

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

Final Report of the Humanities Panel

Descriptive and qualitative reports

History and Archaeology — Luis Lobo-Guerrero

In this sub-panel, Prof. Benjamin Pohl coordinated the pool of 7 evaluators.

The quality of science in history and archaeology demonstrates a strong positioning towards the upper ends of the evaluation, with 13.4 of all outputs ranked as world leading quality, and 47.4 % international excellent quality. That 60.8% of outputs correspond to these categories demonstrates a very strong commitment towards internationalization. This can be corroborated when looking at publication outlets (although not considered for this assessment), as well as the way in which researchers and projects are strongly embedded in and committed to international research networks and professional scholarly associations.

Whereas active pockets of expertise within the pool of applicants is clear, it is possible to observe a tendency in contributions to remain at a fairly descriptive level and within established debates. A turn towards originality and novelty in approaches, analysis, and theoretical contributions could help to mobilize part of the potential of the international excellent quality into the world leading echelon. The fact that the highest ranked outputs include early career and doctoral students indicates solid potential for the near future. With adequate retention and promotion policies, this would indicate a growing quality trend that can be incentivized.

The social impact of contributions indicates a very strong commitment towards the use of science to fertilize societal debates, with 85% of items deemed as excellent or very good. This is commendable. However, when analyzing the significance of the engagement, it is possible to see a tendency towards locating science within societal debates rather than mobilizing science to launch new ones. Whereas the current trend makes the work of researchers immediately useful or valuable, using their science to create new debates could increase the impact of their work and, in turn, support the case for further investments in science. This can also reinforce the impact on creative environment where 84% of items were deemed excellent or very good.

The quality of interdisciplinary output was not found to be so strong. Only 27.8% falls within the top two tiers, and only 5.6% as world leading. This relates mainly to the unclear role of interdisciplinarity played in the production of the findings of the outcome. This could relate to diverse understandings of what is meant by interdisciplinarity, or the lack of strong interdisciplinary teams working on specific topics. From the outputs coming to this sub-panel, the latter seems to be a case. In comparative European context, targeted nation-wide funding on problem-based research tends to stimulate the creation of interdisciplinary teams. This could be a progress frontier on this area of knowledge.

Finally, throughout the pool of applications, it is possible to observe a healthy thematic spread representing diversity of interests across the Slovak history and archaeology landscape. This allows a wide scope for the future development of doctoral students and early career researchers with great potential for societal relevance. It would be advisable to retain such diversity toward the future.

Philosophy and Theology — Emidio Spinelli

More specifically, regarding the sub-panel 'Philosophy and Theology' (a total of 17 applications, managed by 7 members, coordinated by Sam Wilkinson), it is possible to provide a description of the thematic areas that are characteristic of the research landscape in Slovakia. Even a purely quantitative analysis of the products submitted for evaluation reveals some evident trends.

In the case of 'creative outputs' (418 in total), there is a clear prevalence (42%) of theological topics (biblical exegesis, liturgy, iconography, education and literature, as well as contributions on the history and events of the Church, both in a broader context and at a local level).

In terms of philosophical works, on the other hand, the most represented aspects are related to studies in ethics (with particular attention to ecological issues, human rights and transhumanism: 18%) or the history of philosophy in general (12%); there are also contributions on logic/analytical philosophy and language (6%) and, it is noteworthy, the history of ancient philosophy (6%), while less space is given to aesthetics (4%), philosophy of science (4%), theoretical philosophy (3%), political philosophy (2.5%) or sociological essays (2.5%).

In light of this statistical distribution, it is possible to identify a strong point in theological studies (within which, however, more extensive research on issues related to the interaction between religion and other disciplines should perhaps be prioritized) and in those dedicated to ethics (with strengths on highly topical issues), while a reflection on fields of great interest in contemporary debate (such as aesthetics, political philosophy and, above all, philosophy of science) still appears to be underdeveloped.

As far as 'Social impact case studies' are concerned, there seems to be a confirmed tendency to favor projects dedicated not only to religious areas (e.g. pastoral care, the

structures of the Orthodox Church or the intertwining of theological choices and educational needs), but also to ethical issues of primary importance (again transhumanism, the Anthropocene, environmental policy, technological civilization and its problems, equal opportunities, bioethics, and self-care). Some projects specifically dedicated to issues of pedagogy, both general and applied, are also interesting, including those aimed at enhancing critical thinking.

It should be noted that in the evaluation of these 'Social impact case studies', some examples of excellence emerge, with qualities that are also recognized at an international level, alongside proposals that appear weaker, especially in terms of 'overall sustainability'.

Finally, in the case of 'Creative environment forms', the trend in religious research is confirmed (with some privileged themes: the history of the Slovak church and studies in systematic theology; the intertwining of religion and pluralistic society, and the impact on the social sciences and even medical practice), without forgetting, on the one hand, important ethical or anthropological issues (discourse on values, applied ethics, interest in the mass media as well as AI and environmental issues) and, on the other hand, perspectives more markedly focused on historical-philosophical or analytical philosophy investigations. Here too, perhaps, one might hope for an even greater investment in in-depth and constant comparison with the most important strands of research at the international level.

An additional note concerns the evaluation of these forms: it falls somewhere in the middle, without particular excellence or negative peaks.

Language and Literature — Servanne Woodward

A group of seven members were coordinated by Professor Olga Goriunova in this sub-panel.

What is immediately compelling in the 17 applications totaling 420 outputs of language and literature is their internal coherence and purposefulness, generally defining greater wellbeing, preparedness for the future as it unfolds with new developments with AI and new technologies, new mental attitudes and new perceptions, and sometimes innovations come from very old texts, for instance those merging disciplines, before they were developed into distinct branches. An identifiable strand of thought comes from a very European characteristic, namely shifting borders and neighboring or dominant languages, one way or the other, and therefore mutual influences and unity in divergence. All 17 applications include very diverse pieces coordinated by unifying aims (such as what objective as well as emotional realities are part of living and evade language but through creative rhythms in music, poetry and scientific terms, or how to rethink time and place in a focus on the collective wellbeing in nation building as relating to the soil — in poetic “motherland” terms, in farmland identity or in ecological fiction). The research is honest, courageous and generous, sometimes pragmatic, and it answers or shares very much the ministry’s values in its evaluating scales.

The articles produced in prestigious foreign journals reflect on a society with shared heritage or concerns due to shifting borders and cosmopolitanism. Slovakia appears receptive to influences, a center for passing other cultures through translation and methodical comparisons and also as a source of important and original literary figures of its own—a true cultural center for Europe and beyond. It is a society working on values and on education so that Slovakia cultivates the non-exclusive with all members of society. Conversely, the current society is also depicted as a linguistic pocket gathering a nation via Slovak language and literature as it engages the nation in a centrifugal manner.

Another center of Slovak research in linguistics and literature and perhaps the essential one, appears in the main thrust of these articles and books questioning language: what is orality? what is writing? More essentially, what does language accomplish? And it brings together

various apparently disconnected disciplines (linguistics, language teaching, curated archives, contextualized manuscript holdings, translation and literature studies) under the same quest to conscientiously coordinate with international bodies of research. The co-fundings of the research with foreign nations to Slovakia is one more testimony to this very successful openness, and the trust international researchers place in Slovak scholars.

An identifiable strength noted by the sub-panel as well lies in translations and translation studies. The sub-panel estimated that 19.05% of the outputs met all the highest criteria required for World excellence and significance, followed by 31.1% and 37.86% in international recognition or a total of 88% approximately, answering World and International interests and research—the remainder may have been perceived as oriented toward internal socio-aesthetics and trends more meaningful per se to Slovakia. The sub-panel explained the rationale for their scale at the end of their final report (validated by all) and submitted by Professor Olga Goriunova.

Panel members

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