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**PERIODIC EVALUATION OF RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT,
ARTISTIC AND OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITY
IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

**ПЕРІОДИЧНЕ ОЦІНЮВАННЯ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ, РОЗРОБОК,
МИСТЕЦЬКОЇ ТА ІНШОЇ ТВОРЧОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ
В СЛОВАЦЬКІЙ РЕСПУБЛІЦІ**

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Introduction. Investments from the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility, based on the European Parliament and Council Regulation on February 12, 2021, establishing the Recovery and Resilience Support Mechanism, became a support for the economy and an impetus for the labour market in the period after the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) of the Slovak Republic is a comprehensive response to the consequences of the crisis associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as a response to the identified main challenges and systemic deficiencies of the Slovak economy.

Investments in the framework of the RRP also include investments in education, including higher education. These investments and the allocation of funds depend on the implementation of specific political reforms. Component 8, “Increasing the performance of Slovak universities”, includes five reforms and foresees the allocation of funds of 213 million euros. This paper deals with Reform 2 which concerns the introduction of a Periodic evaluation of research, development, artistic and other creative activities. The evaluation took place in 2022 and represented a new administrative workload for public universities and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) public research institutions.

Only recently, the institutional evaluation of science and research at Slovak universities has become a subject of independent periodic evaluation. Although an independent Slovak accreditation agency for higher

education has been established to assess the quality of education, there needed to be procedures for assessing the quality of research activities. The last evaluation of most universities' research activities was completed in 2014 for the period 2008–2013. However, it did not consider developments in other years, which also impacted the institutional funding of research activities at Slovak public universities [1, p. 5].

Until now, any evaluation of the publication outputs of Slovak university teachers and researchers has been based on scientometric and bibliometric indicators. A few years ago, requirements for the publication of academic articles in journals included in the Web of Science and Scopus databases began to appear in various accreditation and qualification criteria. It represented a big turning point, especially for social sciences and humanities, where book publications have been highly valued: monographs, collective monographs, or edited books and, moreover, where most of the ground-breaking research is traditionally not published in research articles.

Results. The goal of Reform 2 within Component 8 of RRP was to create a system of periodic evaluation of the scientific performance of universities implemented with the participation of international evaluators who will evaluate the content of the submitted publication outputs. It will be a peer-review process by its nature. This system will be uniform for universities and other public research institutions at the SAS. The ranking considers not only the best researchers but also the average or those below average. Therefore, the goal is to create institutional profiles in individual scientific fields to identify the strengths and weaknesses as well as the needs of individual academic workplaces.

The British Research Excellence Framework (REF) was the system that inspired officials from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The REF is a research impact evaluation of British higher education institutions. As a successor to the former Research Assessment Exercise was first used in 2014 to assess the period 2008–2013. The REF has been criticized in the past, mainly because of its high cost [2; 3].

The task of the requestor (i. e. faculty, department, university, or research institution) was to select twenty-five hyperlinks to publication outputs for the period 2014–2019. Each academic employee who has been working 100 % full-time at the university and at least half-time at the SAS during the six years was included in the assessment. In accordance with other criteria, the employee had to work at the workplace for at least four of the six monitored years. In the first round, each employee submitted five original outputs – articles, books, artworks, etc. If someone produced less than five outputs, the requestor entered a zero for each missing value. In the

second round, the requestor selected twenty-five outputs according to the principle of evenness and representativeness: the number of outputs per employee could differ from the number of outputs of another employee by no more than one output so that all the requestor's employees were the authors of the same or approximately the same number of outputs [4].

Submission of applications for assessment within the periodic evaluation was possible only after approval of applications for evaluating the method of outputs selection. In the first round, each requestor was obliged to describe and explain the methodology used to select and sort publication outputs. Therefore, each institution set the standards at its discretion, and it could sort the outputs according to own significance and relevance criteria. For example, the criteria for selecting the individual publication outputs might be internally defined based on the categories of publication activity according to the Decree of the Ministry of Education no. 456/2012 on the central register of the evidence of publishing and artistic of activity and the central register of the evidence of artistic activity. As part of the first phase, the applicants also uploaded five hyperlinks for each assessed employee to the electronic system. In the second phase, if the administrator approved the methodology for the selection of outputs from the Ministry of Education, the applicant determined the selection of 25 outputs based on the principle of evenness and representativeness. The full text in pdf had to be attached to each record. In addition, the institution had to submit an abstract in English in case of outputs that are not written in English.

The evaluators were selected from 960 nominations, of which 720 were from foreign universities around the world. Finally, 165 evaluators from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Australia, and other countries were divided in twenty-eight panels for twenty-eight scientific areas [5]. The evaluation phase is running from September to December 2022. Within this phase, roughly 4,000 euros per month for each evaluator was allocated from the RRP for their peer-review activity [5].

The twenty-five outputs will be distributed into five assessment categories – world quality, significant international quality, international quality, nationally recognized quality and unrated. At the same time, each institution receives information on what percentage of the submitted outputs represents the individual assessment categories [4].

Conclusion. The periodic evaluation of research, development, artistic and other creative activities included the evaluation period 2014–2019. Within the process, 308 applications were submitted, a total of 7,700 publication outputs for 8,379 employees. In addition, 165 evaluators from 66 universities and 19 countries currently participate in the evaluation process [6].

At the end of the process, each institution will receive information about its scientific profile following the evaluation criteria.

The periodic evaluation of scientific performance represented an additional effort because it came at the time of work peak on the institutional accreditation of public universities and their study programs, as well as in the middle of the accreditation process at the SAS. Deliverables had to be processed and submitted within a few weeks. It took work for individual institutions to reconcile these obligations, different expectations and again a new, additional way of evaluating the performance of employees at public universities and the SAS. In addition to the fact that, once again, the work of university teachers and researchers has been assessed according to criteria set retroactively, it still needs to be determined how the results of this evaluation will translate into the funding of science in the period 2024–2029.

Assuming that the periodic evaluation of research, artistic and other creative activity is established and will survive political changes over the years, universities and research institutions will adapt their functioning and adjust their performances so that in the next six years, they will be better prepared for this type of assessment. At the subsequent evaluation in 2028, two more assessment modules should also start – societal impact and research environment, including doctoral studies.

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INFORMATION AND INNOVATION IMPLEMENTATION AS AN EFFECTIVE MECHANISM IN THE TRAINING OF SPECIALISTS

ІНФОРМАЦІЙНО-ІННОВАЦІЙНІ ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ЯК ДІЄВИЙ МЕХАНІЗМ ПРИ ПІДГОТОВЦІ «МАГІСТРІВ»

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