humanities, has been meeting formally once per month for at least 60 minutes. Minutes of these meetings were drafted by Professor Jonathan Conlin and reviewed/approved by Professor Benjamin Pohl (sub-panel chair) before being submitted to the Ministry.

The sub-panel's initial task consisted of establishing a shared strategy for conducting the work fairly, transparently, and impartially. Informed by the United Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework (REF) and its short definition criteria, the sub-panel agreed a methodology for assessing the criteria of Originality, Rigour, and Significance.

The task of assessing applications (incl. Outputs, Interdisciplinary Outputs, Social Impact case studies, and Creative Environment case studies) was facilitated by creating a 'live' Excel spreadsheet accessible to all sub-panelists and maintaining regular communication via email, usually with the Ministry and panel representatives in Cc. Assessments were allocated as equally and equitably as possible amongst the seven sub-panelists, taking into account their respective expertise and field of study whenever possible. All applications and their constituent elements were assessed by at least two sub-panelists. Only one sub-panelist declared a conflict of interest, which was taken fully into account. Before commencing the assessment, a calibration exercise was organised to ensure consistency of practice and offer a space for discussion/clarification amongst the sub-panelists. The sub-panel agreed that there should be no requirement to normalise differences in scores between individual sub-panelists, and that in cases of significant differences it was advisable, but not compulsory, for sub-panelists to initiate independent conversations amongst each other via a communication channel of their choice.

After the assessment had begun, further interdisciplinary allocations were submitted to the sub-panel by the Ministry and allocated amongst the sub-panel members as per the abovementioned criteria. Other topics of discussion at the sub-panel meetings concerned the definition and significance of diversity and inclusion, the treatment of book reviews, introductions to edited volumes or special issues, and other non-standard submissions. For further details, please see the meeting minutes from 20 October 2025, 10 November 2025, 15 December 2025, 19 January 2026, and 16 February 2026.

1. Scope and purpose of this report

This report provides a brief analytical overview of the state of historical and archaeological research in Slovakia as perceived by the sub-panel History and Archaeology based on evidence submitted to the Periodic Assessment of Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities (VER) 2026. It reflects the collective judgement of the sub-panelists and draws on the assessment of multiple factors, as indicated by the respective regulation VER2026: research outputs, social impact case studies and creative environment statements across the field.

The purpose of this report is not to discuss individual applications but to identify and articulate overarching characteristics, strengths, deficits/challenges, and trends in historical and archaeological research in Slovakia. It is intended as a reflective, constructive, and forward-looking account of the state of the field in Slovakia. It also offers some considerations on the work completed by the sub-panelists and the practical challenges that emerged in the process, as well as some suggestions for improvement for future iterations of VER.

2. General comments on the state of the field

Historical and archaeological research in Slovakia is characterised by a strong continuity of scholarly traditions, particularly in empirically grounded research, with a notable focus on national/domestic and wider Central European contexts. The prevalence of this regional interest in Slovak and East-Central European history represents both a strength and a potential limit of the research activity. Across the assessed submissions, research activity covers a wide chronological span, from prehistory to contemporary history, and it includes both historical and archaeological approaches, often in close dialogue with other related disciplines.

The field demonstrates stability in its core areas of expertise and a sustained commitment to source-based scholarship. At the same time, levels of international visibility, methodological innovation, and thematic diversification vary considerably across applications.

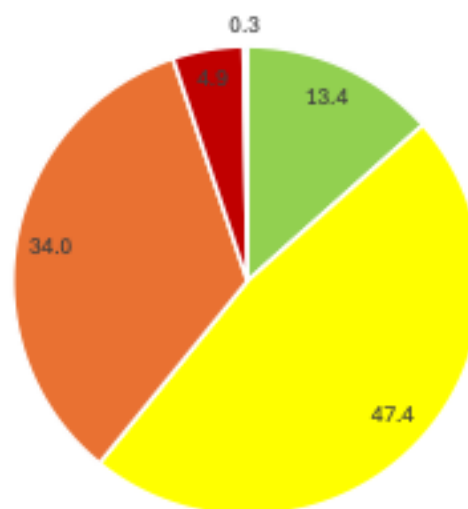
3. Quality and characteristics of the assessed research outputs

3.1 Overall quality and trends

The assessed research outputs generally compare very favourably in an international context, with the vast majority (>94%) being of internationally recognised (34%), internationally excellent (47.4%), or world-leading (13.4%) quality. Most demonstrate sound methodological practice, appropriate use of sources, and internal coherence of argument. Those of internationally excellent quality are typically characterised by clear research questions, explicit engagement with international historiography and/or current archaeological debates, and effective integration of empirical material with broader interpretative frameworks. This favourable impression is cemented further by the fact that a good portion of outputs are published in top-ranking international journals and by leading international publishers. Many outputs reflect good levels of cooperation in the national and international context. Outputs scored at the highest levels, especially those of world-leading quality, evidence sustained research agendas rather than isolated achievements. They are thus indicative of strong international connectivity, advanced methodological approaches, and the applicants' ability to open new research perspectives grounded in original source material. Only a small proportion of the submitted outputs (<6%) were found to be below internationally competitive quality.

Scores awarded (%) - Outputs

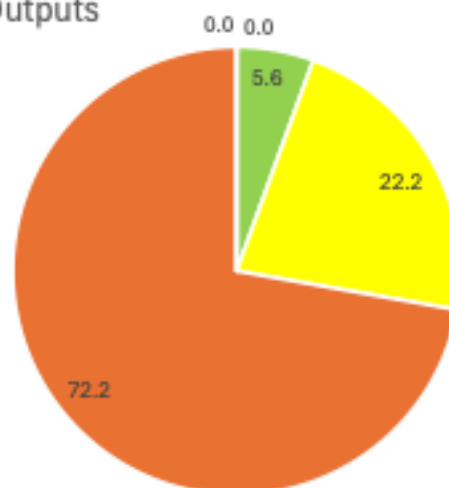
- World-leading quality
- Internationally excellent quality
- Internationally recognised quality
- Nationally recognised quality
- Below the standard of nationally recognised work (incl. 'unclassified')



Outputs (350)		No.	%
1	World-leading quality	47	13.4
2	Internationally excellent quality	166	47.4
3	Internationally recognised quality	119	34.0
4	Nationally recognised quality	17	4.9
5	Below the standard of nationally recognised work	1	0.3

Scores awarded (%) - Interdisciplinary Outputs

- World-leading quality
- Internationally excellent quality
- Internationally recognised quality
- Nationally recognised quality
- Below the standard of nationally recognised work (incl. 'unclassified')

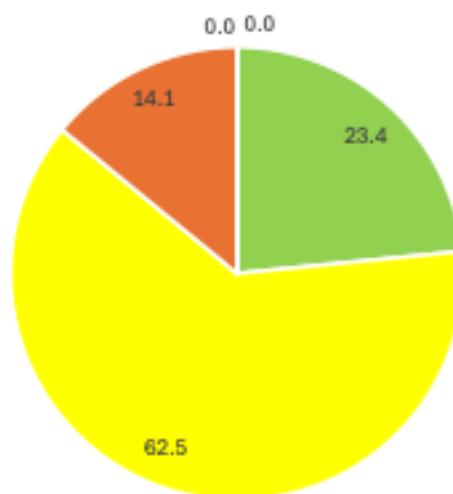


Interdisciplinary Outputs (18)		No.	%
1	World-leading quality	1	5.6
2	Internationally excellent quality	4	22.2
3	Internationally recognised quality	13	72.2
4	Nationally recognised quality	0	0.0
5	Below the standard of nationally recognised work	0	0.0



Scores awarded (%) - Social Impact

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

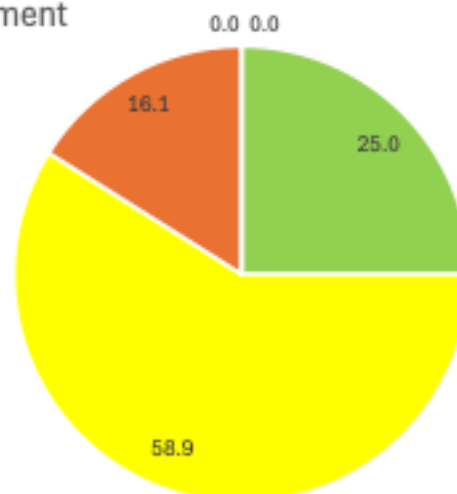


Social Impact (64)

		No.	%
1	Excellent	15	23.4
2	Very good	40	62.5
3	Good	9	14.1
4	Satisfactory	0	0.0
5	Unsatisfactory	0	0.0

Scores awarded (%) - Creative Environment

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory



Creative Environment (56)

		No.	%
1	Excellent	14	25.0
2	Very good	33	58.9
3	Good	9	16.1
4	Satisfactory	0	0.0
5	Unsatisfactory	0	0.0

3.2 Disciplinary strengths

Recurring strengths identified across the field include:

- deep expertise in the analysis of primary sources, including unedited archival, material, and archaeological evidence;
- continuity of long-term research themes that generate cumulative knowledge and consolidate the work of well-established research teams;
- strong regional specialisation, providing essential contributions to national/domestic scholarship at the same time as placing research on Slovak history in its wider European context;
- attentiveness to popular memory work/heritage across a broad range of sites and technologies;
- technical competence in archaeological documentation, excavation practice, and object analysis;
- openness to employing LIDAR and AI-based tools, in a reflective and critical fashion.

In archaeology in particular, field-based research and material studies form a solid backbone of the discipline, supporting both applied knowledge (e.g., cultural heritage) and academic research.

3.3 Structural deficits and challenges

Besides these strengths, the assessment has also revealed some deficits and challenges:

- originality is not always clearly articulated, with description sometimes eclipsing interpretation and insufficient attention being given to the presentation of conclusions and analyses;
- repeated reference to methodological and theoretical frameworks notwithstanding, innovation is demonstrated and distributed unevenly across the field;

- research employing experiments in controlled conditions, field work, and other methodologies borrowed from cognate disciplines (e.g., behavioural anthropology, political science, ethnology) does not always justify this methodological decision and/or explain the significance of its findings in recognisable historical terms;
- the wider significance of research findings is not always made explicit or highlighted sufficiently.

Interdisciplinary research is in good evidence throughout but varies considerably in quality. Outputs positioned at the intersection of more than one discipline do not always clarify their contribution to historical and/or archaeological knowledge, which limits their perceived significance within each field.

4. Social relevance and societal engagement

Historical and archaeological research in Slovakia shows clear potential for social relevance and societal engagement, particularly in areas such as cultural heritage, public history, museum practice, historical education, and collective/cultural memory. All the Social Impact case studies submitted to and assessed by this sub-panel were of at least good (14.1%) and mostly very good (62.5%) and excellent quality (23.4%). Where social impact is realised and articulated most successfully, it typically involves close collaboration with cultural institutions, meaningful engagement with non-academic audiences and stakeholders, and lasting contributions to the public understanding of the past.

That said, the translation of academic research into demonstrable societal impact remains somewhat uneven. Whilst many, indeed most, research activities assessed by the sub-panel show a clear public value, this value is not always accompanied by systematic strategies for ongoing impact generation (legacy) or robust evidence of the achieved (or claimed) impact. Strengthening skills in planning, documenting, and evidencing social impact would enhance the legacy of these case studies and contribute to the overall societal visibility of the field in Slovakia as well as internationally.

Pathways to impact are sometimes conflated with impact itself, e.g., by citing the amount of media coverage or website hits received without evidence of whether/how such coverage does achieve the claimed impact. Whilst generally impressive, the range of beneficiaries identified by the applicants does not always sufficiently acknowledge their specific needs and expectations, especially when academic beneficiaries are included alongside or even amongst the ‘general public’. This is evident particularly in cases where beneficiaries include at-risk stakeholder communities, rendering informed consent a matter of primary importance. More work is needed, therefore, to ensure robust research design that foregrounds co-design and co-creation of impact-generating activities.

5. Research environment and sustainability

The creative environment for historical and archaeological research in Slovakia is generally robust and sustainable, with established research teams and institutional structures supporting ongoing scholarly activity. Integration of research with teaching and doctoral training is a consistent feature of the field. The Creative Environment case studies assessed by the sub-panel were consistently rated good (16%), very good (58.9%) and excellent (25%), which gives confidence for the field’s present state and future development in Slovakia.

At the same time, the assessment highlights noticeable variability in long-term strategic planning, particularly with regard to research renewal, support for early/mid-career researchers, and succession planning. International collaboration is present throughout but distributed unevenly, and in several cases it could be expanded so as to increase research quality, visibility, and global competitiveness. There is strong evidence of international cooperation across all institutions. It is encouraging to see PhD students and early career researchers spending periods of time at partner institutions abroad. Unfortunately, the data submitted rarely includes information on aspects such as gender-balance.

Sustaining and developing the field in the future will depend on Slovakia's ability to balance continuity of expertise with targeted investment in innovation, internationalisation, and generational renewal.

6. Summary and concluding remarks

In sum, historical and archaeological research in Slovakia rests on solid intellectual and institutional foundations, strong empirical traditions, and clear paths to societal relevance and impact. There is demonstrable capacity to produce internationally excellent research, although this potential is not yet fully realised across all subject areas and research groups. That said, the average level of research production, as evidenced by the summative quality profiles generated for each application, is reasonably high, and the members of the sub-panel who previously engaged in VER 2022 recognise some significant improvements in the overall quality of the submitted research and publications, especially as concerns their international reach and recognition.

Future development would benefit from clearer and more consistent articulation of originality and significance, stronger engagement with international debates, and more systematic approaches to societal impact and research sustainability. Addressing these issues would strengthen further the important position of history and archaeology within Slovakia's research landscape and enhance their contribution to international scholarship and society.

7. Practical recommendations for future iterations of VER

The review process has also highlighted some structural issues that could usefully be addressed in future iterations of VER. For example, greater clarity and guidance on the Ministry's part would be appreciated regarding the treatment of outputs that fall outside established disciplinary boundaries. A significant number of submitted outputs were positioned in adjacent or overlapping fields and/or published in venues primarily associated with disciplines other than history and archaeology, often without clearly articulating their significance for and contribution to historical/archaeological research.

Whilst interdisciplinarity is to be encouraged in principle, some submissions did not demonstrate sufficiently how their questions, methods, and findings relate to the core disciplines of history and archaeology. Providing applicants with more detailed and specific instructions of how to articulate disciplinary relevance within interdisciplinary work, at the same time as offering sub-panels more structured guidance on the assessment of such work, would improve transparency and consistency.

The assessment process also raised questions concerning the status of specific types of outputs, notably book reviews, introductions to edited volumes or special issues, and other forms of scholarly editorial work. In the absence of more detailed and specific assessment criteria, the broad/open definition of what constitutes an eligible research output can make it challenging to calibrate expectations of originality, significance, and rigour across a multitude of formats. Future iterations of VER would benefit from more explicit guidance on how various types of outputs should be framed by applicants and assessed by sub-panels, including the extent to which critical reflection, synthesis, or research leadership should be demonstrated.

Additional clarification on co/multi-authored outputs and the assessment of an individual author's contribution therein would reduce uncertainty amongst assessors. Applicants should be encouraged to include a statement as to the qualitative/quantitative contribution of the submitting author(s) as part of the application. Whilst assessing each output as a single unit regardless of the number of contributing authors (as is common in STEM subjects) is an option, clearer communication of expectations at the outset would strengthen the sub-panel's confidence in the transparency and comparability of evaluations across the board.

It would also be beneficial to highlight more clearly, and earlier on in the assessment process, the possibility/requirement for applicants to upload more than one Social Impact case study depending on the size and staffing levels of the submitting institution.

It would further be helpful if all submissions, specifically outputs, included consistent metadata, possibly in the form of citations in standard bibliographical formatting. This

would make it easier to allocate expert reviewers and determine the precise nature of the work to be reviewed.

If future iterations of VER are to include assessments of work in languages other than English, the applying institutions and authors should be encouraged to ensure that all abstracts/summaries submitted for assessment adequately indicate the work's significance and originality.

Finally, future iterations of VER should seek to provide clearer guidance from the outset as to the rounding of scores that result in a fraction. Following correspondence with the superordinate panel Humanities, it was agreed that fractional scores should always be rounded naturally to the nearest whole number except for those ending in .5, which should be rounded in the applicant's favour to reflect VER's inverse scoring system in which 1 marks the highest ('world-leading quality'/'excellent') and 5 the lowest ('Below the standard of nationally recognised work'/'Unsatisfactory') possible score (i.e., fractions smaller than and including .5 were rounded down to the nearest whole number, whereas fractions larger than .5, though not .5 itself, were rounded up to the nearest whole number; e.g., 1.33 was rounded to 1, 1.67 was rounded to 2, 1.5 was rounded to 1, etc.).

Sub-panel members

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