

March 2021

International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions Activity

Panel Report: Social Sciences

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1 Introduction

International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions Activity analysed the research performance and international competitiveness considering also socioeconomic impact and development potential of the institutions. Results of the evaluation can serve as input in policy making and will enable the institutions to improve their performance based on the recommendations.

The Social Sciences panel evaluated 16 institutions:

- RISEBA Faculty of Business and Economy
- ISMA Business Laboratory
- Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Regional Studies
- Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Business and Social Processes
- Business Competence Centre¹
- Riga Stradins University, Platform of Social Sciences
- Liepāja University Educational Sciences Unit
- Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management, Riga Technical University
- Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit, Liepāja University
- The BA School of Business and Finance
- Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences
- Foundation "Baltic Studies Centre"
- Center for Security and Strategic Research
- Daugavpils University research programme "Educational sciences, psychology, economy, and law"
- Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Social Sciences
- Cluster of Social Sciences, University of Latvia

The Panel evaluated the institutions using the following criteria:

- Quality of the research
- Impact on the scientific discipline
- Economic impact
- Social impact
- Research environment and infrastructure
- Development potential

The evaluation of each institution involved documentary review and Panel Members' online discussions with institutions. The final evaluation of each institute is a collective view of the Expert Panel.

Experts were provided with summary data tables for each institution that aggregated data from self-assessment reports in the following manner:

¹ Institution requested not to publish the results of evaluation for this institution.

- FTE academic and research personnel 2018 – sum of all academic and research personnel in full-time equivalent in 2018 excluding other acting academic and acting academic research personnel, research attending staff, research technical staff and all level students
- Total number of self-reported outputs 2013-2018 – sum of i) Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings included in WoS or SCOPUS; ii) Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings not included in WoS or SCOPUS; iii) Monographs; iv) Patents (Latvia) as well as v) Patents (Europe and international)
- Total funding – sum of i) Total state funding (Base funding plus Competitive state budget funding plus EU Structural Funds plus Other national funding); ii) Total international funding (EU Framework Programmes plus Other international funding); and iii) Private funding.

The analysis of each institution is presented in following sections.

Feedback on Panel assessment received from the institutions is published in the **Error! Reference source not found.** The Panel has reviewed the feedback and made small changes in some of the individual reports.

2 Institution reports

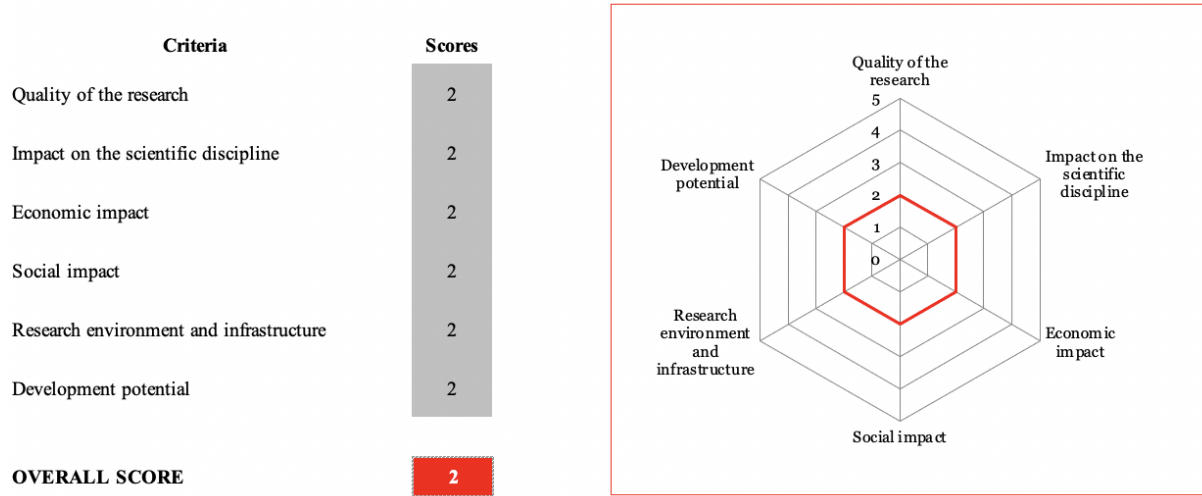
S_1 The BA School of Business and Finance

Institution data

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	6,38
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	2,00
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	8,38
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	29,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	81,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	1
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	111,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	3,46
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	13,25
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	6
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,72
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	152.217
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	18.164

The BA School of Business and Finance (BASBF) was established by the Bank of Latvia in 1992. Currently the school has 1400 students and 43 academic staff members. The research staff is small with 6.38 FTE academic and 2.00 FTE research personnel. The school has a firm national education position in business management and finance, conducts student-related, applied research for the industry, and is well-connected to other institutions. The joint doctoral programme with RISEBA is a strong asset.

Figure 1 The BA School of Business and Finance – Scores



Overall score

Score: 2

Most of BASBF research is applied. The BASBF produces a reasonable number of publications. The quality of the unit's research is adequate, but it does not excel. Basic research is underdeveloped. There are few papers with international impact, published in high quality journals. BASBF undertakes few international activities and its international status and international research impact is therefore limited. The School does not receive basic research funding. It does not receive research grants or do paid commissioned research.

National economic impact is realized through student research projects which is highly valued by firms and institutions such as banks and the ministries.

The school has social impact at the national level through its educational programmes, student internships, participation in expert groups, and dissemination of insights through the website, social network sites, and its own journal.

The research infrastructure of the school is adequate. The school has recently launched well-chosen and ambitious strategies and policies to improve its research performance. However, to what extent these will increase the research accomplishment of the unit is uncertain. Successes in the highly competitive national and EU funding schemes are seldom granted to small units which are only beginning their development as centres for research.

Overall, the Panel assesses the research of BASBF as 'adequate'.

Quality of Research

Score: 2

The school produced a total of 29 Scopus/WoS articles and 81 'other' articles during the period of assessment. The annual production of Scopus/WoS articles has declined from 15 in 2016, to 9 in 2017, to 5 in 2018. The number of 'other publications' shows the same trend. BASBF's publication statistics are reasonable as is its number of doctoral completions. Mainly student research projects are conducted for the industry, government and NGOs. The scientific quality of the output is modest: descriptive – case - studies dominate, empirical studies aimed at theory development are scarce. The school's *Journal of Business Management* is not included in Scopus.

The school has not been successful in attracting external funding of research, and only participates in one EU funded programme (ERASMUS+). One professor is a member of a

number of editorial boards of international journals. There is no mention of awards for academic personnel.

Overall, the Panel assesses BASBF as a satisfactory national player. The international academic community deems the significance of the research to be acceptable.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

The doctoral programme and the study related - applied - research shows the relevance of BASBF, in particular at the national level. It must be noted, however, that the rigor of the papers is quite modest and that their impact on the field, especially at an international level is restricted. International exchange of scholars and international research collaborations are limited. Research grants and scientific awards are lacking. Participation in the management of international journals as editor or as a member of the editorial board, participation in international conference organization, and in international research consortia are limited or absent.

Overall, the Panel assesses BASBF as a satisfactory national player with a stable position in the national scientific community. The unit would still need to do a lot of work in order to become a recognized member of the international scientific community.

Economic impact

Score: 2

The unit connects to companies including SEB Banka, Latvijas Pasts, Swedbank, and Altum, mainly through students who undertake some kind of research project. More than 120 studies were conducted in the period 2016-2018 for the business and finance sector. The unit's economic impact covers topics such as insurance, cyber security, circular economy, and digital transformation. BASBF also contributes to the industry through its doctoral programme, discussions, seminars, and conferences.

Overall, the economic impact of the unit is assessed as 'adequate'; the research of the institute is important for the economy.

Social impact

Score: 2

The unit has social impact through its teaching programmes and the research undertaken by its students. Social partners include Nature Conservation Agency, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvian Insurers Association, and the Mechanical Engineering and Metalworking Association. The unit's social impact covers topics such as sustainability, financial literacy, and climate change. The institution's staff also participates in state expert groups and NGOs. The unit makes an effort to disseminate its knowledge by means of its website, social networks, conferences, and participation in public events and practical conferences and forums.

Collaboration with the public sector is also beneficial for the School and includes internship options for students, guest lectures, and membership of advisory and examination boards.

Overall, the Panel assesses the social impact of the unit as adequate; its research is important for the society.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 2

The basic infrastructure of the unit, including subscriptions to major databases, computers and relevant software, is adequate. The unit has collaborations with other universities and polytechnics in Latvia and abroad, although mainly for teaching purposes. The School partners with Ministries in Latvia and participates in the organization of national conferences. The doctoral programme appears relatively strong and enjoys a good level of success.

The lack of sufficient funding for research is a great challenge. Funding is mainly from tuition and needs to be used for the teaching programme. Other forms of funding are rarely sought and the BASBF is not very active in acquiring competitive funding for research. A detailed research programme and internal research seminars are missing.

Overall, the research environment and the infrastructure of the unit are adequate. The institution's level of research environment is still evolving to achieve a level that is expected in the international scientific community.

Development potential

Score: 2

The unit has a realistic assessment of its own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and has developed a vision for the future ("Strategy 2018-2023"), aiming at high-quality research, international cooperation, close cooperation with the financial and business world, and priorities consistent with Latvian Smart Specialisation Strategy". BASBF sees opportunities to contribute to areas related to the impact of digital transformation on the financial services sector, circular economy issues and complex cyber security management issues.

BASBF wants to grow its international network and improve its research capacity with international supervisors for postdoc research and invitations. A programme of internal research funding has been launched and a remuneration system based on research performance has been introduced. The School is developing a new joint doctoral programme with the University of Latvia

The recently launched strategy of BASBF is well-chosen and ambitious, but a crucial question is how these aims can be realized. Success in the highly competitive national and EU funding schemes is far from guaranteed for small units which are only beginning of their development as centres for research.

Overall, the unit is a visible national player in its area of research which from time to time can be expected to contribute to activities of the international scientific community.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The unit runs the joint doctoral programme "Business Administration" with RISEBA. Both schools provide courses including methods, paper writing, and supervision. They produced 6 PhDs in the assessment period. Currently there are 13 doctoral students. The students interviewed by the Panel were full of praise for the programme and the supervision. The School is developing a new joint doctoral programme together with the University of Latvia.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The Self-Assessment Report indicates that the Smart Specialisation Strategy theme "Information and communication technologies (ICT)" is important in the research programme of the School, and mentions two examples: the doctoral research project "Product development methods and process management in ICT companies with high growth potential and their experience in similar profile start-up companies in Latvia", and the internal grant research project "Impact of information and communication technologies on the management of competences in the financial sector in the Baltic States".

The unit explicitly aims to contribute to the Smart Specialisation strategy through its teaching programme which focuses on the provision of “modern and future labor market-relevant education in business and financial management”. This vision is also clear in the research that BASBF undertakes, however, due to the modest quality of research the impact on the Strategy is minimal.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The unit conforms in several ways with objectives of state scientific and technology development as well as education and innovation development.

Firstly, the unit aims to attract new students, also through the development of (new) doctoral programmes and a post-doctoral programme. The teaching programmes aim to meet the requirements of the future labor market in line with the priorities of the Smart Specialization Strategy.

Secondly the unit has extensive relationships with the industry, mainly through student-related research. The research aims to contribute to the transformation of the economy by promoting structural changes in favor of the production of goods and services with higher added value. In the period of the assessment the students conducted more than 120 studies for the industry.

Thirdly, the unit has developed a strategy to broaden its international network -currently in a first state of development-, amongst others through the post-doctoral programme.

Recommendations

The Panel has some suggestions which might help the unit to become a significant international player and to strengthen the School's position in the international scientific community as a convincing actor and a trustworthy partner within international collaboration networks. Some of these recommendations are already visible in the recently launched strategy of the unit.

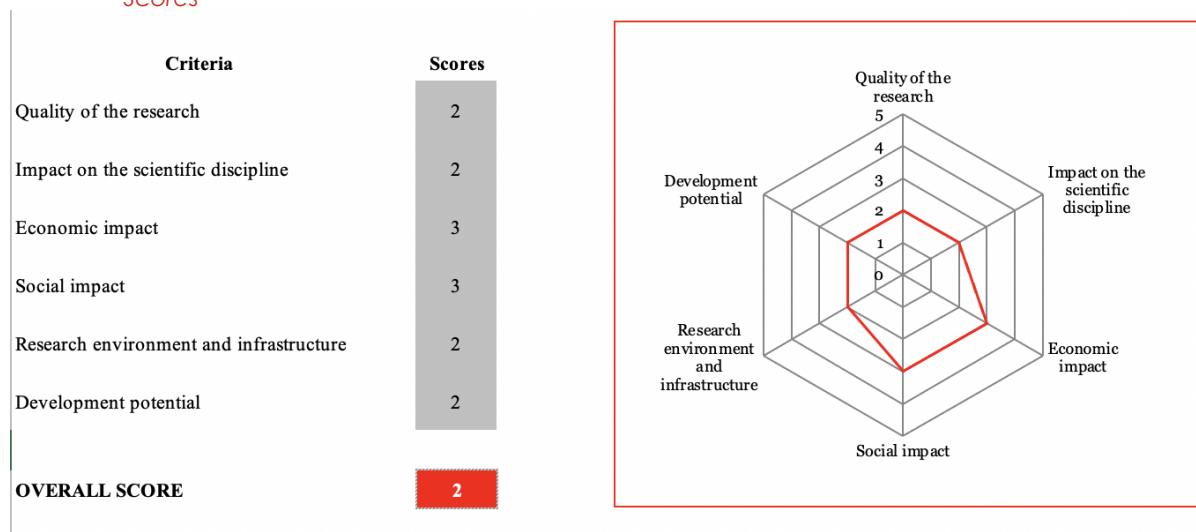
- A focused research agenda. The current research agenda is extremely broad. The Self-Assessment Report, for instance, lists not less than 11 "main fields of research interests", as well as several other themes. Given the small size of the research staff, it is advised to narrow the research agenda and focus on a limited number of research topics. That might help to brand BASBF as the experts in the chosen area and to increase the quality and impact of the studies.
- Less fragmented research capacity. The current research capacity of about 8.5 FTE is distributed among about 45 individuals. This implies that the research capacity is extremely fragmented. The panel advises to concentrate the research capacity on fewer people who excel in research.
- Collaboration. The Panel appreciates the current (teaching) collaborations of the unit with a substantial number of partners, but also believes that for research it is probably better to focus on intensive, long-lasting cooperation with a small number (2 or 3) institutions, preferably including an international centre of excellence in the field.
- Management. Implementing the research strategy according to the above recommendations requires strong research management, 3 to 5 year research plans, and investments in an internal research culture.
- Doctoral programme. The panel recommends making an international internship of several months compulsory in the doctoral programme.
- Evaluation of the Journal of Business Management. As the unit's *Journal of Business Management* (published together with RISEBA) is not included in Scopus or WoS, the Panel recommends an evaluation of the journal with a view to whether or not to continue this publication in its current form.

S_2 RISEBA Faculty of Business and Economy

Institution data

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business, educational sciences, other social science
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	7,60
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	1,00
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	8,60
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	99,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	54,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	10,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	163,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	11,51
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	18,95
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	16,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	1,86
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	323.354
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	37.599

Figure 2 RISEBA Faculty of Business and Economy, RISEBA University of Business, Arts and Technology – Scores



Overall score

Score: 2

RISEBA Faculty of Business and Economy (RISEBA FBE) is a small unit with only 8.6 FTE academic and research personnel, that includes only 1.0 FTE of research personnel. Research at this institution is satisfactory from the perspective of a national player. Research output is local in nature and attracts little international attention. The general publishing strategy appears to aim at academic journals at the lower end of the scholarly status spectrum and proceedings of less well-known international conferences. There are several weaknesses, discussed below, that have to be addressed before the institution can reach the next level of its development potential and become an internationally (regionally) recognized research institution. Technically the research infrastructure is adequate. However, the unit is too small to provide a supportive team-based research environment that would be attractive, also internationally. Economic and social impact of research is one of the stronger aspects of the research undertaken at this institution.

Quality of Research

Score: 2

In terms of the quality of its research this institution can be qualified as acceptable and satisfactory for a national player. The research output of this institution is to some extent international but nearly all this input is published in conference proceedings and in journals that do not fall within the categories of first and second tier journals (journals with a high international scholarly status). The selected articles are often exploratory or limited in their scope by focusing on particular cases and they do not focus on internationally highly relevant research problems. The contribution of this work in an international context is rather weak. The research also appears to focus on applied work which makes it difficult to have this work published in leading international journals. Theory-driven and methodologically advanced research is usually required by international, top journals.

According to the data provided by Technopolis of the 15 publications found in Scopus and Web of Science only three were found in Web of Science journals. On p. 30-31 of the self-assessment report, it is indicated that the number of articles in Web of Science and Scopus journals and conferences has increased substantially during the period 2013 -2016 after which we see a decline in the years 2017 and 2018. However, if the quality of these journals is taken into consideration, only one publication (in the Journal of Asia Business Studies) can be characterized as a publication in a journal of some international status. During the period 2013-2018 the number of publications not listed in Web of Science and Scopus has increased substantially. However, the increase in numbers does not reflect the impact of the unit at the international or even national level. Most publications have been very rarely cited by other researchers (specially by international researchers). None of the Web of Science articles are published in collaboration with international scholars whereas for the Scopus articles about half the conference proceedings or books, book chapters, and monographs have been co-authored with international colleagues.

All of this suggests that the institution runs the risk that its research and publishing strategy is increasingly characterized by quantity rather than by quality.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

In terms of the impact on the scientific discipline, this institution can be qualified as acceptable and satisfactory for a national player. As indicated by the bibliometric data, there is some

impact in terms of a limited number of citations, both in Web of Science and Scopus. Obviously, this somewhat limited impact is due to the specific nature of the publications as discussed under the heading of the quality of research.

The number of (international) visiting researchers and professors could also be taken as an indicator of research impact. Although most visits listed in the self-assessment report were relatively short, this is a diverse and international group of academic visitors. International academic collaboration seems to focus on a range of partner-universities, both research-universities and some universities that are more practitioner-oriented in their research.

Researchers at this institution are quite active in editorial boards of international journals (albeit journals that are relatively new and/or with lower academic status), the institution has also established a journal to publish its own research. Although this journal is open to external authors, it is doubtful whether this will increase the visibility and impact of the institution at an international level. At least so far it has been not reflected in the citation numbers of the articles published by the staff members of the unit.

International research impact could also have been affected by the participation in international conferences but the low number of citations does not yet show such an impact. Interestingly, in recent years research undertaken at this institution is presented at prominent and very competitive management conferences such as the AOM meeting and the SMS conference.

The institution has not participated in EU Framework Programmes and the total funding of other international grants is very limited. There has been no private funding. Many projects listed in the self-assessment report do not qualify as research-oriented projects.

Economic impact

Score: 3

The economic impact of research is assessed as good, as indicated by the degree of interaction with economic and non-academic actors in Latvian society.

This economic impact is primarily found in the promotion of a range of activities that fall under the heading of (social) entrepreneurship and through studies carried out in organizations where a large proportion of RISEBA FBE alumni and students are working. Research activity in the field of management of financial markets and institutions, including financial problems of entrepreneurship and the public, contributes to either the economic development of Latvia's start-ups and SMEs or public awareness of the need to decrease financial illiteracy among private individuals.

Social impact

Score: 3

The social impact of research is good, as indicated by the satisfactory degree of interaction with non-academic actors.

A number of interesting projects are related to social equality, integration and welfare, and social entrepreneurship which indicates that this institution makes a serious attempt to have a broader social impact beyond academic research and teaching. Noteworthy are studies that have an effect on the digitalization of public health management, amelioration of medical device validation models, and the usage of the most topical trends in ICT.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 2

RISEBA FBE management allocates funds for the research infrastructure and the institution also attracts sponsor money as seed money for young researchers. They also attract their researchers with awards on high quality articles.

The research infrastructure in terms of ICT hardware, access to databases and the international literature seems adequate. Basic computer software seems to be available to all students but more specific software for research seems to be available only to the researchers. It seems to be also a bit outdated, e.g. for SPSS version 21 is mentioned in the self-evaluation report, that version was launched already in 2012 (currently version 27 is available). Advanced econometric software is not mentioned.

Although the number of people that falls under the heading of 'academic personnel' has more than doubled, the average FTE for research has decreased. The size of the unit is too small to provide researchers with a strong team-based researcher environment that would be attractive for international scholars.

Development potential

Score: 2

The institution has the potential to become a relatively strong national player. To reach the next level in its development potential, it is crucial to overcome some of the major weaknesses, some of which are listed in the SWOT analysis. In that context, the following topics will demand specific attention:

- Increase the number of papers in first and second tier journals (quality rather than quantity).
- Be selective in international projects, international conferences, and international journal editorial activities (again quality rather than quantity).
- Search for higher status international partner schools to engage in joint projects.
- Increase the number of PhD students, necessary to have a viable participation in a (joint) PhD program.
- Upgrade the public research institutions. research skills of current academic staff.
- As funding per researcher has been quite limited and the institution has not managed to attract funding from national research grant programmes, it might benefit from teaming up with public research institutions.

It might be necessary for this institution to develop a thorough strategic planning exercise to realistically set particular goals for the institution in terms of developing its own research potential, to increase its visibility, and to initiate new areas of research that build on existing capabilities.

Currently the institution has a quite limited number of academic personnel and not enough funds for hiring more staff, especially international scholars. Funding per FTE has been 37,599 €. RISEBA FBE has had some success in attracting funding from EU structural funds, but more effort needs to be made to secure funding to be able to increase quality of research.

The plans to increase international competitiveness are rather weak because focus seems to be rather on quantity than quality of the publications and not much evidence was found for stronger collaboration with internationally recognized research universities and scholars.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The number of doctoral students is very low, on average 2-3 students per year. During the period 2013-2018 not a single doctoral student graduated within the normative time. The current doctoral programme is largely based on the input from lecturers from a total of five

universities and a large number of visiting lecturers who can act as doctoral supervisors. However, permanent staff of the unit is too small for providing high quality PhD studies.

About 75% of RISEBA academic staff has a doctoral degree. In order to provide doctoral studies (but also research-inspired master courses) and to even extend the current program, a PhD and post-doctoral research experience is essential for all faculty. In addition, strong research teams are needed for the professional and academic development of PhD students.

In other words, to successfully provide doctoral studies at this institution, whether this is through a joint program with other schools or independently, it is crucial that both PhD education and PhD research is provided/supervised by experienced researchers with doctoral degrees who are based in strong research teams. The potential might be also strengthened by involving strong visiting professors as co-supervisors for the PhD students.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The research objectives are to a large extent in line with the smart specialization area "Information and Communication technologies" of the Smart Specialization Strategy, however, the impact is limited. As stated in the self-assessment report relevant research at this institution focuses on improving the innovation capacity and innovation system of the Latvian economy.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

Keeping in mind the limited number of fields of research for a relatively small institution, research objectives of this institution seem to be in accordance with the innovation and international competitiveness elements of the national science, technology and innovation development policy of Latvia.

Recommendations

The Panel would make the following recommendations for the further development of the institution over the next 6 years.

1. Focus more on the quality than on the quantity of research output, the attention paid to the sheer number of papers indexed in Web of Science and in particular in Scopus appears to work as a perverse incentive.
2. Attending international conferences and presenting research to an international academic audience is important. However, also here one should concentrate on high-quality international conferences rather than on low impact conferences and not only on presenting research but also on building strong networks to jointly apply for research project funds at the European level.
3. Increase funding of research through joint (international) applications to EU Framework Programmes. Therefore, a more specific strategy is needed to build a supportive international network of researchers. It would be also recommended to involve strong international scholars to the scientific committee of RISEBA, the body that is important in establishing a research policy for the institution.
4. Upgrade the research skills of current staff, make a PhD mandatory for all faculty members, set up a range of research seminars, invite leading international scholars to present their work and innovative research methods they use in advanced studies.
5. Engage in a long-term strategic planning exercise to improve the quality of research and to increase the visibility of research. As a small institution, accepting that focusing on a small and coherent research agenda might be more relevant than to engage in a relatively broad research agenda.

S_3 ISMA Business Laboratory

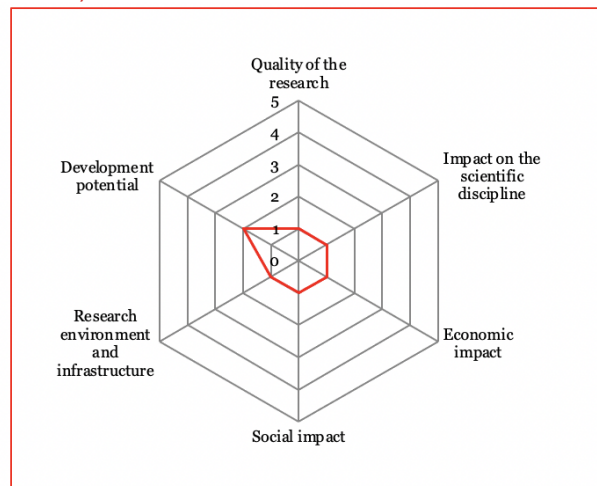
Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business; educational sciences; other social sciences
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	0,21
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	0,21
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	0,42
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	7,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	0,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	1,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	8,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	16,67
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	19,05
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	0,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,00
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	10.200
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	24.286

ISMA Research Institute Business Laboratory (ISMA RIBL), developed in accordance with the Strategic plan of ISMA University, aims to reach a new level of scientific research work and to attract students mastering the scientific research methods that address the real problems of the world. ISMA RIBL is engaged in the promotion and development of research and innovation products of high quality in the area of business and management. Its research directions include systemic approach to human resource management, consumer behavior research, the development of communicative and linguistic competence, mathematical modelling of economic processes, improvement of business environment in Latvia, financial system in the conditions of crisis, research of recreational needs and requirements for tourist products and optimization of taxation in Latvia.

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Social Sciences Panel 2 to ISMA RIBL.

Figure 3 ISMA University Business Laboratory, ISMA University – Scores

Criteria	Scores
Quality of the research	1
Impact on the scientific discipline	1
Economic impact	1
Social impact	1
Research environment and infrastructure	1
Development potential	2
OVERALL SCORE	1



Overall score

Score: 1 – poor

The overall score awarded is 1 to indicate a poor level of research conducted at ISMA RIBL. To come to this decision the panel acknowledged that ISMA RIBL has been making progress in improving the research infrastructure and facilities through some diligent and focused investment in a multi-purpose building and an organisational re-structuring of Business Laboratory as a new research centre. However, in the self-assessment report there are a number of inconsistencies trying to show the situation much better than it actually is. The panel came to the conclusion that there is no research performance to date, no quality publications, and no research investment. The quality of research output is at a poor level and a great effort is required to build on progress and improve the quality of the research conducted and the impact of the work. To recognize the potential of ISMA RIBL the panel awarded a score of 2 for development potential and it is important that ISMA RIBL management support the further development of this research unit as its impact might be important for society. The panel had the opinion that a strong vision and strong management are necessary to keep up with international and national developments and did not observe enough proof of that in the written material, the video and the site visit.

Quality of Research

Score: 1 - poor

The overall quality of the profile of the research by ISMA RIBL is below national level and although there are increases in participation in conferences and external collaborations, the research output quality requires further improvement to reach national standards. Research by ISMA RIBL contains few significant new scientific outcomes in business development and human resource management and some results are only published sporadically. ISMA RIBL is involved in a limited number of significant or major international debates of the scientific community. It focuses mainly on introducing regional and some international research trends in Latvia. The publications are mainly in local and regional journals with no contributions to high quality international journals. A clear indication of this limited contribution is the fact that the key publications listed in the self-assessment report are conference presentations in local or regional conferences and not full research papers in international journals. There is some collaboration with other local and regional universities in more recent years but these activities are mainly focused on teaching and educational aspects with no major contributions to the research performance of the unit. Although the lack of funding is a key factor in the quality of the research performance, a large number of academic staff have limited or no research outputs. The evaluation of the institution in the global research environment in the self-

assessment report has a very local context only and does not consider the international position of the unit.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 1 - poor

ISMA RIBL tries to be very active in research on business development and human resource management within Latvia through some collaboration with other research institutions. However, the impact of the research at a national and international level continues to be fundamentally limited as indicated by the low number of international level research outputs and their limited citations. The impact of the research by the institution remains overall limited and the institution is not a national player compared to other universities in similar fields in the wider areas of business development and human resource management. The publishing strategy and scientific impact of the institution's research work are predominantly geared towards local services and have limited impact at the national and international levels. The impact of ISMA RIBL on supporting research on business development and human resource management should be extended to other important areas of development policy through interdisciplinary collaborations with other relevant university units in Latvia that add specific value and benefits for society and business.

Economic impact

Score: 1 - poor

The institution is working on some important economic sector areas such as business development and human resource management but there is only limited evidence that the economic impact of the research is relevant to economic actors beyond local service economy. The subject area of the institution is important for the economy in general but the research work is not making any tangible and significant contributions to economic impact. Even in market research the impact is minimal. There are interactions of the institution with the private sector for the provision of market services and links with local businesses but significant links with the industrial sectors are yet to be established.

Social impact

Score: 1 - poor

The subject areas of the institution and research are very important for Latvian society, but there are no interactions with other national and international institutions for research projects and no participation in EU expert groups, with the exception of student practice placements and local seminars and conferences for the education and professional development of business managers. The overall level of interactions of the institution with the public sector and the public is limited and cannot reach a level expected of recognized academic institutions.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 1 – poor

A long-term research strategy to enhance the quality of research and innovation in business development and human resource management is missing and there are no appropriate and relevant objectives. There is some human resource development strategy including actions for promotion of doctoral researchers to academic staff and development of opportunities for the attraction of young scientists, but there is not a critical mass of research human resources and the teaching load of staff is high, which reduces the time available to focus on research. There has been recent investment and a very notable improvement in research infrastructure is expected within the new multi-purpose building. Although these improvements as part of the institutional modernisation strategy provide a strong basis for future developments, there is no clear description of the management structure for research in ISMA RIBL and the alignment of the key research directions to the structure of the research unit. The availability and quality of

support services and technical staff is not described in detail. In the self-assessment report, the research environment and infrastructure of institution is even limited to the use of two or three computers! Overall, the research environment and infrastructure of the institution are not comparable to other national and international units in similar areas in business development and human resource management. The institution's research environment needs still evolving to achieve an adequate level that is expected in the international scientific community of a respected institution in the given discipline. Despite the improvement in the research environment and infrastructure the research outputs are mainly based on basic descriptive research work that is not comparable to adequate national or international standards.

Development potential

Score: 2 – adequate

ISMA University Business Laboratory has the potential to become a national player in the areas of research on business development and human resource management. The institution's future strategy can be more detailed and appropriate and based on a realistic assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats that mainly relate to lack of financial support and incentives to attract promising young scientists to the area. The ability to attract students, doctoral candidates, and foreign researchers and to raise funding that is awarded competitively are quite limited but the main research themes and directions are orientated towards topical issues. The institution is capable of being a visible local player in its area of research, which can be expected to contribute to the activities of the international scientific community. The development requires continued funding which is a weakness and a threat given the limited research funding. The expertise of ISMA RIBL is very relevant to many other sectors (industrial, health, etc.), so collaborations should be established and fostered especially with other relevant units at universities in Latvia.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

ISMA RIBL has only three PhDs enrolled at another PhD granting institution in Bulgaria, but as described above, the quality of the research currently is low and the ability to support and award high quality PhDs is dependent on improved research quality. The panel came to the conclusion that there is no potential to offer improved doctoral studies in future. A tight structuring collaboration with other local universities in Riga that have more experience in doctoral programmes and offer doctoral training and support will be a challenge to ISMA University Business Laboratory, which might provide closer links with a larger community of postgraduate students.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

ISMA RIBL has identified potential contributions to some investment priorities of the Smart Specialisation Strategy, namely Modern Education through the promotion of business development and human resource management. The provision of a modern education system in this area is also an area where ISMA RIBL can make a contribution. The link is currently rather tenuous.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

ISMA RIBL has the potential to contribute to Scientific and Technological Development Innovation actions as explained above based on the Smart Specialisation Strategy priorities and specialisation areas and in particular to business development and human resource management. However, this potential requires better links and cooperation with the industrial and economic sectors and collaborations with other relevant Universities and units in the Latvian Higher Education sector as part of a more ambitious, purposeful, resolute and focused research.

Recommendations

Research strategy and quality

- The research vision and strategy is rather generic and should include a larger number of more specific objectives, in which the leadership and operational management and processes of the research structures must be defined clearly and linked to or aligned with the identified key research directions to ensure the strategy can be implemented.
- The research structures need to be aligned better with the main research directions with a research team headed by a research leader in each of the key research directions.
- Researchers in ISMA RIBL must target high quality business science journals for both forming research priorities in the institution and publishing research in these journals that include a number of journals in business development and human resource management.
- The amount of effort and time to produce its own journal is appreciated but the focus in such a local journal detracts from the efforts to target internationally recognized high-quality journals and improve research quality.
- The research and research management competence can be enhanced through targeted training. It might be helpful to organise paper development workshops with peer-review sessions and invited well published international scholars.
- Create and deploy advanced research human resources practices to maintain and advance researchers' careers. You might consider Human resources strategy for researchers (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r>).
- The research impact of ISMA RIBL can be increased by extending its focus towards interdisciplinary collaborations with other relevant university units in Latvia that add specific value and benefits for society and business.

Institutional structure

- In the Panel's view, the challenge for ISMA RIBL as a private independent higher education institution is to improve the research environment, the research management and governance and the research potential and quality in general. Therefore, the Panel recommends that these options are given serious consideration by ISMA RIBL management.

Research staff

- The teaching load of academic staff must be reduced by consolidation or revision of the curriculum and support for staff to be involved in research teams and devise personal research plans that align with the general research objectives and are based on collaborative work with other researchers in ISMA RIBL and other universities in Latvia.
- Academic staff and doctoral students will benefit from a researcher development programme that will enhance their research skills and abilities. Although this is difficult to develop and manage in a private independent institution, other institutions in Latvia have such programmes and ISMA RIBL can collaborate with them to provide generic research support and development opportunities to its doctoral students and staff. Closer links and collaboration with local universities will enhance its research potential and development.

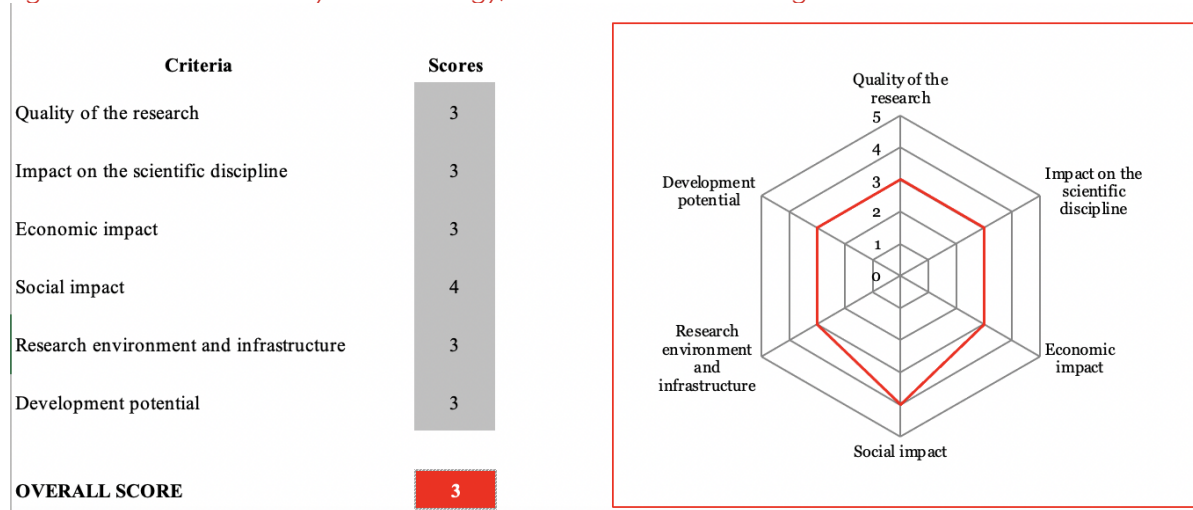
Funding

- External funding from competitive sources must be targeted but this requires planning and support for staff to develop high quality grant proposals. This is difficult to achieve without a strong research culture that allows the necessary collaborations for involvement in high quality grant proposals to national, regional and European sources, which will be difficult to target successfully in isolation and independently without collaborations.

S_4 Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Regional Studies

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Educational sciences, other social sciences
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	5,48
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	6,36
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	11,84
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	196,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	154,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	30,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	1,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	381,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	16,55
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	32,17
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	10,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,84
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	2.960.972
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	250.019

Figure 4 Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Regional Studies – Scores



Overall score

Score: 3

Regionally both the Academy itself as well as the Research Institute (REGI) are significant. REGI plays a strong role in human capital development in its region and in terms of promoting greater equality and cohesion within Latvia. In terms of research quality, the unit has a number of strengths. It is financially successful and has a good profile of publications in Scopus and WoS outlets. However, its publication profile in high quality international journals is more limited. Its metrics in terms of doctoral completions are strong though in absolute numbers they remain small. In terms of impact on the field of science, REGI is judged as a strong national player. While its publications in the field of the Latgalian language are mainly good, those in the personality and socialisation are more variable. Its economic impact, particularly its work on Latgalian language and culture is good and its social impact is strong. The physical resources of the unit are good; there is clear leadership and a strong focus on the strategic development of research. However, the unit remains small which limits development of its research culture.

In terms of future development the unit is ambitious. However, at present it is mainly focused on publication metrics (publication in Scopus and WoS journals or conference proceedings indexed in these databases) rather than genuine research quality and publications in the best international journals with a high impact factor. Were the institution to change its focus, there is good evidence that over the next 5-10 years REGI could strengthen its position further and produce a greater quantity of internationally significant work.

Quality of Research

Score: 3

This is a small and dynamic unit of just 11.8 FTE academic staff. Overall, it is assessed as a strong national player. Financially it is successful with the second highest level of funding per capita in the social sciences; much of that funding comes from EU structural funds. The unit is also successful in attracting further competitive funds both from the state and from the EU. However, the institution has not so far participated in EU Framework Programmes and the total funding of other international grants is limited. The institution is productive in terms of publications in Scopus and WoS with good numbers of such publications per FTE. However, a significant number of publications seem to be in their own journal and in conference proceedings. Only one paper published during the evaluation period was in a Scopus Q1 journal. There is only one journal article indexed in WoS; in Scopus articles, 21% are co-authored with international colleagues. As already noted, this unit has two distinct and very different parts, one focused on Personality and Socialization Studies, the other focused on Humanities. Of the submitted papers those on the Latgalian language were mainly judged to be of good quality; those in the area of personality and socialization were more variable. During the assessment period, the unit had a good number of successful doctoral completions per FTE.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 3

Overall, this is judged to be a strong national player with some international recognition. There is good evidence that in its work on languages, particularly in the study of Latgalian, researchers are leaders in their field. However, this is less clear in relation to PSPV where the quality of papers seems more variable. The unit has a strong commitment to dissemination with a good publishing record and some international collaborations, e.g. from the UK, Italy, Canada, Germany, and Lithuania. The staff members also participate in scientific committees for international scientific conferences. On the national level the institution seems to have significant impact on science, especially in recent years when they have for example established a new e-journal and continue publishing the annual internationally reviewed collection of scientific articles. There are also long traditions in organizing a conference with proceedings indexed in WoS. Despite all these positive achievements, the number of

publications in the highest quality international journals remains low as does the number of citations of many of the unit's publications.

Economic impact

Score: 3

There is evidence that REGI's work on the Latgalian language has significant economic benefit to the region where the Rezekne Academy of Technology is situated. Research on this topic aligns well with EU regional policy and its support for regional and minority languages and there is evidence of regular interactions with public and private bodies. Researchers have also developed a range of language resources for their region which are intended to support tourism and other forms of economic and cultural development. The economic impact of other areas of the unit's work is less clear.

Social impact

Score: 4

The social impact of the unit's work is strong. The institution has an important role in studying Latgalian language, in documenting its corpus, and developing a virtual museum and database of Latgalian folklore. As such it makes a significant contribution to maintaining and developing Latgale language and culture. Its research in Personality and Socialisation Studies is also strongly socially oriented, creating and popularizing scientific products and innovative pedagogical technologies, which promote personality development and social integration into society. This work, which is unique in Latvia, is intended to support the social rehabilitation of pedagogically neglected children, conduct research related to socialization and resocialisation problems and examine risks caused by information technologies.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 3

The physical resources of the unit appear to be good. There are a number of well resourced research laboratories and excellent specialist library facilities. The unit is clearly well managed and, as has been evidenced by its significant development since the last research assessment exercise, is highly strategic in relation to its research development. Financial resources are good though perhaps overly dependent on current national and EU regional policy. The social infrastructure does have some issues including the small number of personnel, the lack of synergy between the two major research strands within the unit and the fact that there are no large scale research groups.

Development potential

Score: 3

This is an ambitious research institution: their long term goal is to become an international leader in research on interdisciplinary education studies, multilingualism and culture at the Eastern border of Europe. There is good evidence that over the next 5-10 years the institution will be able to strengthen its position further in the international scientific community. Since the last review it has made significant progress, particularly in relation to its international work and its publishing profile. There is of course more to be done, particularly in relation to further raising the quality and impact of their research, but the unit already has ambitious plans to internationalise further with the creation of a number of new scientific posts. However, it remains the case that the unit is with several researchers having only part-time positions; it also has two very different and very separate parts. As the unit itself acknowledges, it is also highly dependent on the continuation of current EU regional funding policy. The unit's involvement in the new nationally networked doctoral programme in pedagogy should significantly help to support its further development.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The unit already has a well-developed small PhD programme; there is a good profile of successful completions. Doctoral students seem well supported with many already having opportunities to teach and to contribute to externally funded research projects. Doctoral students also take part in organising and contributing to the unit's annual international conference; some students report having had opportunities to study abroad and to contribute to international research projects. Despite these strengths, the actual number of students registered at any one time is small which inevitably means that the possibilities for establishing a team-based research culture are limited. In addition, many PhD students are also occupied with other tasks besides their studies which may restrict their ability to complete their own research on time and with high quality. The unit is now part of the new joint doctoral programme on Educational Sciences. This should substantially strengthen their opportunities to offer high quality research training and hopefully attract greater numbers of students.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

There is strong evidence that the unit is committed to working in ways that are closely related to the Smart Specialisation Strategy by strengthening the role of social sciences and related interdisciplinary fields within each of the following priorities: the development of a Modern ICT system (Priority 4); the development of a modern education system that meets the requirements of the future job market (Priority 5) and in the development of human capital (Priority 6) through the exploitation of knowledge-intensive medical technology (rehabilitation technology) and ICT development requirements. The unit is also uniquely placed to contribute to the 'Polycentric development' of these priorities in that it is the only research institution of its type within its region.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The unit is aligned to Latvia's national policies for scientific and technology development in a range of different ways. In terms of Latvia's Priority direction in science for the period 2013-2017, the unit's psychological and educational research makes important contributions to the use of smart technologies and to the mental health and wellbeing of society. In addition, through its work on Latgalian language and culture it contributes to research on local resources. Its work on language also contributes to inclusive growth, particularly contributing to social and territorial cohesion. The unit also contributes directly to the Governments 2014-2020 guidelines which include a focus on Latvia's language and values, culture and art. In relation to these guidelines, the unit has a particularly important contribution to make in developing an inclusive society in that it is the leading contributor to educational and human resource development in its region.

Recommendations

The Panel would make the following recommendations for the further development of the institution over the next 6 years.

- The first and by far the most important recommendation is that the unit needs to 'raise its game' in terms of its commitment to high quality internationally recognised publications. In its last period of development, it has improved its publication metrics significantly but largely through developing its own journal and hosting an annual international conference which also results in a WoS publication. While this is commendable it remains the case that the number of publications in genuinely high quality international journals is only modest. It was disappointing to see that unit's main strategy for the next period of development was to launch a second journal of its own. Rather than yet more local publications, in its next stage of development the unit needs to put in place clear strategies to support the achievement of many more high quality publications in international journals. That in turn will demand raising the actual quality of research and the development of more in-depth collaborations with international researchers.

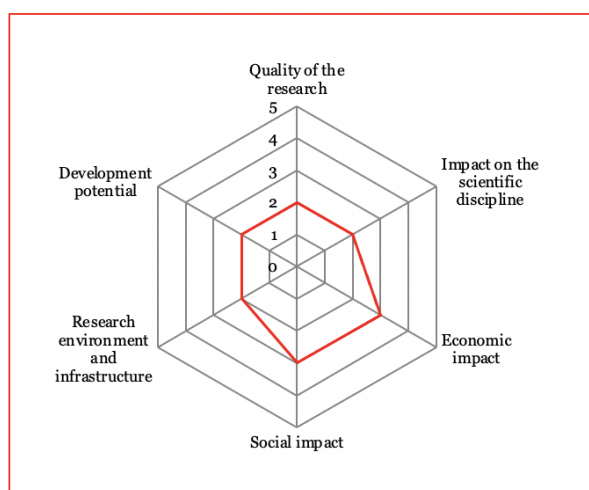
- Although the unit does appear to be well led and has been successful in its research development during the review period, it remains the case that it is very small. It is also the case that it is highly dependent on current EU regional funding policies. In these circumstances the unit should actively consider further developing its collaborative work with other Latvian higher education institutions and strong international partners in other countries. Given its regional location and focus, the unit has much to contribute to research programmes across Latvia. Such collaborations could help diversify the unit's current research strengths and its funding streams; they could also strengthen its research culture. It may be that the new joint doctoral programme will provide a vehicle for this much needed greater collaboration. The international collaboration, however, should lead towards more successful participation in the international calls for research grants. It is also a prerequisite to increase the international impact of the unit (e.g. by publishing jointly in strong journals).
- A final recommendation concerns the two very different parts of the research unit - the Personality and Socialization Research Institute (PSPI) and the humanities group focusing on Latgalian language. While in principle there may be synergies between these two research themes, in practice the Panel found it difficult to understand what they were. In a larger group, differences of this sort may not be a problem but given the very small size of the unit, such differences present difficulties for both staff and students. The Panel therefore recommends that in its next stage of development the unit tries to develop projects that specifically address the divide, exploiting the strengths of both its work on personality and socialisation and on language.

S_5 Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Business and Social Processes

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	8,68
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	4,92
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	13,60
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	40,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	36,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	76,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	2,94
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	5,59
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	1,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,07
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	919.617
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	67.639

Figure 5 Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Business and Social Processes - Scores

Criteria	Scores
Quality of the research	2
Impact on the scientific discipline	2
Economic impact	3
Social impact	3
Research environment and infrastructure	2
Development potential	2
OVERALL SCORE	2



Overall score

Score: 2

Research is satisfactory for an institution that operates primarily within a domestic research environment. Research output is domestic in nature and attracts little international attention. The general publishing strategy appears to aim at academic journals at the lower end of the scholarly status spectrum and proceedings of less well-known regional conferences. There are several weaknesses, discussed below, that have to be addressed before the institution can reach the next level of its development potential and become an internationally (regionally) recognized research institution. Technically the research infrastructure is adequate. Economic and social impact of research is one of the stronger aspects of the research undertaken at this institution.

Quality of Research

Score: 2

The quality of the research output of this institution is satisfactory for a national player. Although the research output of this institution is to some extent international, it is largely to be seen in a domestic and Baltic context. Much of the research output is published in conference proceedings (nine out of fifteen 'most important publications') and in journals that do not fall within the categories of first and second tier international academic journals. Moreover, most of the attended conferences (and articles published in the conference proceedings) are of a domestic nature.

As the research appears to be very applied and somewhat domestic in nature, which is not a problem in itself, this does make it difficult to have this work published in leading journals. Assuming that the research output submitted for this evaluation exercise is indicative of the research undertaken at this institution, it appears that this research is not very theory-driven and is technically rather basic. Theory-driven and methodologically advanced research is usually required by international, top journals. On a more positive note: for the short period for which research is measured (2016-2018), we see an increase for various indicators such as articles published, other scientific publications, conference abstracts, visiting lectures, etc. This institution is quite active in setting up a range of (collaborative) research projects and is actively searching for international research partners. Also, although the resources in terms of FTEs for research are limited and this is a relatively small institution, the output is quite evenly spread over a group of eight to ten researchers with multiple publications.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

The impact of this institution on the scientific discipline can be characterized as adequate and to some extent satisfactory for a national player.

As indicated by the bibliometric data, the impact of the institution's research on the scientific discipline is very limited in terms of citations (largely because of the characteristics of its research as outlined in the assessment of the quality of research). The number of (international) visiting researchers and professors could also be taken as an indicator of research impact but the self-assessment does not report any visitors (apart from short-term visits of a couple of days). However, the institution is quite active as a collaborator on various projects, both domestically and internationally, with a range of partners, including foreign universities. Competitive funding is based on national, European structural funds and other "support and coordination action" like measures. The institution has locally and regionally embedded research and innovation collaboration networks. This international academic collaboration seems to rely on partner-universities with a somewhat similar practitioner-oriented research focus. Researchers are not

members of internationally acknowledged research associations, e.g. Strategic Management Society, Academy of International Business or alike. In addition, researchers at this institution are quite active in editorial boards of international journals and conferences. In other words, the institution does seem to have an outward looking research perspective (both domestically and internationally) but this is not yet matched by a somewhat similar international recognition.

Economic impact

Score: 3 – Important Research and Satisfactory Level of Interaction with Non-academics.

The economic impact of research undertaken at this institution is important for the local economy. Given its practitioner-orientation, the institution seems to have an economic impact through its (international) presence at conferences of trade associations, board memberships, and some research contracts with companies and regional authorities.

Although, the actual income generated through the commercialization of research is limited, this institution has been able to set up a number of contract research projects with companies and regional/local authorities, related to entrepreneurship and tourism. The Management and Technology Transfer Contact Point function as a separate division that was established in 2017 and supports local and domestic entrepreneurship initiatives.

Social impact

Score: 3

As with the economic impact of this institution, the social impact of its research is one of its stronger features. One can find several examples of cooperation with domestic, regional, local, and private authorities and organizations on topics such as media literacy and community development. Rezekne Technology Academy has an important mission related to the broader socio-economic development of the Latgale region (the strategic priorities set by the Programme of the Latgale Region 2010-2019). This programme aims at developing knowledge and skills in the population at large and in local enterprises and administrations in order to raise the socio-economic competitiveness of the Latgale region and to reduce emigration from the region. Rezekne Technology Academy collaborates with the local municipality. In addition, personnel of the Institute are experts, members, commission members of various governmental, non-governmental and private organisations.

Although research at this institution is somewhat limited in terms of FTE, given its practical nature, the social impact of this research certainly seems considerable.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 2

The institution is a satisfactory national player in terms of its research environment and infrastructure. The institution has a vision on the current strategic objectives for its research activities (though very much focused on the Latgale Region). However, it remains unclear how this institution plans to further upgrade its research activities in terms of the quality of its research input and the quality of its research output through international high-quality publications.

The research input of academic personnel in FTE is acceptable (on average 0.4 for research). For academic research personnel such as lead researchers and researchers, the average FTE research input is low, roughly between 0.15 and 0.25, which suggests that most of the research of these research personnel is rather fragmented and a substantial part of their (academic) work does not fall within the realm of this institution.

The research infrastructure in terms of access to databases, the international literature, and other resources seems adequate.

Open access is not discussed, however the preconditions for that are limited due to the high costs of open access and the local nature of publications.

Development potential

Score: 2

One can be cautiously optimistic that the institution has the 'potential to become a strong national player' which 'from time to time can be expected to contribute to the activities of the international scientific community'. Although the institution, as mentioned in the SWOT evaluation, 'has insufficient experience in implementing large international research projects', serious attempts are made to enter into international partnerships to bid for H2020 projects and a range of other projects. The institution also seems quite internationally oriented through international conferences and contacts with a range of international partner universities.

It might be necessary to develop a thorough strategic planning exercise to realistically set particular goals for the institution in terms of developing its own research potential, to increase its visibility, and to initiate new areas of research that build on existing capabilities. The institution has experience in holding international conferences but for its own development it might generate a higher research pay-off if it would also focus on relatively small workshops where world-leading scholars are invited to share their insights on areas of research that the institution is considering to develop further. If the low number of FTEs for research and the fragmented research input is a major concern, this might remain a major obstacle for further development of the institution: the academic status of a university or research institute is based on its intellectual capital, embodied in researchers who are fully committed to undertake research within that particular institution.

The institution seems to have a realistic perception of its current weaknesses but it is crucial that this perception is translated into a realistic yet ambitious plan to step-by-step increase the development potential of the institution.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The institution does not have any long-term experience with doctoral programmes. Two jointly-developed programmes with other Latvian universities were introduced only recently. Given the limited resources, the fragmented research capabilities, and the scope of research, it might be quite demanding to have a broad in-house doctoral program that can attract relatively large numbers of students.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

So far, research at this institution has only to some extent been in alignment with Smart Specialization Strategy, primarily in the context of bioeconomy. However, it is explicitly stated that future research projects (through inter-departmental research) will focus on various aspects of this Smart Specialization Strategy, such as smart technologies and engineering systems and ICT.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

Although also for this institution, its mid-term strategy is not always clear and it has limited options in informing a broad spectrum of policies, given the applied nature of its research, its research objectives seem to be in line with some of the relevant aspects of the government's innovation policies.

Recommendations

To become a strong national player Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Business and Social Processes might benefit from several recommendations:

- Engage in a long-term strategic planning exercise to improve the quality of research and to increase the visibility of research. As a relatively small institution, in the international context, accept that focusing on a small and coherent research agenda might be more relevant than to engage in a relatively broad research agenda.

- Upgrade the research and research leadership competence of the researchers and research managers who are eager to advance their research careers. It might be helpful to investigate opportunities provided by EFMD (<https://www.efmdglobal.org/learning-networking/professional-development/efmd-euram-research-leadership-programme/>) as well as EIASM (<https://www.eiasm.net/>) <https://www.eiasm.net/>.
- Become members of the acknowledged research societies and associations which are relevant to a specific discipline.
- Focus more on the quality than on the quantity of research output, as with some of the other institutions in Latvia, the attention paid to the sheer number of papers registered in Web of Science and in particular in Scopus appears to work as a perverse incentive.
- Attending international conferences and presenting research to an international academic audience is important. However, also here one should concentrate on high-quality international conferences rather than on low impact conferences.
- Rather than a focus on organizing or attending (international) conferences, this institution might generate a higher research pay-off if it would also consider organizing relatively small workshops where leading, international scholars are invited to share their insights on areas of research that the institution might develop further.
- Increase funding of research through joint (international) applications to EU Framework Programmes. EC will launch a new “Hop-on” initiative to join Horizon Europe projects run by experienced research institutions.
- It is not a problem per se that PhD education is offered through a joint programme with other institutions. However, it is important that RAT is to be seen as a credible academic institution with a specific and recognizable academic input in such a programme and that large parts of the joint PhD program are perceived as specific to the quality of RAT research.

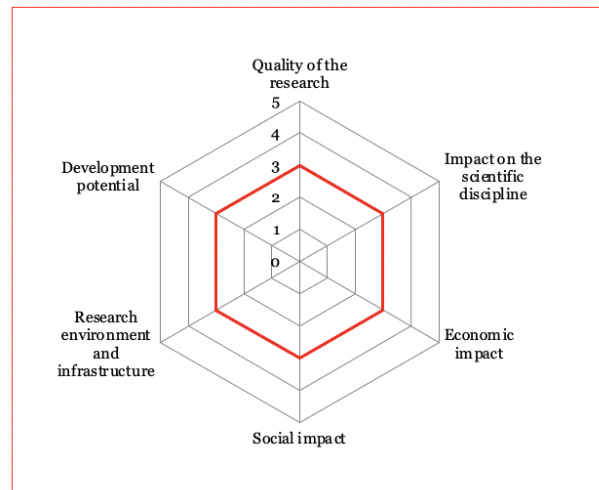
S_8 Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business; social and economic geography; media and communications
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	5,93
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	19,01
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	24,9
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	103
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	81
Monographs in period 2013-2018	18
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	202
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	4,13
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	8,10
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	11
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,44
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	2.472.258
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	99.128

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) received the status of research institution in 2015. This is a middle-sized unit with 5.93 FTE academic and 19.01 FTE research staff. In addition to Social Sciences, Vidzeme also has a Faculty of Engineering. ViA's fields of social science include economics and business, social and economic geography, and media and communications. The unit's long-term research goal is "to create and adapt new technologies of the next generation knowledge society". The unit has a good level of research and is a strong national player with some international recognition. Vidzeme is successful with its focus on (interdisciplinary) projects for the private sector. This is to some extent at the expense of basic and disciplinary research.

Figure 7 Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences – Scores

Criteria	Scores
Quality of the research	3
Impact on the scientific discipline	3
Economic impact	3
Social impact	3
Research environment and infrastructure	3
Development potential	3
OVERALL SCORE	3



Overall score

Score: 3

This unit has a good level of research and the quality and quantity of the publications are good. Given the limited amount of basic funding for research, the institute has decided - successfully - to focus on applied research and external project funding. The focus on applied interdisciplinary research, however, leaves less room for basic and disciplinary research.

The number of peer reviewed articles shows the impact of this University on the field of science, although publications in top journals are missing. The unit obtained some international grants, but as a research group they are only weakly integrated into the international scientific community.

The unit conducts research important for the economy, including studies on tourism, marine diversity, and virtual reality technologies. These contributions were highly valued by the industry partners interviewed by the panel.

ViA addresses a number of social issues such as: media literacy, disinformation, e-learning, social empowerment, and more recently cyber security research. All of these projects have a strong potential to have important social impact. The university also conducts research relevant for the Vidzeme region for social partners such as the municipality. Dissemination of insights is an essential part of any research project unit. ViA staff actively participate in science communication and advising.

ViA has developed a strong research infrastructure and has a good development potential: the unit has an attractive research agenda with contemporary topics, modern facilities, a young staff, a vivid research culture, and an active and strong management. The unit has developed new doctoral programmes with a central role for research. ViA has implemented an active postdoctoral program and supporting human resources management policies.

Its research focus, however, is rather broad and it would benefit from some further narrowing. A great challenge is the limited amount of basic funding.

Overall, the Panel assesses the research of Vidzeme University as 'good'.

Quality of Research

Score: 3

The panel assesses the quantity and quality of the papers as good. ViA has contributed 103 Scopus/WoS articles (per researcher 4.13), 81 other articles and 18 monographs in the period of assessment. Studies are well-located in the literature, employ adequate methodological procedures, and contribute relevant insights.

Given the limited amount of basic research funding, the institute has decided to focus on project funding. With success: the funding has increased substantially from 0.18 (2015) to 2 million EUR (2019). This has resulted in an emphasis on applied, interdisciplinary research, which leaves less room for basic and disciplinary research. The Panel understands the logic of the chosen strategy, but also believes that fundamental disciplinary research is important to gain a prominent position in the international scientific community.

ViA undertakes a number of international activities. The unit participates, for instance, in a H2020 research project (sustainability modelling for agriculture), an ERASMUS + project, and ERA-NET, and organises international seminars for foreign postdocs. Academic personnel present at international conferences and visit universities abroad. Visits from international scholars, however, are missing (except one keynote speaker). As a research group they are only weakly integrated into the (international) scientific community - no prizes, no editorships of any journal, limited participation in international research consortia.

Overall, the Panel is of the opinion that the institution has a good level of research and is a strong national player with some international recognition. The importance of research by the institution is unquestionable in the experts' assessment.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 3

The topics addressed by researchers in this unit, including media technology, big data, cyber security, and socio-economic modelling are up-to-date and highly relevant for today's social sciences. The number of peer reviewed articles shows the impact of this university on the (international) field of science, recognized by peers, although publications in top journals are missing, as are (inter)national awards. ViA obtained a few EU grants.

A weakness is that the fields that researchers address are very diverse, covering economic and social history, tourism, marine studies, journalism, PR, media and communication, health, regional issues, circular economy issues, human resource development, labour market issues, education, and more. That means that there is perhaps less opportunity for researchers to build strong levels of impact on the scientific field than if they were more focused.

Overall, the institution is a strong national player with some international recognition.

Economic impact

Score: 3

ViA aims to be an internationally recognizable regional (Vidzeme) platform with focus on Digital Solutions for Social Challenges. The University gives priority to applied over basic research and focuses on (interdisciplinary) research projects for the private sector. Many topics on ViA's research agenda including tourism, marine diversity, and virtual reality technologies are important ones economically. These contributions of the University are highly valued by the industry partners interviewed by the panel.

Overall, the unit conducts research important for the economy. These interactions with the private sector are at a level that is expected from recognised academic institutions.

Social impact

Score: 3

Since the beginning of 2017, ViA has addressed a number of social issues such as media literacy, disinformation, e-learning, social empowerment, and recently cyber security research. All of these projects have a strong potential to have important social impact. The university also aims to contribute to the Vidzeme region and provides research and advice for social partners such as the municipality.

Academic personnel actively disseminate academic knowledge through a variety of activities including participation in congresses, hackathons, etc. Researchers contribute to discussions in mass media and national public events, serve as advisers to the government, as chairman of Latvia's most prominent journalist organisation, and as founder and member of the Latvian Council of Communications Industry Experts.

Overall, the Panel believes that ViA conducts research that is important for the society. The institution employs a satisfactory level of interaction with the public sector.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 3

ViA has developed a strong research infrastructure which is supportive of good levels of research. The University has formulated an attractive research agenda (Digital Solutions for Social Challenges), has modern IT and lab facilities, a group of young employees, and a vivid research culture with monthly research discussions. The management is active and strong. The unit has developed new doctoral programmes with a central role for research, and has implemented a postdoctoral program (in 2018 ViA had 6 postdoctoral researchers). The unit has implemented a supporting HRM policy, including a remuneration system based on research performance, and support for professional development, including project writing abilities.

The unit is well integrated with other universities in Latvia which contribute to its research environment.

Overall, the Panel is of the opinion that ViA provides a good environment for research.

Development potential

Score: 3

This unit does have good development potential. The quality of its current outputs is good and it has been highly successful in attracting funding for its various research themes. The University embraces relevant new themes and policies and supports the priorities of Smart Specialization Strategies. The common research direction of ViA includes priorities such as sustainability, smart technologies, virtual reality technologies, E-learning, and cyber security. Highly relevant fields such as data science, AI, and machine learning are implemented in the new doctoral programmes. The University has an active management that is keen to foster research, implement new scientific fields, and develop collaborations with international, national, and local (Vidzeme) institutions.

The Panel understands the focus on applied, interdisciplinary research given the lack of core funding for research, but also believes that basic disciplinary research is important to gain a prominent position in the international scientific community. Other concerns include the inability to attract students with tuition fees and an insufficient number of proactive researchers.

Overall, the Panel believes that the development potential of the unit is good. Over the next 5-10 years the institution will be able to strengthen its position in the international scientific community as a convincing actor and a trustworthy partner within international collaboration networks.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

ViA offers the doctoral programme "PhD in Sociotechnical Systems Modelling", jointly with Rezekne Academy of Technology and a number of (inter)national partner institutions. The School has produced 11-12 PhDs in the period of assessment. It is not indicated how many students exceeded the normative study time. The SWOT analysis mentions that few new PhDs completed the PhD programme with a degree. The University had four doctoral students and one graduate in 2018.

ViA aims to introduce two new doctoral programmes: "E-ecosystems and modelling" (together with other universities) and "Economics and Management". Both programs will focus on machine learning, artificial intelligence, and Big Data.

Graduates and students interviewed by the Panel were full of praise for the programme and the supervision.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The core objectives of this unit seem to be closely aligned with the Smart Specialization Strategy. Its mission is to promote a sustainable development of the knowledge society at regional and national level, ensuring the private and public sectors with high level professionals, as well as to conduct research on actual social issues. In particular the research aims to create new smart development models of sustainable knowledge economics, society and technologies.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

ViA supports the priorities of Smart Specialization Strategies. The common research direction of ViA is *Digital Solutions for Social Challenges*. Sub-topics include sustainable national economy and knowledge society, communication ecosystem and technologies, virtual reality technologies and visualisation, and e-learning management and technologies. In 2019 cyber security research will be added to the research agenda.

The research aims to contribute to higher added value products and services in the creative industry, product innovation, energy efficiency, ICT, and economic development opportunities in the municipal territories. The University also contributes to objectives of state scientific and technological development as well as educational and innovation development through providing education for the future labour market.

Recommendations

The Panel believes that its assessment of this University's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges is largely consistent with the management's vision. The Panel also considers the objectives and policies formulated by the management realistic and appropriate, taking into account the circumstances and state of development of the institution. The Panel wants to emphasize some of the recommendations that are already mentioned in the self-assessment report.

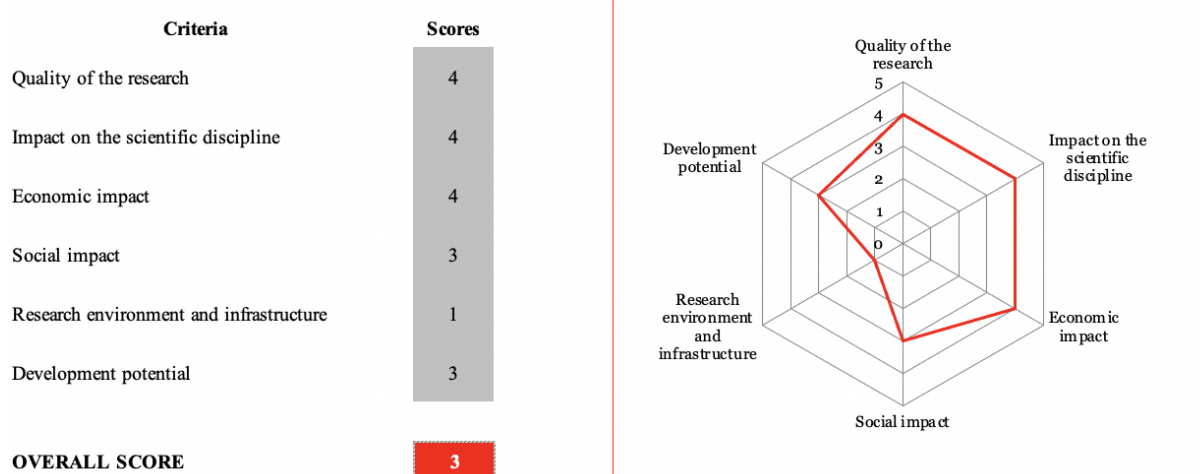
- The Panel understands that the (necessary) focus on acquiring project funding might lead to a broad research agenda, applied and interdisciplinary studies. However, the Panel is also of the opinion that if the university wants to become a strong international player, it is advisable to focus on a more limited number of topics, more attention to disciplinary studies and a policy aimed at fewer but more impactful publications.
- The Panel also believes that some of the research areas identified in the self-assessment report are currently insufficiently visible in the unit's research activities. The Panel proposes to develop a five-year plan to make the research agenda less dependent on "accidental" project opportunities and to strengthen the focus on the themes included in the research objectives.

- Finally, the Panel appreciates the current (teaching) collaborations of the unit with national partners, but also believes that for research it is probably better to focus on intensive, long-lasting cooperation with a small number (2 or 3) institutions, preferably including an international centre of excellence in the field.

S_9 Foundation "Baltic Studies Centre"

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Sociology
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	4
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	4
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	22
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	42
Monographs in period 2013-2018	1
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	65
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	5,5
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	16,25
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	0
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	1 420 648
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	355 162

Figure 8 Foundation "Baltic Studies Centre"- Scores



Foundation "Baltic Studies Centre" is a private non-profit research organization that has been active since 1991. The research is driven by policy relevance and the unit's focus of expertise is in food system and food supply chain analysis, food and nutrition security, agricultural knowledge and innovation systems, rural development, as well as social, economic and

political solutions for sustainable development. The quality of research is high, and relative to other units in the field, this unit has high scientific and economic impact. Consequently, the panel has scored these items with 4s. However, the weakness of the unit lies in its small size, and its strong dependence on its founder and key senior researcher. Thus, one cannot claim that the unit provides a strong research environment, and its development potential is uncertain. This leads to lower scores, and as a consequence an overall score of 3.

Overall score

Score: 3

The overall score for the Foundation Baltic Studies Centre is 3, indicating a good level of research. There is considerable variation across the assessed dimensions and it is particularly noteworthy that Panel conceives the research environment to be poor. The Panel is chiefly concerned with the small size of the unit and how it affects its development potential. However, it is important to add that for the dimensions of quality and impact of research, and economic impact, the Panel is of the impression that the unit is a very good performer. Indeed, the consistently high quality research output of this unit is probably the most impressive among Latvian social science units.

Quality of Research

Score: 4

This is a very small unit with only 4 FTE researchers, solely financed through competitive funding. In terms of quantitative output, the unit is among the medium performers in the Latvian social science units with a total of 16.25 outputs per researcher of which 5.5 are WoS/Scopus (national range is 4.68-32.17 and .9-16.67 respectively). Given that this is such a small unit with very little room for rational division of labour, this is good achievement. The output reflects the goal to confine activities to EU framework funded research, which generally speaking has less emphasis on fundamental research. However, the quality of the actual research they carry out is strong. They are highly successful in attracting EU funding and this results in the highest level of funding per researcher across all the Latvian social science units. The quality of their publications is good, and they are well networked internationally. The panel wants to point to the noteworthy raise in publication quality over the past 5 years. Although the unit has a flat decision structure and leadership transition is part of the strategic planning, the panel fears that the international reputation of the unit rests too much on the key senior researcher. Overall, this is a very high quality but very small research unit.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 4

The unit has established itself as a reliable Latvian partner in EU-funded research, and the list of international projects that the unit has participated in over the period is impressive. Given the small size of the unit, the impact is going to be small in absolute terms. Nevertheless in relative terms they are able to claim considerable academic impact. While the overall research performance is not outstanding, the centre has considerable impact on the field compared to other Latvian social science units. The Average Field-Weighted Citation Impact (3.45) is significantly above most other social science units. As is clear from their publications, they are working at the forefront of thinking on the role of practitioner knowledge and its links to more formal knowledge. Their work on knowledge networks is particularly important.

Economic impact

Score: 4

The unit undertakes research that is strongly applied; indeed 'making a difference' is one of their core objectives. Economic impact for sustainable development is part of that overall commitment to developing applied research. The unit is successful in achieving economic impact, and appears to be having an impact on economic policies and practices. The unit has well developed networks with broad sections of the agricultural industry and has developed a number of 'tools' that will have direct economic benefit in Latvia and beyond. Examples of their direct economic impact include the SOLINSA (2011-2014) project which promoted learning and innovation networks within the agriculture and food sectors and AGRILINK (2017-2021) where researchers are working towards a new internet platform for information sharing, learning and advice in the fruit sector.

Social impact

Score: 3

Because this unit is concerned with the ways in which local networks can support knowledge production in the agriculture industry, the unit does have substantial social impact despite its small size. The unit works closely with a large number of such networks to support partners in civil society, public institutions, and business in their development, both in Latvia and other European countries. The unit has also produced a number of useful 'tools' that can support networks as they move forward in developing more sustainable forms of agriculture. The FOODLINKS (2011-2013) project is a good example of the unit's social impact. It brought together scientists, policymakers and civil society organisations to develop Latvia's first municipal food strategy; it also developed a number of practical guides and toolboxes to assist sustainable food initiatives in urban settings. In terms of public outreach, researchers from this unit often contribute expert opinions in national media.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 1

The unit is well-managed with a democratic management system guided by a strategic plan for research and staff development. The unit is able to attract and retain very high quality research staff - as is evidenced in the very high success rate in attracting external funding. Both because the unit has to rely solely on competitive research funding, and because of its very small size, the unit does not constitute a research environment in the conventional meaning (i.e., there are no shared databases, no seminar series, etc.). All staff simply have to focus on attracting funding and deliver results. If the same activities had been carried out within a larger institutional setting, this unit can in many ways be best described as a well organized, highly supportive, and successful research group.

Development potential

Score: 3

This is unit that is very successful in many ways; it has a strong vision and strategic plan, it is completely and successfully financed through competitive and primarily international funding, it is oriented towards finding solutions to topical and even urgent social challenges, it has strong and well-established international research collaborations and national industry partnerships, and it has highly dedicated and ambitious researchers. However, institutionally this unit is fragile. It is entirely dependent on external funding and thus risks spending time and energy on securing funding rather than developing new research ideas. Even though the unit does address the issue openly, its strong reputation still depends primarily on one senior researcher who is also the founder of the unit. At the last review in 2013 recommendations were made that the unit enter into some form of collaborative relationship with a more established higher education institution in Latvia. Although this seems not to have happened, the recommendation still stands. Therefore, though in principle it does have strong development potential, in reality,

unless there is some form of collaboration or a change in government funding arrangements so that some core funding is available, the development potential must remain low.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The director holds a professorship at University of Latvia, and most researchers have some university affiliation. However, the unit itself does not offer education at any level. A few doctoral students, national and international, are affiliated to the unit through their research projects. In that regard, the unit does offer research training to a small number of doctoral students. In some cases such initiatives have been extended also to non-affiliated students at University of Latvia and Riga Stradins University. While the unit's researchers consider active interaction with students an important part of research, the unit has no potential to offer doctoral studies, nor does the unit foster such an ambition.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

Research at the centre has significant policy relevance. This holds for sustainable development goals in general, and for agricultural policy in particular. The strong dedication to contribute to European Union wide policy goals is indeed one of the areas for which the centre is to be applauded. Under the Smart Specialisation Strategy Social Sciences are expected to contribute 'growth of human capital through knowledge and networks' and provide 'useful new knowledge in meeting future or present economic and societal challenges'. This unit would seem to have a strong case to make in relation to both of these objectives though perhaps not quite in the way envisaged by the strategy itself. This is because the core purposes of the research unit concern the development of localised knowledge producing networks that can support more sustainable agricultural production in the future. In other words, it is sustainability rather than economic growth that is the focus of their work. Given that sustainability is now recognised as a major future social and economic challenge, despite its different approach, this unit can make a strong contribution to the Specialisation Strategy, specifically in areas related to the knowledge intensive bioeconomy.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

Research at this unit explicitly strives to develop knowledge and human capital in sectors of the economy in which Latvia has a competitive advantage. Virtually all the unit's research projects take the form of international collaboration, predominantly within EU framework programmes and the unit is strongly embedded in international research networks with a multitude of well-established relationships. One might argue that the flip side is that the research is less well-connected to other Latvian social science units. Moreover, the strong policy orientation of the research naturally calls for strong collaboration with industry and the unit is well-connected to relevant industries and entrepreneurs in Latvia. While the unit is very well aligned to state scientific and technology development, specifically towards sustainable economic development, it is limited by its small size. A closer and reciprocal exchange between this unit and one of the bigger universities should be encouraged, to ensure that the know-how and reputation of this unit contributes to the larger Latvian research community.

Recommendations

The Panel would make the following recommendations for the further development of the institution over the next 6 years.

- The unit should not further delay making the necessary formal decisions on leadership succession. Currently, the unit's reputation as a high quality, reliable Latvian research partner is too much dependent on the visibility and personal networks of its founder.
- The unit should continue to foster ties to other universities in Latvia. This is for two reasons, firstly so that researchers at the unit become embedded in a local and lively research environment that fosters creativity and curiosity that goes beyond immediate practical

problems, secondly so that the ambitions and attitudes that signify the research activities of this the unit become more widely adopted by social scientists in Latvia.

- The unit should establish a formal relationship with bigger universities in Latvia. While it is fine that researchers are affiliated to universities on an individual level, the panel believes that an institutional collaboration or merger would significantly increase the development potential of the unit and create a win-win situation in the social science landscape in Latvia. A minor step could be to exchange administrative support in exchange for research opportunities and a closer integration of doctoral students. A more radical move would be to allow the unit to act as an autonomous research group within a university structure. Clearly, the unit would need support to manage such a transition, including some basic funding.

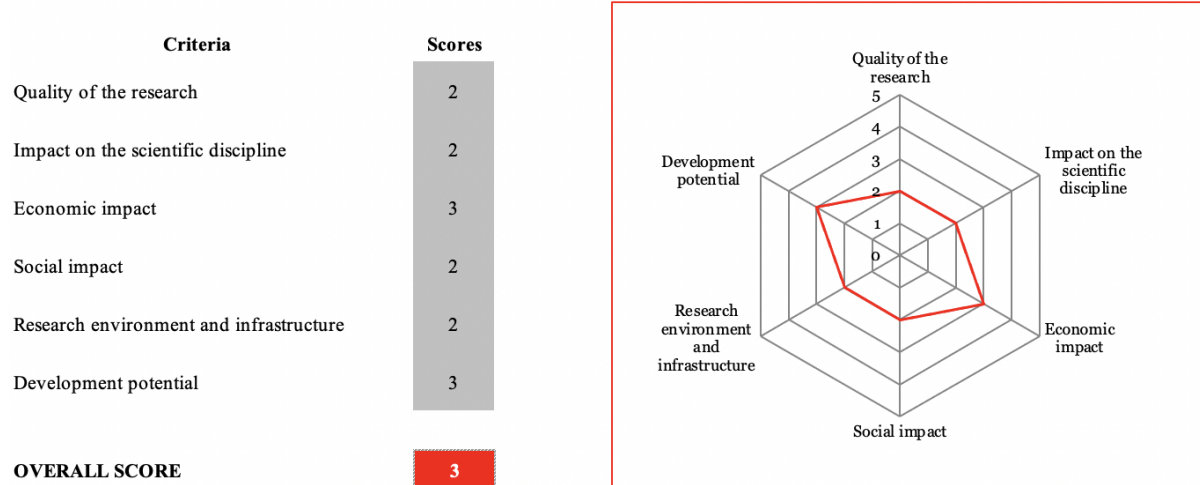
S_10 Riga Stradins University, Platform of Social Sciences

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Psychology; Economics and business; Law; Political Science; Media and communications
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	7,40
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	3,50
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	10,90
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	153,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	52,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	61,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	266,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	14,04
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	24,40
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	36,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	3,30
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	1.257.747
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	115.390

Riga Stradins University Social Sciences Platform (RSU-SSP) is one of the three research platforms of the Riga Stradins University. Its vision is to become a leading education and research centre in Eurasian regional studies of International Relations and Strategic Communication. RSU-SSP comprises three faculties and its research strategy is organized in four streams: a) International Relations, Comparative Politics and Political Economy; b) International Business and Economic Development; c) International and National Legal Systems, including security and medical law; d) Strategic Communication including interdisciplinary research integrating sociology, psychology, social anthropology and digital approaches and AI applications. Its goal is to focus RSU resources to conduct excellent research and provide internationally recognized expertise and scientific recommendations to stakeholders nationally and internationally. From 2013 to 2018, RSU-SSP has performed research in more than 15 basic and applied research and more than 50 contract research projects for government, non-governmental and private foundations, including the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for Eastern Policy Studies.

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Social Sciences Panel 2 to the Riga Stradins University, Platform of Social Sciences.

Figure 9 Riga Stradins University, Platform of Social Sciences, Riga Stradins University – Scores



Overall score

Score: 3

The overall score awarded is 3 to indicate a relatively good level of research conducted at Riga Stradins University, Platform of Social Sciences (RSU-SSP). To come to this decision the panel acknowledged RSU-SSP as a strong national player in research; however, the panel also considered the quality and impact of the research to be more limited, compared with some of the other institutions reviewed. Most importantly, the panel expressed worries about the sustainability of the research organisational structure through some diligent and focused investment of structural funding and an organisational re-structuring of research units and clusters. The panel had the opinion that a strong vision and strong management toward strategic specialisation priorities are necessary to keep up with international and national developments. This is recognised by the award of a score of 2 for the quality of research environment and infrastructure. In addition, the panel was impressed by the enthusiasm and professionalism shown in the self-assessment report, but supporting substantial facts are lacking. The panel considers that the quality of research outputs is still at national level and a greater effort and state funding is required to build on progress and improve the quality of the research conducted and the impact of the resulting work. The panel awarded a score of 2 for development potential, 3 for economic impact and 2 for social impact. Despite the importance for the Latvian society, the panel considered RSU-SSP's international scientific profile being still in development. In the panel's evaluation, RSU-SSP has a medium level of scientific achievements in the international scientific community and bodies, although it produces some strong disciplinary papers.

Quality of Research

Score: 2

The panel awarded a score of 2 to recognise the quality of research of the RSU-SSP as an adequate national player with some international recognition. The panel acknowledged the successful participation of the RSU-SSP researchers in the acquisition of a large number of national research grants from different funders. The panel also discussed that RSU-SSP researchers have been able to create a significant network. RSU-SSP researchers also participate in several international research projects, although their contribution in these projects is sometimes relatively limited; in any case, RSU-SSP researchers are not leading in these international projects.

When taken as a whole, the panel came to the conclusion that the international research visibility of RSU-SSP researchers is yet to evolve based on both the lack of influential papers and the low h-index of the researchers. The panel observed that in order to result in influential research and research output in the respective scientific disciplines (e.g. in the form of papers in high-ranked international scientific journals), the research projects of RSU-SSP should become more hypothesis-driven. The scientific papers presented to the panel as the best scientific output of RSU-SSP are rather descriptive.

There are many rhetorical self-laudatory terms (e.g. "in-depth research education", "formidable impact", "conducts excellent and relevant research", "actively seeks opportunities"). However, the panel also considers that output detailed information is missing, while the originality, innovation and importance of research at RSU-SSP, which can be measured by highly cited research papers, is still limited. Furthermore, the number of papers published in high-ranked journals of the disciplines that RSU-SSP covers is still very low. The most part of research is still published in local and regional journals and the number of Web of Science/Scopus indexed publications is moderate. In addition, although written in English and indexed in Scopus, the quality of peer-review and the impact of such journals is low in the international context. The panel acknowledges that significant improvement has been made in this respect, but also has the opinion that there still is a lot of room for further improvement.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

In the self-assessment report there are identified many strengths, but these are not supported with substantial information to show why and how RSU-SSP considers itself as a leader among other universities in Latvia, why and how it has a well-known reputation for setting and requiring high research and scientific excellence standards, why and how it has committed and highly qualified research personnel or opinion leaders in their respective fields, what are the lasting traditions of international collaboration, the strong integration in national and international research and analytical networks, why and how it has access to best students, why and how research education at RSU is more valuable in the eyes of the younger generation on local and international levels, etc. Again, research personnel activities, strong policy making impact and high visibility in media are mentioned but evidence is lacking. Overall, there is no information about what are the indicators and the criteria against which the claimed "excellent research" could be benchmarked.

The panel came to the conclusion that RSU-SSP occupies a stable position in the national scientific community, while its position within the international scientific community is still evolving. The main international connections of the RSU-SSP are participation in international conferences, bilateral exchanges with foreign universities and research institutions as well as other interactions within EU programmes, which have led to joint publications and networking. The international networking has strengthened with a good number of European projects, but there are no signs of being involved in the coming Horizon Europe and European Partnership developments, or in general in the development of EU's research policies. The connections in the international research projects are primarily in the stage of participation of RSU-SSP researchers in programs; but we do not see evidence of a leading role of RSU-SSP researchers as project coordinators in such programs, which indicates the presence, but a subordinate role at international level. This medium level international connectivity is also visible by the low number of participations in high-quality journal editorships and low numbers of invited speeches at international conferences. In terms of international publishing and collaboration with partners, the status of RSU-SSP therefore still leaves room for improvement.

The panel further observed that the contribution of RSU-SSP researchers in the international research projects is rather limited. There is a lack of good research papers certainly given the fact that apparently RSU-SSP researchers do participate in such multidisciplinary international teams. In the few publications with international partners we observed, the RSU-SSP researchers are not the lead contributors, and this does not sufficiently strengthen the position of the RSU-

SSP researchers in the respective research discipline in an international context. An important opportunity for improving the international status through publishing common and strong research papers where the RSU-SSP researchers are key contributors has not been efficiently utilised. As such, the EU projects did not yet generate the required research impact for RSU-SSP. In all international cooperation shown, there is little visibility of the impact of either Latvian early-career researchers, who do not appear as first authors, or of the senior researchers, who do not appear as corresponding authors either. The panel also found that the efficiency of conversion of large projects into highly valuable scientific knowledge is low. From many research grants acquired, in which a few also included several international partners, no or only a few high-quality research papers were generated. This is true both for international multidisciplinary projects and for other significant grants funded by national funding agencies. The panel acknowledged that the researchers of RSU-SSP participate actively in international conferences and some Professors and Leading Researchers participate actively in the scientific journals. However, the overall international visibility of the RSU-SSP researchers is still low, as can be measured by low participation in editorial boards of highly reputed scientific journals or conferences, invited talks at international conferences, etc.

Economic impact

Score: 3

The panel scored the economic impact of RSU-SSP with a 3. The panel concluded that the economic impact of RSU-SSP is increasing but still is not of an extensive and dynamic nature. Some areas like legal medicine, comparative politics and strategic communication have strong connections with public health and foreign policy. During the hearing, it became evident that the national research partners and stakeholders rely on RSU-SSP capacities, although they are not strong enough to contribute in a dynamic manner in this interaction. Furthermore, the potential of RSU-SSP in using its expertise and infrastructure has been used on several occasions. Interaction with the national stakeholders and research partners is at the moment at the stage of providing small services such as consulting, method development, assessment analyses, and provision of expertise in the area of legal medicine and foreign policy. The stakeholders and research partners were positive about this interaction, even though there is no dynamic interaction, because research partners do not have resources to co-fund common activities.

In comparison with more applied branches of academic work, RSU-SSP does not usually produce a commercial product. Its work does have economic impact, but this is hard to quantify. All in all, the panel observed that the expertise of RSU-SSP is important and is of a level which is to be expected from a University with a range of activities related to teaching, research and service provision. In addition, RSU-SSP looks for opportunities for students to engage with businesses and the RSU-SSP business incubator aims to create an interdisciplinary space to encourage innovative ideas. However, there is no investment and there is no information about research investment returns, even though RSU-SSP has much bigger effect on society via public benefits than directly for the economy.

Social impact

Score: 2

The panel scored the social impact of RSU-SSP with a 2 to recognize that the social impact of RSU-SSP research in Latvia is adequate, with satisfactory levels of interaction with society. The panel observed that the main social activities include cooperation with the Latvian ministries and other state institutions. Moreover, research results of the RSU-SSP researchers are used to improve national legislation. In addition, the RSU-SSP researchers participate in various working groups as experts, thus ensuring the transformation of scientific knowledge into rules and regulations and sectoral guidelines. The results of working on informal institutions in the Balkans might have allowed more informed decision-making at the EU level. Other activities of the RSU-

SSP researchers include fostering of social equality. The RSU-SSP scientists were active in strategic communication activities including articles in existing popular science literature, self-published popular science literature, media materials, radio-, TV- other media appearances. Reports on research results from public institutions are also produced. During the visit, stakeholders and research partners highlighted a good interaction with the RSU-SSP in diverse topics of social interest in Latvia. The stakeholders appreciate the role of RSU-SSP in the knowledge transfer and in enhancing social values in Latvia.

However, the panel came to the conclusion that there is no information about what are objectives to support social impact and how knowledge of RSU-SSP disciplines is assessed in this respect. For example, there is no information about what exactly and how knowledge of social anthropology is regularly shared to public and private stakeholders, in particular what is the social impact of the Baltic Summer School of Anthropology, etc.. Also the involvement of active academic personnel in policy recommendations outside the academic research field is not substantiated.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 2

The panel scored the research environment and infrastructure with a 2 to recognize that the RSU-SSP research environment is still evolving to achieve a level that is expected in the international scientific community of a respected institution in the given disciplines. However, the panel could not find a clear explanation of the organisational structure of RSU-SSP within Stradins University, especially with regard to the exact position of this pool in relation to more consolidated units such as the faculty of European studies, the department of humanities, or the institute of international affairs. The impression is given that the research environment and infrastructures are presented in two different ways, without any objective rationale why a virtual organisational structure is superposed (RSU-SSP) to the formal real structure (three faculties), which does not allow understanding the goal orientation of the research work. Research is organized in four streams, but there is no detailed breakdown information on RSU-SSP consolidated research entities and it is not clear why a pool of several disciplines can make a strong stream. For example, there is no explanation why communication and anthropology are associated within one stream. Again, research infrastructures of Parliament Corps and Internet Aggressiveness Index System are not explained. Overall, research capacity and abilities are not substantiated or explained and there is no objective evidence of staff being well integrated in the global research environment of RSU-SSP.

The panel thinks that from the perspective of research infrastructures, the RSU-SSP possesses the necessary supportive and research facilities required for research of the involved disciplines. However, the panel came to the conclusion that the goal orientation of the research work seems to be rather weak. Therefore, the RSU-SSP cannot exploit the entire potential. Although the RSU-SSP aims at increasing the scientific capacity by promoting the career of young scientists and encouraging them to publish the research data in indexed journals, this has not yet given the expected results. The number of high-quality papers in which the young researchers are first authors is very limited. From the hearing, it became evident that the teaching and administrative load seems to be very high, taking into account that only a "very tiny" part of the budget grant is dedicated to research, even though "hopefully it will grow". Actually, not all faculty members are active researchers, but teachers of Bachelor students. Young and dynamic research groups dedicated almost entirely to research is missing. There is a new rewarding scheme for publications and high performance for the scientific staff so that each researcher receives a performance reward, where the amount depends on the results of the scientific work. However, in the interview it became evident that there is no supportive strategy from the university management for the staff to increase their performance. The financial incentives are not enough to enhance the performance, if they are not coupled with staff enhancement policy (support in scientific writing, hypothesis-driven research, advanced

research techniques, presentation techniques, modern project management, work-life balance, etc.).

Development potential

Score: 3

The panel scored the development potential with a 3 to recognize that the RSU-SSP has a potential to become international player in its area of research. However, there are serious problems with research strategy or investment plan that need to be addressed. RSU-SSP has to develop partnerships for promising research areas to increase the ability to attract students, doctoral candidates, and foreign researchers, to raise funding that is awarded competitively, and to orient towards topical issues in the selection of research themes. For example, there is no information of how much RSU funding and resources will be allocated to support further expansion of RSU-SSP research, or about the proportion of continued increase of remuneration for the research personnel in relation to other investments. In addition, a number of influential leading scientists are mentioned, but without identifying them or their potential involvement to demonstrate and to further scientific excellence and impact.

In the Panel's view, RSU-SSP has not fully recognized its weakness in terms of its loose organisational structure, lack of adequate research management strategy, low thematic concentration, and low scientific publication output, low conversion efficiency of research grants into high-quality publications, the need for development of young and dynamic research groups, and the low quality for certain research fields. All these issues hamper the development potential and possibly the international visibility in the near future. In the SWOT analysis, the RSU-SSP has claimed lack of funding for basic research, although without showing any strategy how to counteract this and a vision regarding a direction for basic research. The panel considers the staff development a weakness of the RSU-SSP. The University has recognized the risk of losing high-quality staff to emigration without showing any evidence-based strategy how to stop this and motivate, attract and develop the young talented researchers. The panel believes that the ability to synergize research directions that will benefit the international visibility will depend on the capacity of the RSU-SSP to attract young and talented researchers in competition with other similar institutions in Latvia and in the region.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

From the review of the infrastructure and interaction with the current PhD students, the panel considers the RSU-SSP has all resources required to offer doctoral studies and to attract PhD students in Social Sciences. The RSU-SSP has committed supervisors, opportunity for interactions with undergraduate students and peers for the PhD students, as well as opportunities for offering additional soft skills and techniques (i.e., scientific writing, experimental design, advanced statistics and presentation techniques) to the PhD students within their programs. At the moment only few PhD theses seem to yield high quality papers. It is not clear why the success rate is so low given that the number of staff enrolled in doctoral studies is very high compared with the finished theses. It was also noted that PhD theses were typically not converted into influential and highly cited papers. RSU-SSP organizes the graduate school in partnership with several Latvian institutions, which may allow building some interdisciplinary network, additional resources and complementary cooperation. However, participating in collaborative networks cannot compensate for lack of internal resources. More efforts are needed to build a strong doctoral school to provide social, educational, and financial support to students. Indeed, they could progress faster and better when enrolled in strong doctoral school.

The panel recognizes that there are efforts to encourage collaboration between the less research active teachers and the more active researchers, for instance in the COVID-19 research project many people participated, including Master and Doctoral students. Taken

together, in the future RSU-SSP has all opportunities to offer PhD studies based on the infrastructure and academic staff.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

RSU-SSP aligns with the RIS3 strategy as it is advancing political and social scientific knowledge and human capital in several domains.

- RSU-SSP contributes to the Latvian Smart Specialisation Strategy by performing quality research and supporting the strengthening of the socioeconomic development, research and innovation in Latvia, which align directly with one of the knowledge specialisation areas of the RIS3 strategy.
- RSU-SSP works regularly and closely with business, legal and political stakeholders within Latvia and internationally.
- RSU-SSP provides PhD training and research opportunities for young scientists and thus also supports the priority of research human capital development in Latvia.

The panel thinks that from the scope, profile and the volume of research the RSU-SSP's activities are oriented towards RIS3 policy goals in Latvia. The panel judges that the RSU-SSP has given contributions to achieving the goals of the RIS3, in particular by increasing the number of national collaborations, increasing the knowledge transfer and the number of papers published in peer-reviewed journals and in the media. RSU-SSP, as a knowledge intensive research body, contributes to high-added-value and advanced knowledge base of Latvian research system, namely in the knowledge-intensive socioeconomic, political and communication areas.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

RSU-SSP contributes to the objectives of Latvia's scientific and technological development as defined in key policy documents (e.g. Science, Technological Development and Innovation Guidelines 2014-2020, Education Guidelines 2014-2020 and other).

The Latvian policy goals obviously aim to transform the national social sciences towards higher international competitiveness, higher added value and enhanced research performance. In the panel's opinion the RSU-SSP during the last years has contributed only fairly to increase the internationalisation of Latvian social sciences as well as to increase the value of Latvian research. The panel analysed that although the level of national achievement is good, international reach needs a more aggressive strategy. The low number of highly cited papers in the top journals indicates that the contribution of RSU-SSP to the innovation and increased international competitiveness of the Latvian research is still low.

Recommendations

RSU-SSP is a good quality research institution with very good basics in Latvia, but there is room for development, mainly at the international level, it needs higher international embedding and visibility, a more adequate research management strategy to achieve excellence, and therefore be able to continue to adapt and develop. The Panel recommends that:

Leadership and management

- RSU-SSP research leaders and managers staff could initiate a high-level task force aiming to determine the best way to design and implement research environment and capabilities for International Relations, comparative politics, economic development, security legal systems, and strategic communication in Latvia.
- RSU-SSP could avoid unnecessary dispersion of its research development potential by reorganising its research environment in line with the overall RSU strategy as a research university focused on medicine, healthcare and public health.

- RSU-SSP would benefit from an external international advisory panel to provide review and guidance, review plans, research strategies, outputs, finances, training and education, communication. Advisory panel could provide their assessment of research quality, the quality of organisational structure/management and provide advice and recommendations.

Research environment and infrastructure

- RSU-SSP could open the application policy for permanent and visiting research positions to neighbouring countries and beyond in order to encourage highly qualified foreign researchers applying for such positions at RSU-SSP.
- In particular, there is need for a strategy to increase the quality of the research and a focus on publications in high-ranked international journals, instead of increasing the number of papers published in local or regional journals.
- RSU-SSP could create a unit of project support to assist researchers and support talented PhD and young Postdocs to initiate their own research groups focussed entirely on research and research-based teaching without administration and teaching duties; decrease the teaching and administrative load of groups leaders with strong research projects/profiles; and stimulate the international exchange of young scientific and support staff.
- Priority should be the positioning of the new generation of young researchers, using the recent achievements in international connections and reputations, and push the best young researchers to higher levels, that is to send them to best international university centres, to propose them to be editors, participate in projects, being invited speakers, give seminars abroad, etc.
- RSU-SSP could upgrade the graduate school, giving the PhD students more rights and obligations to be involved in the research projects starting with hypothesis development, experimental design, decision to publish, and first authoring of at least one manuscript in their PhD theses. In addition, the panel recommends creation of a uniform doctoral program in which the PhD students should be encouraged to write only cumulative PhD theses and publish at least one paper as first author in a high impact factor journal. To further enhance the quality of the PhD program, the panel recommends involvement of external international experts in the PhD supervision and the PhD committees.

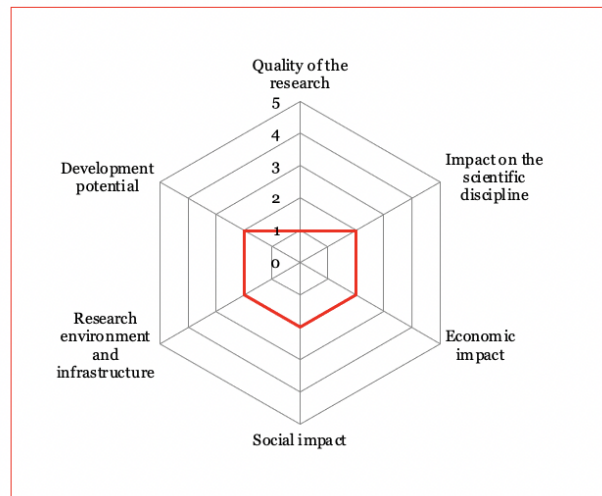
S_11 Center for Security and Strategic Research

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Other social sciences
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	7,7
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	7,7
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	7
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	18
Monographs in period 2013-2018	11
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	36
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,91
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	4,68
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	2
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,26
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	975065,32
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	126 631,86

The Center for Security and Strategic Research (CSSR) has existed in its present form since 2012 as essentially the research arm of the National Defence Academy of Latvia and the Ministry of Defence. CSSR has three main functions: to provide the Ministry of Defence and the National Armed Forces research on practical, concrete, and often classified issues; to serve as the scientific hub of the National Defence Academy, thereby being responsible for international cooperation with other military research institutions; and, to increase public awareness about security and defence issues in Latvia. The ambition of CSSR is “to establish itself as one of the most influential small research centres in Europe.” CSSR is divided into two departments: The Department of Strategic Studies and the new Department of Applied Military Research. CSSR is a very small unit, employing six researchers. It is entirely funded by the National Armed Forces.

Figure 10 Center for Security and Strategic Research - Scores

Criteria	Scores
Quality of the research	1
Impact on the scientific discipline	2
Economic impact	2
Social impact	2
Research environment and infrastructure	2
Development potential	2
OVERALL SCORE	2



Overall score

Score: 2

CSSR is a very small unit carrying out research on narrow, yet societally highly salient themes. Its primary function is to provide information to the policy-makers and this is reflected in its output, which largely consists of policy briefs and topical commentaries instead of actual scientific publications. CSSR has established a wide range of contacts with similar 'military studies' centres abroad, but it rarely cooperates with the broader academic community. Unlike other Latvian academic social science institutions, CSSR is not reliant on external funding and the staff has good access to research materials and administrative support. At the same time, the strong dependency on the Ministry of Defence and the narrowly defined research field limit the future development of CSSR.

Quality of Research

Score: 1

The CSSR's target audience is not the academic community, but rather the policy-making community, the Ministry of Defence, and the National Armed of Forces. Some of the research undertaken by CSSR is indeed 'classified' and not publicly available. There are essentially no publications in reputable academic journals, with most of its output consisting of policy briefs and various topical reports. Hence the limited scientific output of CSSR is disappointing. There is less academic freedom in CSSR than in normal academic institutions: the unit focuses strictly on security issues and the topics of individual researchers are approved by the scientific council of the CSSR. Surely such a top-down environment is not conducive to academic innovation and independent thinking.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

As most of the interaction is with either Latvian policy-makers or the military, the academic impact of CSSR is limited. This applies both to the publications and to the international collaboration. CSSR staff does have active links with select other similar institutions and even foreign and defence ministries across the world, but dialogue with actual universities is almost non-existent. However, many of the papers published by CSSR are nonetheless well cited, indicating that they do reach the international security studies community. Within its own narrow niche of military studies, the CSSR is, therefore, recognised internationally.

Economic impact

Score: 2

The research topics of CSSR are determined using a 'top-down' approach and they mostly deal with national security and defence policy. Hence the audience of the CSSR consists of relevant personnel in public administration and the military, and the direct economic impact of CSSR's research is understandably very small. However, the Department of Applied Military Research can in the future produce outputs that have more direct links to defence, technology, and communication sectors.

Social impact

Score 2

CSSR clearly has close ties with the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces, and it has influenced various key documents, such as the National Defence Plan. CSSR's staff is also frequently used as experts in the media. Therefore, CSSR contributes to public debates about Latvian foreign, security, and defence policy. Given the obviously high salience of defence issues and the expertise of CSSR in Russian foreign policy, CSSR's staff can thus effectively inform the media and the broader public about such matters. The CSSR's director Dr. Jānis Bērziņš has also given policy advice to several legislatures and executives from the European Union (Sweden and Poland), Asia (Singapore) and the United States. However, beyond such expertise the social impact of CSSR is bound to remain limited. Even the public lectures seem primarily attended by military personnel and civil servants.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 2

CSSR deserves credit for organising seminars and an annual conference as well as for attempting to improve the scientific quality of its work, but inevitably the small size of the unit impacts its ability to expand the scope of the work. At the same time, the staff enjoys benefits not readily available to their colleagues in other social science institutions in Latvia: while the immediate proximity to the ministry may not be an optimal solution, there is good access to literature and research databases, and there are funds available for attending conferences and proofreading the publications. In terms of organisational culture, the procedures at CSSR, including the selection of the research topics, appear to be unnecessarily rigid and top-down, which may limit the academic freedom of the researchers.

Development potential

Score: 2

The strong dependency on the Ministry of Defence comes with a trade-off for CSSR. On the one hand, the unit has stable resources and over the years it has consolidated its position both in Latvia and in the international military studies community. On the other hand, the future development of CSSR is not in its own hands, and the unit does not seem to have any real strategy concerning its future progress and growth. Overall, CSSR is still a young, small institution that is currently expanding in size with the addition of the Department of Applied Military Research. CSSR should decide, together with the Ministry of Defence, whether to continue as it is or to develop the centre more in the direction of a normal academic research institute. Self-assessment report and the online visit made it evident that the CSSR understands its role to be quite different from typical academic institutions, and this certainly limits the impact of work carried out by the unit.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

CSSR does not offer doctoral studies and has no intention of doing so, but individual staff members are involved in supervision of doctoral students at other institutions.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The research conducted at CSSR is quite far removed from the Smart Specialization Strategy. The Department of Applied Military Research should foster closer links between CSSR and businesses.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

As most of the research carried out at CSSR is very specific and tied to the goals of the military, the ties to the national objectives in science, technology, and education and innovation development policy are very thin, but the Department of Applied Military Research can prove beneficial in terms of technological development and innovations.

Recommendations

CSSR is a small institution whose future is entirely in the hands of the Ministry of Defence. Its research themes cover security, defence, and strategic issues – topics that are most salient in Latvia and the Baltic region. The research infrastructure at CSSR is stable, but the organisational culture and procedures at CSSR are not conducive to achieving higher levels of academic performance. Our recommendations aim at making the CSSR a stronger and more independent academic actor both in Latvia and internationally.

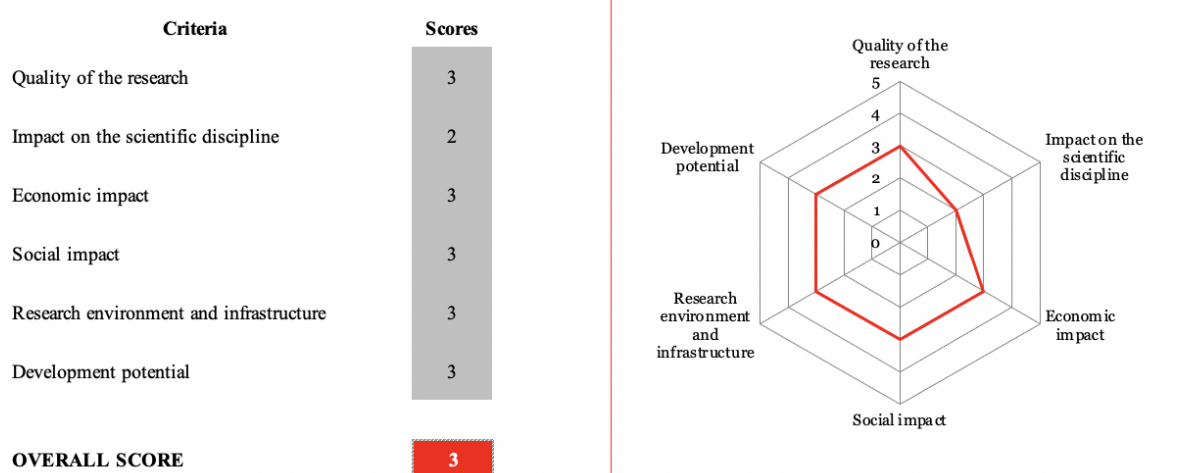
- Introduce more academic freedom and less centralized decision-making. CSSR needs to become more like a typical academic department, with its own office space and looser ties to the Ministry of Defence. Despite the stable resources, currently many potential recruits may shun the close interaction between the ministry and the CSSR, as it poses significant limits to academic freedom. Individual staff members should have freedom to choose their own research topics and publication outlets, at least as long as they also produce research that is in line with the remit of CSSR. There should also be transparent incentive scheme rewarding staff members for international academic publications.
- Develop closer links with universities. Currently, CSSR's network consists primarily of similar military studies centres abroad, which limits the impact of the unit. Universities in Latvia and abroad carry out research on various security questions, and hence there is a demand for CSSR's expertise in academia. In addition to attending standard academic international conferences, CSSR's staff should be encouraged to develop joint research projects with political science or international relations scholars. Another avenue of collaboration could be regular teaching and supervision of doctoral students at other academic institutions in Latvia.
- Establish stronger ties with the public. CSSR prioritizes contacts with policy-makers, but there is undoubtedly high demand in Latvia for the kind of security and defence expertise found in CSSR. While respecting the need to keep certain information classified, the unit should invest more in its online presence, and produce, on a regular basis, reader-friendly, publicly available material on various security questions. This would clearly improve CSSR's standing in the country.
- Utilize a broader conception of security. While it is understandable that the Ministry of Defence wants CSSR to conduct research on security and defence issues, the unit should deliberately employ a broader understanding of security. Security and securitization are popular concepts, used in various social science disciplines. For example, the links between energy policy, environmental issues, and security are well established, as are the ties between security and migration and security and communication. The attractiveness of CSSR, particularly regarding contacts with universities, would benefit from such a broader understanding of security.

S_12 Daugavpils University research programme "Educational sciences, psychology, economy, and law"

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Psychology; economics and business; law; educational sciences
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	35,65
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	8,19
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	43,84
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	233
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	293
Monographs in period 2013-2018	22
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	548
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	5,31
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	12,5
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	6
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,14
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	3243093
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	355,162

The Daugavpils University research program "Educational sciences, Psychology, Economics and business, Law" (EPEL) is spread across two faculties (Social Sciences and Education and Management), four departments (Economics and Sociology, Law, Pedagogy and Educational Psychology, Social Psychology) and two centers at the Institute of the Humanities and Social Sciences (Social investigation and Sustainable Development). In 2018 it reported 43,84 FTE academic staff. The different units are located in proximal spaces in the university buildings, therefore facilitating communication among their staff members. The DU is the reference university center for the Latgale region and it is located at the external border of the European Union with the neighboring countries Belarus and Russia.

Figure 11 Daugavpils University research programme "Educational sciences, psychology, economy, and law" – Scores



Overall score

Score: 3

EPEL is an articulated research unit linking together different departments and research centres. Academic staff members pursue and publish research in their own disciplinary field, but the EPEL also tries to foster interdisciplinary research and publications. Given the complexity and the scope of EPEL's self-assessment and panel presentation, it was difficult to fully understand specific aspects of each discipline. However, there was evidence of growing interdisciplinary works and integrative projects bringing together academic staff from different disciplines. There was also evidence of a growing trend towards publishing internationally and increased attention and emphasis on research, including attempts to implement specific research-focused incentives, positive developments in the research training, and a systematic attention to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research. The research output has been increasingly published in journals recognized in international databases such as Scopus. However, a substantial portion of these journals are local or regional (Latvian or Baltic) publication outlets. There is room for improvement in terms of both the quality and the quantity of the research output.

Quality of Research

Score: 3

This institution is a strong national player with some international recognition. There is a regional focus in EPEL's research due to its unique location at the external border of the European Union as well as a focus on sustainability, especially in the field of Education. There is also evidence of relevant applied research. The number of EPEL's scientific publications in the journals listed in the Scopus database has increased over time. However, although internationally recognised, many of these journals are locally based and the articles that are published in them tend to attract citations from the same journals. For example, among the publications selected for the evaluation, only one publication has been cited more than 10 times from works published in journals different from the one in which it was published. Overall, the research output is adequate from a national perspective and there is some evidence of internationally recognized research, but it is not yet at the standard that is expected from a strong international institution, for instance, the proportion of output published in leading high-ranking international journals is lower than expected.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

There is some evidence that the research produced by the members of the EPEL has some impact, but it is mainly at the national level. Thus, EPEL is a satisfactory national player and its researchers play a significant role in the national scientific community, but its influence within the international scientific community is limited. The increase in the ratio of research output published in Scopus databases relative to the total number of publications over time is a positive development. However, much of this increase in the ratio can be explained by the overall reduction in the total number of publications, rather than merely by the increase in the number of articles published in Scopus. Furthermore, out of the publications submitted for the International Evaluation of Scientific Institution Activity six are published in journals that, although listed in Scopus, are based locally or in Lithuania and have limited international scientific influence. The remaining publications offer some evidence of research efforts starting to be embedded within the international network collaborations and getting published in higher-ranking international journals, which is a promising achievement.

Economic impact

Score: 3

EPEL's research had a strong economic impact, although a significant portion of it was indirect. There is evidence of close links between the university and the economically relevant actors at the regional and national levels, for example, the city council. In addition, EPEL has established cooperation with enterprises and various stakeholders, as well as looked for ways to integrate the topic of sustainability in the schools' curricular frameworks. EPEL's interactions with the non-academic sector are at a level that is expected by a recognised academic institution. Some of its research is also embedded within an international context. There are examples of economic impact for all research disciplines considered in this exercise, for instance, in the context of smart specialization and sustainable regional development as well as IT solutions for the logistics sector and its employees.

Social impact

Score: 3

The social impact of the research is relevant at a local and national level. There is evidence of social and cultural impact in education, especially concerning sustainability issues, security issues, rural development, and micro-crediting, among others. One such example is the development of the approaches for the formation of a sustainable knowledge society, within the framework of the National Research Programme. EPEL is an active participant in the communication and interaction with the public and is well rooted in the local context and territory. The unit has aimed to create cooperation channels with the representatives of state and private sectors through project activities. Academic staff of EPEL are involved in collaborations that have social impact (or both economic and social impact). The social impact often dovetails with the economic impact of the research within the local context.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 3

The basic needs in terms of IT, library, databases, and software seem to be met. For the promotion of scientific research and the enhancement of the development of the scientific staff and young scientists' careers, this institution has created and maintained relevant scientific infrastructure, which includes scientific journals and annual scientific conferences, Baltic and Black Sea Circle Consortium, and Promotion Councils. In addition, there are also some research-focused incentives, such as a monetary incentive for publishing in high-quality journals and an annual competition for small research grants that could create virtuous cycles and yield positive outcomes in the future. However, self-assessment also reveals some issues, such

as the need for more financial resources as well as for the refurbishment of some of the outdated or worn-out technical equipment. Overall, the institution is able to provide a reasonably good research environment and infrastructure.

Development potential

Score: 3

EPEL's self-assessment report revealed that the number of publications in journals listed in international databases, such as Scopus has increased between 2013-2018. However, this increase is not yet reflected in publications in high-level international journals. There are some promising elements boding well for the potential of the future development. For example, the SWOT analysis in the self-assessment was sharp, realistic, and not self-complacent; there were strategic goals set up by the University and there was an attempt to genuinely foster communications, exchanges, and interdisciplinary works among staff members of the different departments and research centers. In addition, a geographic location may offer EPEL a unique advantage, as it combines the benefits of being in the center of the local region (Latgale) with a possibility of taking on the role intermediary. Time will tell whether these promising elements will be actually exploited and bring significant results in the future.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The number of completed doctoral theses from 2013 to 2018 is small in terms of both the absolute number (6) and the ratio to the number of researchers (0.14). From the self-assessment, there appears to be a larger number of enrolled PhD students than the number of defended thesis in this time period, suggesting a relatively low success rate. This may be explained by an inadequate funding for doctoral students and a limited amount of grant bursaries, both of which presumably are systemic issues in Latvia. Measures to increase the number of successfully completed PhD theses should be closely considered. Not only the PhD students' success rate, but also their number is not in line with what one could expect given the breadth and the articulation of EPEL's research activities. Addressing this problem effectively could offer significant long-term benefits and it is arguably one of the most important forward-looking issues that EPEL is currently facing.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The EPEL aligns in several of its activities with the RIS3 priorities. Examples are its contribution to build cooperation with enterprises as multiple stakeholders, its research on how to increase life proficiency and competence in obtaining information for the citizens, and the orientation of some of its activities to the opportunities of developing a smart economy in Latvian regions considering the social-economic peculiarities of the rural territories.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The EPEL promotes activities in close conformity with the main national scientific and technology development objectives. The EPEL stimulates the creation of technologies and innovations as well as their transfer to practice. For example, specialists in economics and computer science developed innovative IT solutions for improving the quality of logistics and for increasing the efficiency of employees in its sector; EPEL members have contributed to the creation of a wide cooperation network for accumulating and exchanging experience of developing a sustainable education content in the universities; EPEL scientists have developed a methodology for assessing smart specialization in sparsely populated rural territories, including the deployment of a specialized indicator, the Smart Development Index, that can be used for formulating strategies and monitoring the progress.

Recommendations

The EPEL is overall a strong national player, pivotal in the Latgale region, and shows some evidence of international recognition. The Panel would like to make the following recommendations for the further development of the institution over the next 6 years. It should

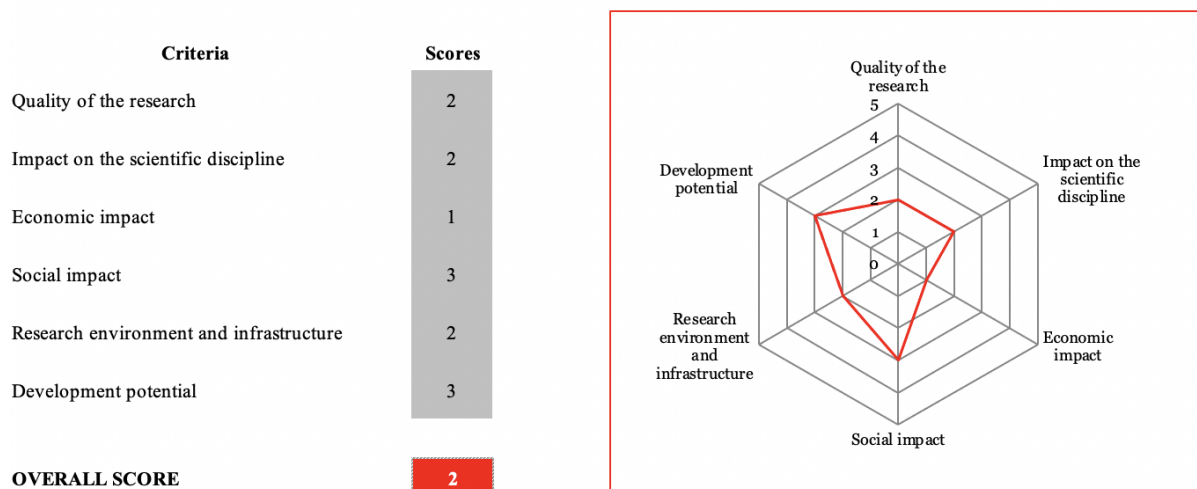
be clarified first that the way in which the evaluation was conducted made it very difficult to identify specific strengths or weaknesses at the level of the specific academic disciplines. The recommendations therefore concern the whole EPEL.

- Publish in high-quality international outlets. The first and probably the most important recommendation is that the EPEL focus more of its efforts on trying to publish in high quality, internationally recognised journals. There has been a noticeable improvement over time of publications in internationally recognized journals (i.e., listed in Scopus). But this was achieved largely through publishing in the international journals that are based in the local region or journals with a limited international influence. Therefore, the next stage of development should focus on trying to publish in higher quality, well-established international journals. This will probably require raising the quality of the research, developing collaborations with international researchers, and considering the introduction of supportive actions (e.g., English proof-reading of the manuscripts, seminars on how to publish in international journals, etc.).
- Invest in researcher training. The university has already implemented some good research-focused incentives, such as financial rewards for the international publications, internal research grants, and competitive grants for the participation in conferences. These are good initiatives, although attention should be paid to the specific details of their implementation to avoid potential unwanted effects. These initiatives could also be complemented by other initiatives starting already at the level of doctoral students. The initiatives should not be limited to only providing incentives/disincentives (e.g., for publishing in high quality international journals), but they should also be focused on providing a high-quality training for the basic skills needed for a successful PhD and research path, such as research methods, academic writing in English, reviewing and evaluating academic work, and literature review and bibliographic research methods. The training should try to have the right balance between disciplinary (depth) and cross-disciplinary (breadth) elements.
- Engage in international collaborations. One way to grow in terms of research is by engaging in international collaborations and becoming involved in large international projects. Although the specific, unique contribution of an EPEL member in a multi-author, multi-countries context might be limited, it is arguably a first step towards focusing on research that has an international impact in the relevant scientific field. Moreover, being involved in international networks provides learning opportunities and exposures to cutting-edge research developments. There are already a few isolated examples of this in EPEL, but it could become a more general practice. Supportive actions could include inviting selected foreign scholars to EPEL for research visits and actively identifying opportunities for international collaborations.
- Find a balance between applied and basic research and between disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research. All over the world academic institutions face similar research dilemmas—struggling to find a correct balance between basic and applied research as well as between disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research. Applied research is important for many reasons, for example, it can help solving specific problems by leveraging relevant academic and scientific knowledge. Yet, basic academic research is foundational and, in the long term, is the very reason why one can perform high-quality applied research. By the same token, interdisciplinary research is more likely to meet the challenges of modern society, can allow achieving synergistic effects, and can integrate scattered specialistic knowledge, thus providing breadth. Yet, interdisciplinary research may have difficulties in influencing a particular field of science given the specificity and the advanced level of knowledge required doing so. Moreover, high quality interdisciplinary research requires the presence of advanced disciplinary knowledge, which provides the necessary depth. It is not easy to find a good balance between the two, but it is important to bear in mind that focusing on one at the expense of the other is unlikely to represent a good solution.

S_13 Liepāja University Educational Sciences Unit

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Educational Sciences
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	16,11
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	9,55
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	25,66
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	89,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	156,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	9,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	254,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	3,47
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	9,90
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	10,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,39
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	593.046
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	23.112

Figure 12 Liepāja University Educational Sciences Unit– Scores



Overall score

Score: 2

Liepāja University Educational Sciences Unit consists of people affiliated to Institute of Educational Science and Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work (including Speech Therapy Centre and Music Therapy Centre). In the self-evaluation report 76 members of academic staff were mentioned but in the online visit it appeared that about 1/3 of them are people working at schools and in 2018 the FTE numbers of academic staff (including research staff) was only 25.66. The institution's website shows that at the time of the online visit (December 2020) the research institute has all together 12 out of 15 people with PhD degree or Dr. Paed. In the Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work there are 47 people (12 with doctoral degrees). Based on the self-evaluation report the institution also counts in their work on about 20 more people who are not part of the faculty but work in partner schools.

Based on the numbers and the focus, it is clear that the institution is mainly teaching-oriented though with some research in specific areas of education. Overall, the quality and volume of research is relatively limited and, based on the citation number of the published articles it currently does not have a strong impact internationally. The focus seems to be rather on quantity than on quality of the articles. The institution has an important social impact as a teacher education unit in Latvia; however, its economic impact does not appear to be strong. The research environment in general is relatively weak for a number of different reasons: because the funding per researcher is limited; because there are insufficient strong workgroups of researchers; and because the international focus and networking is limited. The Speech Therapy Centre and Music Therapy Centre seem to be separate units within the institution with a stronger research profile; they are involved much more in international collaboration (projects, conferences, publications) which increases their development potential significantly.

Quality of Research

Score: 2

In terms of research quality, the institution is a satisfactory national player. It has some research strengths in relation to pedagogy in different contexts – adults, children, higher education etc – and in specific domains such as art, music and speech therapy. Some valuable work has been undertaken in educational psychology, sociology, language and medical sciences. Internationally well-connected research groups are formed in the Music Therapy Centre and Speech Therapy Centre (partners from Germany, Greece, Turkey, Taiwan).

In terms of high quality outputs and doctoral completions, the unit has an average profile. There is evidence that since the last review, the unit has increased its research productivity considerably. It has 33 journal articles (110 citations) in Scopus though no articles indexed in WoS. Despite these improvements, the number of outputs remains low given the numbers of personnel involved. The number of published conference proceedings is higher – 25 in WoS and 48 in Scopus – but the number of citations from these publications remains low – only 4 in WoS and 31 in Scopus. None of the conference publications are published in collaboration with international scholars.

The quality of the articles submitted for the Panel to read was in international terms relatively low. One article was in Latvian, others were primarily focused on the national context and were therefore unlikely to contribute to the international field of studies. In most cases the research methods used were somewhat simple with too many studies based on small scale work and/or literature reviews.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

The institution is a satisfactory national player but the position of the institution within the international scientific community is still evolving. The unit is engaged with a diverse range of important topics. However, its main contribution to the field of science is through its teaching rather than through its research per se. While some of the submitted papers were of reasonable quality (particularly in the area of language development) others were largely descriptive or involved very small scale studies. As a result, the impact of the unit's research on its field of science is therefore likely only to be moderate.

To date, the institution's participation in international projects has been quite limited. It has not participated in EU Framework Programmes and the total funding of other international grants is very limited – 78,464 €. Private funding has been only 4,836 €. In the self-assessment document reference was made to a number of international collaborations. However, it seems that these have more often been focused on the development of teacher education per se rather than on high-level research projects that have produced internationally recognized outputs.

Economic impact

Score: 1

As is noted in the unit's self-evaluation document, its main claim to economic impact is through its teaching rather than its research. Specifically, they claim to be able to make important contributions to human capital development, the visibility and competitiveness of Latvian research, and knowledge transfer. Substantively they are also contributing to the development of a modern, inclusive educational system improving the capacity of learners to contribute to both social and economic development. However, as the on-line visit confirmed, in terms of research, their economic impact appears limited, primarily because their research itself is limited.

Social impact

Score: 2

The unit's main social impact is through its contribution to the development of a modern, inclusive education system in all of its sectors. Much of the unit's research seems to focus on revising and developing its study programmes in teacher education. According to the self-assessment report there is also a wide range of studies developed in relation to social equality and teachers' work in a range of different aspects of educational practice, for example in relation to professional competence in multicultural and inclusive educational environments. In this work the institution has strong networks in Latvia, including connections with other universities as well as the local municipality which supports guest lecturers and internships in schools. There are also strong links with the Ministry of Education and Science. However, because the research itself is limited the unit's potential for international social impact is also limited.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 2

The main challenge of the unit is that, in the quite large unit there are not enough staff members with a PhD degree who focus on research.

As already noted, the institution seems to be primarily focused on teaching rather than research. This is reflected in the self-assessment document's discussion of infrastructure which focuses primarily on physical resources such as rooms and computers. The unit is able to report a number of specific resources that would appear to be valuable such as good library facilities and a publishing unit. In addition there are specialist resources, such as a repository of life history recordings, facilities to support speech therapy and speech research, and a specialist arts

laboratory. Access to several online databases of research is also available. However, what is missing is a more holistic view on the research environment which includes the social and cultural resources needed to support productive research. This might include a vision of how to establish research groups involving all academic staff members; a vision of how to support staff in the use of more sophisticated research methods.

Development potential

Score: 3

The unit's research aspirations are high – they are to provide outstanding scientific research in Educational Studies at a regional, national and global level. In order to achieve these objectives, the unit reports development plans in a number of directions including contributions to: the development of human capital; increased international competitiveness and efficient knowledge transfer; the modernization of the research and education sector; and the development of Master's and doctoral programmes. While each of these is valuable the unit seems less clear as to how they will raise the actual quality of research itself.

In achieving its development aims, the unit faces some important challenges most particularly funding. National funding for teacher education is apparently static; in addition a substantial number of academic staff are employed as lecturers with no entitlement to funding for research. During the review period research funding itself has been very limited (23,112 €) which does not allow extending the workgroups. The institution has been mainly financed by state funding of which the majority is from basic funding and EU structural funds but a significant amount 118,503 (20%) comes also from national grant programmes. In its SWOT analysis, the institution does recognise that lack of funding is a significant limitation in developing its research potential. However, it seems that there is insufficient awareness of other factors that currently limit development e.g. the relatively weak profile in international networking, the lack of strong research groups needed to attract new people.

Another challenge is focus. At the last review concerns were expressed about the very wide range of topics that were being researched. It is clear that there has been some improvement in this regard, but the range of topics studied still remains very broad. While the unit may well wish to retain some research activity across the whole of its teaching portfolio, for its highest levels of research, it may be sensible to consider specialising in a smaller number of areas.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

Liepāja University Educational Sciences Unit offers PhD programme jointly with Rezekne Technology Academy, Daugavpils University and the University of Latvia based on their specific expertise in educational sciences or even more specifically in particular topics of teacher education; e.g. self-directed learning, teachers work in primary school or pre-school, music therapy. PhD projects in the context of pre-school education and primary education are responsibilities of Liepāja University and for this the university has good potential. However, the PhD studies would significantly benefit from stronger international collaboration in these areas as well. Collaboration between PhD students seems to be not very systematic.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The research objectives of the unit are to a large extent in line with the ICT knowledge specialization area of the Smart Specialization Strategy in that some of the research is focusing on use of educational technology in education. In addition, the unit contributes to the development of a modern education system that meets the requirements of the future job market (Priority 5) and in the development of human capital (Priority 6) through modernizing teacher education programmes according to the societal changes and needs. In much of this work the unit is seen as an important partner with the Ministry of Education and Science.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

In some areas the unit is specifically developing its research in conformity with the state scientific and technology development plans. For example, at the national level, in order to respond to the requirement of more coherent provision, Liepāja University now contributes to a joint PhD programme with several other higher education institutions. The aim is to avoid duplication to bring together limited human resources and to provide PhD students with better opportunities for networking.

However, a challenge for the institution seems to be the requirement to strengthen collaboration between the business sector and science which is currently insufficient.

Recommendations

The Panel would make the following recommendations for the further development of the institution over the next 6 years.

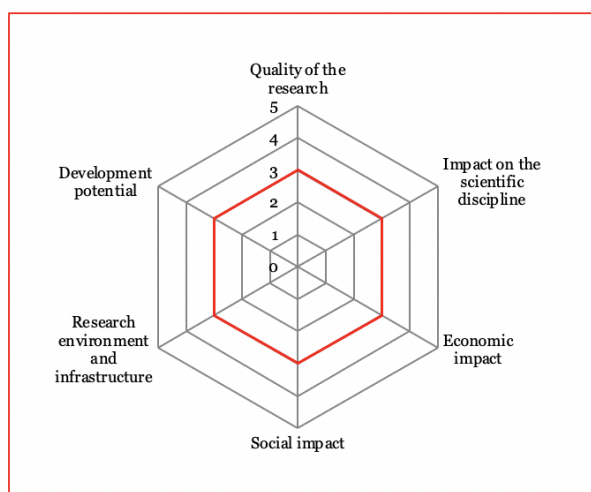
- The institution needs a more clear structure that specifies the research areas of every unit and avoids separation of some researchers. In addition, there is a need for a long-term strategic plan for building interdisciplinary research engaging all units of the Institution.
- The institution needs to strengthen its human capital. They have sufficient number of faculty members but many of them have not been involved in research and might have not up to date research skills (e.g. skills to apply contemporary research methods) and International contacts. It is recommended that the unit establishes a number small research groups around different topics so that all staff members belong to at least one group and focus on joint research and publishing first in national journals and conferences but in six-year-long perspective also in International high quality journals and conferences.
- The institution should shift its focus to be more on the quality than on the quantity of research output. In publishing less, over the next six years it should aim to have a significant number of articles in strong international journals indexed in the Web of Science. The work published should be also introduced internationally through different networks and in strong conferences where the focus is not in publishing but networking (e.g., EARLI, ECER).
- The institution needs to focus more on international collaboration with strong partners – the partners who publish every year in internationally highly valued journals and who are successful in applying for international research projects. Through active participation in international large-scale research projects the institutions' faculty members could establish quality oriented research and decrease the focus on quantity oriented approach.
- In the view of the Panel, it is too early for Liepāja University to develop its own separate PhD programme. The institution confirmed that at present they did not have plans to launch their own PhD programme. It is therefore recommended that it continues in the joint PhD programme with other higher education institutions in Latvia. However, in order to strengthen the institutions' contribution to that joint programme, there is a need to invite stronger international scholars to visit Liepāja and also to send some current faculty members to study abroad.
- Most of the current faculty members with a PhD degree would benefit from Post-Doc period or long-term (at least six months) academic leave abroad in a strong university. It is recommended that the institution provides some grants to support such long term mobility with the specific aim of its staff preparing joint publications and research project applications in collaboration with the international scholars in their host universities.

S_14 Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management, Riga Technical University

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business; Political science; other social sciences
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	29,33
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	17,05
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	46,38
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	297,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	410,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	25,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	1,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	1,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	734,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	6,40
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	15,83
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	21,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,35
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	2.892.459
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	62.364

Figure 13 Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management, Riga Technical University – Scores

Criteria	Scores
Quality of the research	3
Impact on the scientific discipline	3
Economic impact	3
Social impact	3
Research environment and infrastructure	3
Development potential	3
OVERALL SCORE	3



Overall score

Score: 3

The overall assessment of the quality of the research performance of the Faculty is based on the assessment of five sub-elements covering quality of research, impact on field of science, societal and economic impact, infrastructure and development potential. The scores are set within an international context. Having examined all the material and conducted the interviews, the panel finds that the overall score for Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management at Riga Technical University is 3. The level means that the research conducted at Faculty is of leading national level and of good international level in terms of dissemination outlets, impact the research has on the national economy and society, the research support that is available for research and the potential the Faculty has in pursuing high quality research.

The score for each of the sub-elements is given below, followed by recommendations to the Faculty that will help it raise the research quality further in the next few years.

Quality of Research

Score: 3

The panel found that the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management overall produces research of high national standard and with international recognition. Originality and significance of the research was assessed by reviewing the publications submitted to the Panel as well as on publication records provided. Equal weighting was given to fundamental and more applied research, since both have an important role.

Output is found in international journals of good quality and reputation; publishing at such levels is a common occurrence among several of the faculty. This indicates a depth of research capabilities in the Faculty that is appropriate for research at a strong national level.

Ranked outputs on WoS and SCOPUS are increasing, as are collaborations with researchers abroad. Both of these aspects are indicators that a comprehensive research strategy is in place that is targeting improved research. There are also other research outlets, such as conferences. The lower proportion of conference publication compared with those in journals suggests that there is a clear publishing strategy. However, these types of publications could be more focused on those conferences directly associated with high quality journals. In this way researcher's work would more readily align with expectations in terms of methods and topics sought by the editors. It would also raise faculty's general awareness and recognition of the research conducted by international peers.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 3

The panel found that the Faculty research has a significant impact on its relevant scientific fields. This is evident from the collaborations with international partners, attraction of grants, both national and international, and that the Faculty often act as a partner in international research projects and networks. It has a strong presence within the international academic community and a leading one nationally. The quality of the international connections and research collaborations is high, with well-established and often leading international partners.

The panel also notes that the research conducted by Faculty staff shows a broad range of expertise. The combination of different research methods, applied and fundamental research, and the importance given to the technological elements in the research supports a strong impact on the general academic discourse since it provides greater opportunity for collaboration and scientific pursuit. However, this also leads to a less clear research focus, making it more difficult to pursue leading research and thus in turn also attract high quality collaborations.

Economic impact

Score: 3

The panel found that the research conducted by the faculty has a notable economic impact. Its interactions with a broad range of both private and public organizations in terms of research impact are at the level that is expected of nationally recognised academic institutions. This occurs in a number of ways, including the education of master and doctoral students, and the development of new knowledge and understandings that has led to a significant number of spin-out companies. Various organisations have also been provided with beneficial direct support through the research activities of the Faculty staff. The Faculty is already an attractive R&D partner for non-academic organisations and attracts substantial research grants. It also has a considerable positive impact on the national economy, supported by the institution's pursuit of industry development support. Given the technological strength of RTU as a whole, and the ability of the Faculty of economics and management to access this expertise, the direct support provided to organisations is relatively small in terms of income generated. However, that could be readily increased in both scope and width. This would strengthen the economic impact of the Faculty's research further and provide direct benefit to its partnered organisations. It would also strengthen the ability of the unit to successfully apply for further research grants through a strengthened research network.

Social impact

Score: 3

The Faculty seeks to position itself as an academic and thought leader with social impact on sustainability and responsible management. This is achieved by its staff organising or participating in a variety of different seminars and events, on a wide range of issues with social implications, such as: security, youth interest in technology, and the development of start-ups. In addition, the unit's research itself helps to facilitate understanding around the implementation or application of new technologies. The Panel found evidence that Faculty's activities have direct impact on policy decisions at national and regional level, thereby having a significant indirect effect on society. This is evident from the numerous policy related activities run or participated by the Faculty staff. Overall, the panel finds that the Faculty has a social impact that is of the level expected of a recognised and socially involved academic institution.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 3

The panel found that the Faculty is collaborating on research with several other faculties, both national and in other countries. This takes the form of collaborations on research development as well as dissemination. The dissemination material and results are broadened to open access journals or similar accessible outlets. It is important that funds available for this remain and preferably are increased.

The Faculty aims to improve on the research publication quality in a considered way. In accordance with its research strategy, over the review period there has been a relative and absolute increase of publications in ranked outlets such as on SCOPUS and WoS. However, raising this to an international competitive level may require a more targeted publication strategy, and further explicit alignment with this to conferences attended, and research problems and methods selected.

Topics studied cover a range of issues, with a strong quantitative or technological element. There is access to relevant databases and materials needed for research, and there is an expressed focus on ensuring that the necessary software and hardware is available to support quality research.

Faculty have systematic access to training and industry interaction. Technical staff (4) are available. Junior research roles and inclusion of international researchers have been increased, which provides opportunity for further research.

Development potential

Score: 3

The panel found that the Faculty has a clear and ambitious strategic vision, and is implementing systematic support to achieve it, including staff training, availability of technical resources, and collaborative research support. The Faculty's SWOT analysis identified relevant conditions, with possible reductions of public funding being the key threat.

The research strategy covers several actions to support a high quality of research. However, to elevate the research to an even higher level may require a more specific strategy, i.e. pre-screening outlets, conferences and collaborations. There are several collaborations with international projects and involvement in international networks in all sub-fields of the institution. Grants are won on both national and international level, but the Faculty is primarily a collaborator and not a leading partner in them. This is not necessarily a problem, since it helps build the Faculty's capabilities and reputation, which in turn over time should improve its ability to both win and lead international research projects. Note that this is in practice contingent on having recognised areas of expertise, so an explicit and narrow focus beyond what is provided in the Faculty's research strategy may be necessary.

The average faculty age is being reduced through new hires, and PhDs being admitted, some of whom are international. This fits with the Faculty's long term strategy. However, it is not evident how high quality recruits will be attracted or kept, given increased international competition for suitable candidates. This also applies to hiring strong PhD or post-doc researchers, which is critical for the Faculty to achieve its research ambition. Strong measures such as dedicated time slots for research, automatic, if minor, grants for research active staff may be needed. There is an ongoing intent to increase the internationalization of both faculty and research students, although numbers are still relatively small. This must be resolved, since closer connection scientifically to the international community is a prerequisite for conducting research that is both relevant and publishable in an international context.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The panel found that the Faculty has the necessary resources, both in terms of infrastructure and of staff capabilities to offer doctoral studies. The panel also found that the existing doctoral programme can readily be increased. This may be achieved partly through the organic growth of the existing doctoral programme intake, and partly through possible cross-sharing with other faculties of RTU or with other universities. Given the recognition of the Faculty and RTU as a whole, this may even be with collaborators abroad. Constraining conditions include a lack of existing dedicated funding. It is also important that required doctoral courses are made available to any expansion of the program numbers.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The panel found that the Faculty's research strategy and the conducted research is well aligned with the Smart Specialisation Strategy, with a strong emphasis on technology and its use. In particular the research covers Latvia's RIS3 in Information and communication technologies (ICT), and smart materials, technologies and engineering systems, and to a lesser degree, biomedicine, medical technologies, bio-pharmacy and biotechnologies. The objectives and scope of both fundamental and applied research in the relevant areas and the development priorities set makes the institution highly aligned with the Strategy. Importantly, the institution is well placed to continue to advance in the relevant areas, and further support the Smart Specialization Strategy.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The Faculty clearly contributes to the objectives of scientific and technological development as well as for education and innovation development as defined in the key Latvian policy documents. It conducts nationally leading quality research which supports social and economic development, research and innovation in Latvia. It is also actively bridging the technology development and practical application divide by its research itself and the involvement sought with external stakeholders. The faculty collaborates extensively with universities and other research institutes both nationally and internationally. It trains students at all levels and supports the development of human capital. It provides research opportunities and an environment that enhances the training and support for young researchers and established staff alike.

The Latvian policies on development seek to ensure the national social sciences strive towards higher international competitiveness. The panel found that while the Faculty is contributing to this goal at a high national level, it has yet to reach an international competitive level. In the Panel's view, this is achievable given the Faculty's current research performance and trajectory during the evaluation period. However, it will require a dedicated research strategy, with resources and activities closely aligned. Links with foreign collaborators, public stakeholders and even own technology-oriented faculties within RTU should be considered for such a research drive.

Recommendations

The panel has made several recommendations to the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management suitable for implementation and adoption within the next six years. Note that the current performance at the Faculty is at a high level across the various aspects that the panel considered. The recommendations are designed to help the faculty raise their research quality even further, in a systematic and structured way. This has the benefit of being long lasting and not based on the performance of a few individuals or single successful research projects.

The recommendations are as follows:

- To raise the research outlet quality to a higher level, it is necessary to shift from quantity to quality in the research approach and pursuit. Steps to accomplish this quality focused research strategy must cover all research steps. This involves a research strategy with explicit targeting of selected journals, and aligning the conducted research accordingly in terms of methods chosen, type of data collected and type of analysis.
- In providing faculty support, expectations on performance and available support must be clarified, and equally allocated.
- In terms of research leadership, faculty support can be strengthened through systematic knowledge sharing of successful research, ensuring that new or less experienced research active staff is given the tools and understandings needed to raise their research quality and output.
- Work conditions should be reviewed so that they can better support research endeavors through teaching-free time periods, such as periodic sabbaticals dedicated to research.
- The Faculty is already a participant in a range of international research collaborations. However, at present it is not apparent in which areas the Faculty had, or sought to have, a competitive advantage that would make it a stronger collaborative partner for international research collaborations. For its next stage of development, the Faculty should seek to establish specific areas of excellence that will attract external collaborators and funding opportunities.
- Funding to date has largely been focused on collaborative research projects funded by national and international research funding bodies. The Panel recommends that efforts should now be made to broaden that funding base, including seeking more funding from

companies. This may initially be narrow in scope to solve organisation specific issues, but is a good way of broadening external support for further public research grant applications.

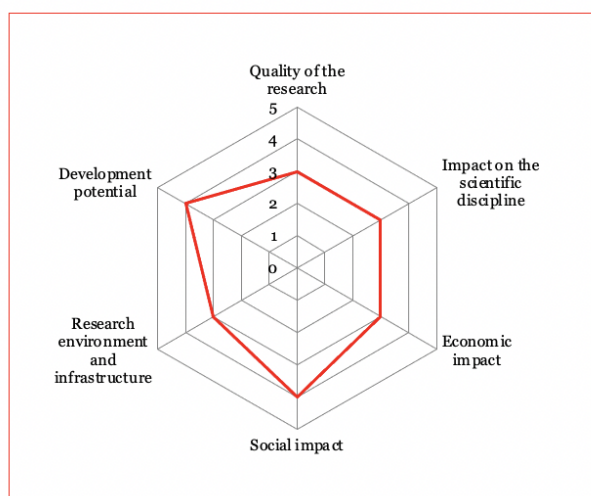
- The Faculty has strong access to highly technical scientific research, which is underutilized in the current research outputs. There is ample opportunity to strengthen the technical component in the pursued research collaborations and funding efforts to thereby be in a stronger competitive position to other potential funding applicants. This applies equally to national and international research grant or collaboration seeking.
- The doctoral program may be strengthened through use of the existing and established collaborative partners abroad, through visiting study schemes for a year or a semester.

S_15 Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Social Sciences

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business; Educational sciences; Sociology; Social and economic geography
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	30,33
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	12,61
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	42,94
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	412
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	332
Monographs in period 2013-2018	15
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	6
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	765
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	9,59
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	17,82
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	31
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,72
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	419104
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	97622

Figure 14 Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Social Sciences, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies – Scores

Criteria	Scores
Quality of the research	3
Impact on the scientific discipline	3
Economic impact	3
Social impact	4
Research environment and infrastructure	3
Development potential	4
OVERALL SCORE	3



The social science unit at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is organized into three teams that work horizontally across other faculties at the university: Sustainable bioeconomy, Sustainable and smart territorial development, and Competitiveness of business and sustainable development of society. The Faculty of Economics and Social Development was formed in 2013, but it is not entirely clear for how long the three-team structure has been in place. This unit is considered a solid good performer across most dimensions. There is a particularly ambitious mission to make a social impact that is very good. The panel believes that the unit has the potential to achieve an excellent level of scientific quality and influence and to become a highly regarded partner in international collaboration and research networks on sustainable development.

Overall score

Score: 3

The overall score for the Social Sciences unit at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is 3, indicating a good level of research. The Panel has not scored any of the assessed dimensions below this grade; however, two dimensions do stand in a stronger light. The panel believes that the social impact of this unit is very good. Moreover, the Panel was impressed both by the strong development of this unit over the past period, and by the dedicated work on establishing an ambitious strategy. In that light, the development potential of this unit is considered to be very good.

Quality of Research

Score: 3

This is one of the bigger social science units covered by the assessment with about 30 FTE academic personnel and 13 FTE research personnel. Over the past five years the unit has increased its research funding considerably to about 100k annually. The unit receives little basic funding for research, and depends on external competitive funding that makes up 86 percent of the total research budget. The main sources are EU structural funds, Erasmus programme, and national research programmes. The unit contributed 412 Scopus/WoS articles over the period, which is second only to the significantly larger social science unit at University of Latvia. Over half of the research papers are WoS/Scopus listed, and in national comparison the WoS/Scopus output per researcher is good (9.6, which puts the unit in a distinct national top-5 group among social science units). Some of the most important papers have been published in top journals. The unit has a strong focus on applied research aligning closely with national research policy goals. Four of the submitted papers target highly relevant issues related to environmental sustainability. The number of completed PhDs over the period is 31, which is on par with the second largest player, social science at Riga Stradins University (36), but still far below University of Latvia (229). The number of PhDs per researcher was 0.72 (rank 2/3). Doctoral students' international collaboration and exchange is encouraged. The research by the institution possesses a good standard of quality in terms of originality and importance.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 3

The unit participated in two FP7, one ERA-NET and two H2020 projects over the period, and also participated in international projects on tourism. Research output is published by internationally recognized publishers and journals, and researchers present at international conferences. The unit publishes about half of its output in WoS/Scopus listed journals, and intends to further increase that share. Some of these journals are top journals in their field. The citation impact is limited at an average of 3.6 citations in Web of Science listed journals (compared to 3.17 in the more inclusive Scopus), and below the global field weighted mean citation (0.64), suggesting limited international research impact, also in national comparison. It is perhaps noteworthy that while all submitted papers deal with issues of high policy relevance, only a few draw on original

empirical data collection. The theoretically most sophisticated paper is a review paper in linguistics. While the unit is a recognized and important participant in international research projects, the publication impact on the international research field is limited. Incoming and outgoing international research visits are rather scarce. Overall the unit is a respected and recognized research unit, also internationally.

Economic impact

Score: 3

The economic impact of this unit is good, and is at a level that can be expected of recognised institutions. Researchers are represented on scientific advisory boards of business companies and contribute to innovations and the development of industry solutions, claiming to be "the main promoter and implementer of the knowledge-intensive bioeconomy in Latvia". While the panel cannot verify this statement, the unit undeniably has an impact on public policy especially related to bioeconomy. This unit is one of the few (only three) social science units with registered Latvian patents (6).

Social impact

Score: 4

There are several examples of collaboration and contractual research endeavors with companies and municipalities on highly relevant, contemporary issues such as sustainability, bioeconomy, and economic development. The stakeholders interviewed by the panel were full of praise for the contributions of LLU.

The unit is also an active participant in communication and interaction with the public. It appears that this interaction is highly appreciated and well recognized. There is a very active dissemination of knowledge through annual seminars (part of the action plan), exhibitions and summer schools. There is also cooperation with non-governmental organisations in the dissemination and communication of project results with the public, as well as participation in boards of non-governmental organisations and companies. The unit also appears to be very active in diffusion popular science in various media and advisory boards. In addition, interaction between researchers and students is also well-organized.

Overall, the Panel believes that the social impact of LLU is very good. Its interactions with the public (sector) stand out in terms of their extensive and dynamic nature.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 3

A substantial part of the budget of LLU is allocated to infrastructure and this mirrors an ambition to provide access to all the necessary research infrastructure, and making it one of the strengths of the LLU. The social science unit has access to the necessary library, IT, and software facilities. A new plan foresees more effective use of existing infrastructure, equipment and facilities, to replace outdated information technology systems and equipment with new one, to improve energy efficiency and functionality of the premises. Still, the self assessment report notes that even though the situation has greatly improved over the past years, the situation is still lacking in comparison with universities in (Western) Europe. The Panel concludes that the unit is able to provide a good research environment, comparable with recognised academic institutions in the discipline.

Development potential

Score: 4

The management of the University is active and strong. The University has a strategic plan and action plans for the period 2015-2020, and a new plan is in the making. It is clear that the university and unit have taken a range of measures over the past 5 years to consolidate and

strengthen its capacity. The plans aim at high-quality research. Though specific steps to achieve this are not elaborated. The proportion of young scientists has increased and a doctoral programme is up and running. An incentive system for research accomplishments seems to be stimulating research performance. However, the Panel notes that in the long run financial incentives cannot substitute for career incentives and personal interests as proven drivers of good research.

International collaborations are established. Substantial investments in infrastructure have been done and are foreseen. A substantial part of research funding is competitive research projects funding. Being a social science unit in a technical university in itself offers an interesting potential that the university appears to take full advantage of. If that same devotion is upheld over the coming 5 years, the development potential is great. While much is to be applauded, the panel wishes to point at the risk of reducing the social sciences to a support activity only. With high dependence on external policy-driven research funding, and a horizontal and multi- and transdisciplinary research organization there is limited room to develop fundamental research and to explore new scientific approaches and methods. It is therefore particularly welcome that the unit has recognized the need to develop its basic research capacity.

Overall, the Panel is of the opinion that LLU has the potential to become a strong international player. It is expected that over the next 5-10 years it will achieve an excellent level of scientific quality and influence and a highly regarded partner in international collaboration projects and networks.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The unit has the proven capacity to offer doctoral education, and both researchers and doctoral students appear to be strongly committed to fully exploit the potential of the current doctoral programme in agrarian and regional economics. Indeed, the focus on sustainability and the strong multidisciplinary embeddedness of social science research at this unit provides an attractive niche in the higher education market. Graduating doctoral students from this unit are likely to be equally attractive to the private and public sector. In the period 2015-18 this unit graduated between 2 and 4 PhDs per year. The students interviewed by the panel were very satisfied with the programme and the supervision. With further funding the unit would be able to train a higher number of doctoral students. The panel notes that an increased focus on basic research might be necessary to secure solid social science methodology training.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The research activity at this unit is closely aligned with the Smart Specialisation Strategy. One of the fields of Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy is bioeconomy, a theme that is at the core of LLU research at large and at this unit specifically. The SAR also indicates that LLU research aligns with the specialization area Information and Communication technologies in RIS3, however this is not as pronounced as the very strong contribution to interdisciplinary research on knowledge intensive bioeconomy in RIS3.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The research of this unit focuses on sustainable bioeconomy, regional development, and competitive and sustainable business, themes that are highly policy relevant. The research is developed within and in collaboration with international partners, and results are diffused internationally. Because of the often very practical nature of the research projects, collaboration with non-academic actors in business and municipalities is the rule rather than the exception. While the self assessment report complains that it is difficult to attract students to continue into doctoral studies, this seems only to be due to a general lack of funding in the system. The unit itself takes great care in nurturing relationships with students and seems highly capable to raise students' interest and to equip them with both the necessary skills and confidence. The panel concludes that the unit aligns particularly well with the Latvian science policy objectives on industry collaboration and internationalisation.

Recommendations

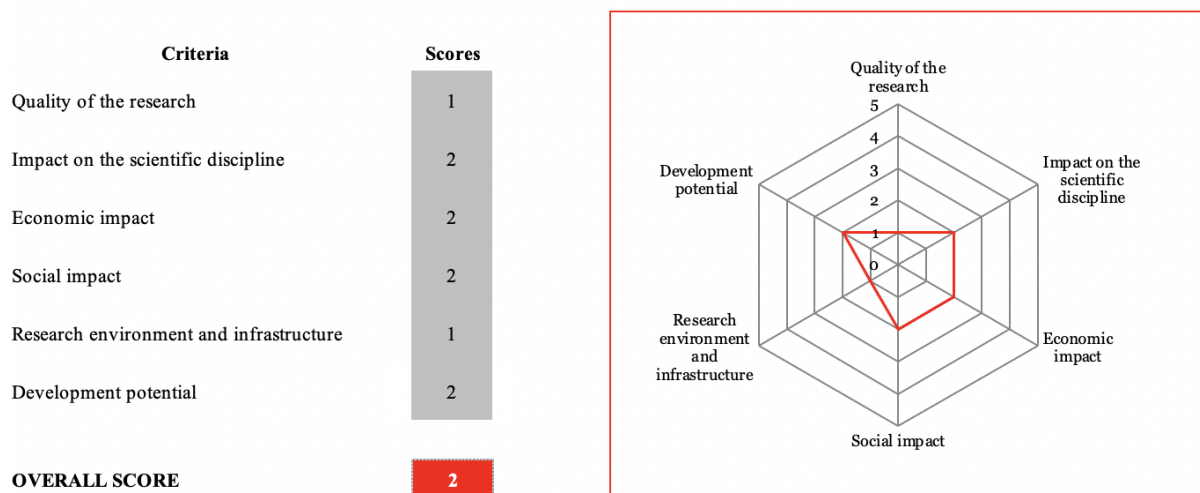
The Panel would make the following recommendations for the further development of the institution over the next 6 years. The Panel considers the objectives and policies of LLU for the coming years to be ambitious, realistic, and appropriate. The Panel supports these policies and understands that the realisation of these aims is number one priority of the management in the coming years. The Panel also suggests the unit to consider the following two additional recommendations.

- The unit should pay more attention to disciplinary aspects. The Panel understands the focus on interdisciplinarity given the structure and the research agenda of LLU. However, the Panel also believes that more attention to disciplinary aspects and disciplinary networks could be helpful to get more impactful publications and impact, as many top journals, conferences and professional organisations are (still) organised by disciplinarity. The Panel, therefore, advises the unit to aim for, and invest in “disciplinarity” in addition to the interdisciplinary orientation of the University at large.
- The unit should further develop its PhD program. First, the panel recommends that the unit secure that students receive state-of-the-art social science methods training that make them competitive in an international research landscape. Second, the panel recommends further strengthening and extending collaboration with strong disciplinary doctoral programs (in economics, information and communication, etc.) in Europe. For instance, this may include a mandatory international internship of several months for PhD students, advanced disciplinary courses, etc.

S_16 Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit, Liepāja University

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Economics and business
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	9,35
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	6,17
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	15,52
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	33,00
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	46,00
Monographs in period 2013-2018	5,00
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	84,00
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	2,13
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	5,41
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	1,00
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	0,06
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	315.108
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	20.303

Figure 15 Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit, Liepāja University – Scores



Overall score

Score: 2

The overall assessment of the quality of the research performance of the Liepaja University Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit is based on the assessment of five sub-elements covering quality of research, impact on field of science, societal and economic impact, infrastructure and development potential. The scores are set within an international context. Having examined all the material and conducted the interviews, the panel finds that the overall score for Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit at Liepāja University is adequate in terms of conducted research and its dissemination, the impact the research has on the national economy and society, the research support that is available for research, and the potential the unit staff has in pursuing high quality research. The given score for each of the sub-elements is given below, followed by feasible recommendations for the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit for it to raise the research quality further in the next few years.

Quality of Research

Score: 1

The panel found that the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit conducts research whose quality is poor. Originality and significance of the research was assessed through provided academic outputs as well as on publication records provided. The research is primarily published nationally, with limited international scientific association in terms of the research itself and the dissemination outlets chosen. The unit's research is also mainly focused on local and regional conditions. This is in itself not a problem since it may still address important problems and issues, but it does limit the potential scope of the research by not anchoring it to the greater scientific community. The panel notes that the output has remained steady over the last five years, with a slight increase in outputs not ranked in WoS or SCOPUS and a steady output for those that are ranked in them. Note that the number of journal articles not listed in WoS or SCOPUS are quite considerable, so that research productivity may be higher than only covering given listings would indicate. This is indicative of a research strategy in place aimed at improving the research quality, and further steps should be taken to ensure that this trend is strengthened and that select journals are both ranked and of high quality.

The listed journal articles cover a broad range of issues, without a notable particular focus on a specific field. The broadness may be indicative of staff interests or opportunistic research rather than set research agenda. Also, conference attendance of the Unit's academic staff has been limited over the covered time period. Given the existing close association between conferences and select academic journals, an explicit strategy for conference and journal selection would be beneficial for an improved publication record. The panel also noted that several textbooks have been written by unit staff, which is another measure of research quality. Of note is that authorship of many of the listed published papers are accredited to a handful of people. A broadening of the ability to conduct quality research is desirable for the unit's ability to conduct high level research over time, so such pursuit should be incorporated to the unit's research strategy.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 2

For the impact on science within the scientific field, the panel found that the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit's research has had limited impact on the science fields. This is evident from the limited levels of collaborations with international partners, attraction of grants, both national and international, and staff collaborations with international research projects. Research contribution to the science fields, as evident by selected journal publications and citations, is limited, and in particular for an international setting. The research conducted at the

Unit is currently occupying a stable but nationally and regionally focused position in the scientific community. However, the panel does note that this has changed in the last years, with the research evolving towards a more international readership and impact on the academic community. There is a positive trajectory that should be continued.

Economic impact

Score: 2

The panel found that the research conducted by the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit has an adequate economic impact. Its interactions with a broad range of both private and public organizations in terms of research impact are at the level that is adequate of a recognised academic institution. The Unit has some limited involvement with non-academic institutions on a national level. However, it is noted by the panel that on a regional basis, the Unit has a higher degree of interaction with non-academic organisations, both private and public. It is also noted that the research conducted at the Unit is important for the regional economy and its interactions with the private and public sector are at a level that is expected of recognised regional academic institutions. For national level cooperation the interaction is more limited with both private and public actors. This includes interaction in terms of providing support or expertise as well as policy assessments. So there is opportunity for the Unit to leverage its existing capabilities on regional level to a broader arena, which in turn will generate a greater economic benefit from the Unit's research activities. It will also strengthen the ability to successfully apply for further research grants through the more evolved research network.

Social impact

Score: 2

The panel found that the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit has a social impact that is of the level adequate of a recognised and socially involved academic institution. The panel also noted that at a regional and community level the Unit has a significant degree of involvement with non-academic entities and both directly and indirectly promotes the development or regional issues. Social impact on a national level is more limited, as primarily indirect through involvement in supporting a few key businesses that in turn have significant social impact on the region. There is opportunity to leverage the expertise and relations at regional level to both national and international level, given that the Unit strategy identifies the key capabilities and focus areas that have a broader social significance and exploits them.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 1

For the research environment, the panel found that the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit is still in the process of creating a leading nationally and internationally comparable research environment. There is access to datasets and research journals, and technical support staff available. Staff are allocated adequate research time, but this is contingent on obtaining research funding. So, long term research viability is contingent on attracting adequate research funding. This has been pursued at regional level, with the research aligned with the regional demands and needs. One element in the planned research strategy is to attract more dedicated research staff, including gaining access to PhD students from other programs for research collaborations. Having its own research students is advantageous but by no means a necessity for a successful research institution, but it is important to establish long term and structured research relations with programs at other institutions to ensure access to research students. It also helps in the attraction of younger researchers, which is vital for a sustainable research strategy. The panel also noted that the Unit is not set for a particular research focus or pursuit, although there has been a dual setup of faculties which narrows the scope.

Development potential

Score: 2

The panel found that the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit has potential to successfully develop its research, and the current steps to identify and set out the new research strategy are appropriate. The reflective research strategy indicates a balanced self-assessment of its position, with key limitations identified. At a regional level there are more pronounced strengths, and a route to further research development and support. The panel also noted that significant steps have been taken from previous assessments, indicating willingness and ability to adjust. The Unit still has significant steps to take to establish itself as a nationally leading academic institution in its discipline within the foreseeable future. The research quality is at the moment underdeveloped. This is partly due to a limited ability to attract high quality researchers and to establish research collaborations with leading national partners. It is not evident how high quality recruits will be attracted or kept, given increased competition for suitable candidates. Collaborations and linkages with the international scientific community and discourse are also limited. However, the existing regional expertise could be leveraged to a national level if a narrow yet explicit scope is set. So the panel finds that there is opportunity for improving the research and, importantly, increasing its applicability and impact. However, dedicated research funding is needed to support such Unit research improvement.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The panel found that the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit has the potential to offer doctoral studies. However, the necessary resources, both in terms of infrastructure and of staff capabilities to offer doctoral studies need to be in place. Constraining conditions include a lack of existing dedicated funding and the smaller staff number of available supervisors. It is also important that required doctoral courses are made readily available in-house or through collaborations with other doctoral programs. The panel does note that the close relations developed with local private and public organisations are valuable partners in research data collection and results dissemination. Hence, it is a resource readily exploitable for closer collaborations with other academic institutions that offer doctoral programs nationally or abroad. Over time, this would further develop the Unit's research program proficiency and suitability.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

The panel found that the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit's research strategy and the conducted research is not well aligned with Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy in any of the research areas (i.e. Information and communication technologies, smart materials, technologies and engineering systems, biomedicine, medical technologies, bio-pharmacy and biotechnologies). This is primarily due to the focus and expertise of the Unit staff. And that the Unit's research strategy has been more focused on supporting the local region than on the national specialisation strategy. However, there is scope for a greater alignment between the research and the RIS3 strategy. Short term the Unit can use its developed network in the region and seeks further collaborating research institutions with a more explicit technological research focus. Longer term, such research expertise can then be developed organically as staff expertise and interest follow suit.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The Latvian policies on development seek to ensure the national social sciences strive towards higher international competitiveness. The panel found that while the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit is contributing to this goal in terms of scientific and technological development as well as for education and innovation development at national level, it conducts research which supports social and economic development, research and innovation in Latvia, but primarily in a regional setting. The unit has yet to be a leading national player, or indeed reach an international competitive level. The former is achievable given the current research trajectory during the evaluation period, but it requires a dedicated research

strategy with resources and activities closely aligned that leverages the Unit's core research strengths. The Unit trains students and supports the development of human capital. It is also actively bridging the theoretical and practical application divide by the involvement sought with external stakeholders.

Recommendations

The panel has made several recommendations to the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit suitable for implementation and adoption over the next six years. The recommendations are designed to help it raise the research quality in a systematic and structured way. This has the benefit of being long lasting and not based on the performance of a few individuals or single successful research projects.

The recommendations focus on what the Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit needs to do to improve the quality of their research and its impact on the scientific field, on the economy and society. The recommendations are as follows:

- The research strategy should seek to increase collaborations and scientific involvement with companies and public organisations to increase the economic and social impact of the conducted research. This is particularly important if the regional focus is kept, to facilitate greater social and economic impact at national or indeed international level. To further increase the impact, research dissemination should also be done beyond typical results disseminations through academic conferences and journal publications. Suggested examples are setting up formal regional or national networks and run periodic dissemination events within them. This should take into account the Unit's current expertise, for instance focusing on local or community SMEs.
- In terms of research leadership, faculty support can be strengthened through systematic knowledge sharing of successful research, ensuring that new or less research active staff are given the tools and understandings needed to raise their research quality and output. Work conditions can better support research endeavours through given teaching-free time periods, such as periodic sabbaticals dedicated to research.
- The Unit has strong access to and collaborates with partners in the region. There is ample opportunity to strengthen the technical component in the pursued research collaborations and funding efforts to thereby be in a stronger competitive position to other potential funding applicants.
- The lack of a doctoral program may be strengthened through use of the existing and established collaborative partners nationally or abroad, through visiting study schemes for a year or a semester.
- To improve on the research quality, these could be a stronger focus on the conferences directly associated with high quality journals. In this way staff research would more readily align with targeted quality journals by ensuring staff awareness of suitable methods, topics sought by the editors, and more general awareness and recognition of the conducted research among international peers. Given the Unit's local and regional focus, such structured connectedness would help strengthen the ties with the international academic community needed to ensure both that the research is held at high level but that this is also disseminated to the broader academic community.

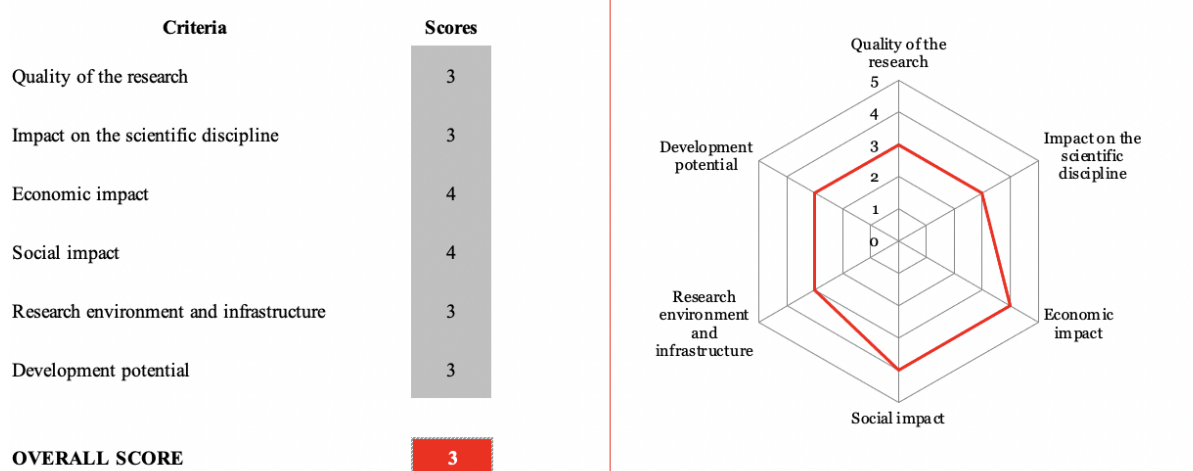
S_17 Cluster of Social Sciences, University of Latvia

Primary field of science	Social Sciences
Corresponding fields of science	Psychology, Economics and business, Educational sciences, Sociology, Law, Political Science, Social and economic geography, Media and communications
No. FTE academic personnel 2018	133
No. FTE academic research personnel 2018	63,9
Total number of FTE academic and research personnel 2018	196,9
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS in period 2013-2018	837
Articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings <u>not included</u> in WoS or SCOPUS	797
Monographs in period 2013-2018	72
Patents Latvian in period 2013-2018	0,00
Patents (Europe and international) in period 2013-2018	0,00
Total no. of self-reported outputs in period 2013-2018	1706
No. of WoS or Scopus outputs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	4,25
No. of all outputs in period 2018 per researcher in 2018	8,66
No of PhDs completed in period 2013-2018	229
No. of PhDs in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018	1,16
Total funding in period 2013 -2018 (Euros)	10472829
Total funding in period 2013-2018 per researcher in 2018 (Euros)	53189

The University of Latvia (UL) is the leading and by far the largest university in Latvia. According to UL's 2015-2020 Development Strategy "in 2020 UL is one of the top research universities in the Baltic region and holds its place among recognized European and global research and innovation centres." The UL's social science cluster (SSC) is also clearly the largest social science unit in the country. In terms of size, both the UL and the SSC thus have the potential to become not only a leading university in the Baltic States but also a recognised academic institution in the broader European context.

The main structural units of SSC are political science, sociology, media and communication based at the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS), economics and business at the Faculty of Business, Management and Economics (FBME), law at the Faculty of Law (FL), educational sciences and psychology at the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art (FEPA), and social and economic geography at the Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences (FGES) and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IPS). These structural units are currently spread out in different locations in Riga, but within a couple of years most of them will be located in a new building.

Figure 16 Cluster of Social Sciences, University of Latvia – Scores



Overall score

Score: 3

While the SSC is the dominant social science unit in Latvia, and also a solid player in the Baltic context, the panel feels that its academic performance leaves significant room for improvement. Given the large size of the SSC, the panel could not get sufficiently detailed data to be able to understand the extent to which performance varies among the disciplines. The panel also found it difficult to develop a good understanding of whether and how the various disciplines in the SSC work together. Yet, it is obvious that only a relatively small share of staff members publishes internationally, and that there is a tendency to focus on Latvian or Baltic publication outlets. The involvement of SSC in larger international research projects is also quite limited. Despite some positive developments concerning research training and incentive schemes, the SSC does not appear to have a convincing strategy for improving its position in the international academic community. It is also unclear to what extent considering the SSC as a single unit is wise. Its size is such that the FTE academic staff in this single unit is more than 40 % of the total FTE staff across the 16 units evaluated in this evaluation. Moreover, its FTE staff is spread across many diverse disciplines. It is possible therefore that an effective strategy for improving the SSC would start from considering first the specificities of its disciplines and departments.

Quality of Research

Score: 3 good

Both the UL and SSC emphasize their competition with other Baltic universities. This Baltic focus is strongly evident in the scientific output of SSC. Particularly more senior staff members publish primarily in Latvian or Baltic journals, and thematically much of the research deals with Baltic societies. The scientific output is steady, but not increasing either in terms of quality or quantity. The average annual publication level is below one peer-reviewed publication per staff member, and most of the 15 leading publications selected by the SSC did not appear in higher-ranking international journals. The self-assessment report was written at such a general level that it was difficult to identify pockets of better-performing academic disciplines, but the low number of high-quality publications and international research projects seems to suggest that few if any research groups or academic disciplines have reached the level of international excellence. On a more positive note, the SSC conducts the kind of basic research that forms the core of all academic disciplines, and this is valuable in the Latvian context where the smaller universities mainly conduct more specialized or applied research.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score: 3

The panel found it difficult to establish the exact scientific impact of the SSC in individual academic disciplines. Internationally, the overall academic impact of the SSC is limited: in addition to relatively few strong international publications, the number of major international projects SSC staff has participated in has been small and contacts with more established universities are somehow limited. Some disciplines, such as geography and earth sciences, appear more internationally oriented, while others, such as law, clearly focus more on interacting with Latvian policy-makers.

Economic impact

Score: 4

Most of the economic impact of SSC is indirect. Many lines of research, such as those focusing on the social and economic geography of Latvian regions, migration patterns, digitalisation, or behavioural economics produce knowledge that can benefit both public decision-making and companies. Regarding ties with industry, UL has a special 'effective collaboration projects' programme to foster greater researcher cooperation with companies. One recent example was the project BVEF had with Latvia's largest mobile telephone operator LMT.

Social impact

Score: 4

Certainly many if not most of the academic disciplines in the SSC have active ties to relevant stakeholders: Latvian policy-makers, non-governmental organisations, companies, or media. The staff at SSC has disseminated information about their research actively to the stakeholders and the broader public, but the impact of such activities is hard to measure. Given the strong Latvian / Baltic focus found in SSC, the research conducted at SSC has obvious societal relevance in the regional context. The self-assessment report lists several projects carried out with governmental or non-governmental actors that appear beneficial in terms of national policy-making. Of particular interest is research in the field of social and economic geography which has helped to quantify and understand Latvia's high internal and external migration rates and has linked these to policy changes concerning negative migration and demographic trends as well as administrative territorial reform.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score: 3

After the research assessment exercise conducted in 2013, UL as a whole has undertaken reforms that have the potential of improving the quality of research carried out in the SSC. Measures such as clearer career paths where promotion is based on scientific merits, financial incentives for publishing in top journals, and administrative support for research funding applications should all prove beneficial if implemented efficiently. It was, however, unclear how effectively these mechanisms work in practice and whether they are equally used in all departments of the SSC. However, the uncertainty of funding remains a major challenge, both regarding money from the national budget and from external sources such as the European Union. Ambitious plans require proper resources. It is also unclear whether the research environment varies between the individual 'departments' both in terms of resources and work culture. The self-assessment report indicated plans for 'cross-disciplinary meetings' and 'developing interdisciplinary research projects'. The online 'visit' suggested that interdisciplinary collaboration was starting to take place, although there is significant space for improvement.

Development potential

Score: 3

The SSC and the whole UL aim higher, and the various reforms, if implemented correctly with adequate resources, should make the university a more attractive place for both staff and students. At the same time the SSC suffers from the same problems as universities across Central and Eastern Europe: funding can fluctuate, pay levels remain low, and there is uncertainty about basic work conditions. Furthermore, the current environment favours academic disciplines more geared towards innovations and economic profit, and this may not benefit SSC. Unfortunately neither the self-assessment report nor the online visit produced any real evidence of forward-looking scenarios – either at the level of the SSC or the individual disciplines. One option, already brought up in the 2013 research assessment exercise, would be to invest in those disciplines within the SSC that have a proven track record of higher academic performance. This option would require first to focus on the specific disciplines and departments within the SSC instead of starting from the SSC as if it is a unitary body. Stronger cross-disciplinary collaboration between the various disciplines' could also help in fostering a more internationally-oriented, research-friendly climate.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The self-assessment report notes a significant drop in doctoral students due to ending of external funding through the European Social Fund. Funding appears to be again a major issue and there are only a limited number of full-time funded positions to doctoral students. The report also mentions the development of five 'doctoral schools', and considering the breadth of disciplines within the SSC and the number of doctoral students, there should be demand for joint doctoral studies courses - such as on methods, scientific writing, academic publishing etc. On a more positive note, the UL and SSC have opened up positions for post-doctoral researchers and there is funding available for doctoral students to attend international conferences.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy

Several disciplines within the SSC contribute to the Smart Specialization Strategy. These include education, psychology, economics, sociology and economic geography. However, much of the Strategy lies outside the core areas of SSC research, and hence it is understandable that the direct links to the Strategy are quite limited. A notable, more direct contribution is FBME's Management and Entrepreneurship Training Centre which disseminates research results in its training activities while PEDC (Forum for Productivity, Efficiency, Development and Competitiveness of Latvia) promotes productivity, competitiveness and research-based economic policy. FEPA in turn contributes to knowledge-based decision-making in public administration through its research agenda, particularly recent new research on technology-enhanced learning.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The research conducted in SSC has various links to the national objectives in science, technology, and education and innovation development policy. For example, the Institute of Education Research (IER) conducts research projects with the Ministry of Education and Science and researchers collaborate with the National Centre for Education (NCE); psychology researchers have made significant contributions in the field of traffic safety; law scholars are routinely consulted by the government and the parliament; FBME staff are experts on labour market, migration, pension, and loan policies; and political scientists advise the Foreign and Defence Ministries.

Recommendations

SSC is the leading academic institution in Latvia and a strong player in the Baltic context, but the main challenge is to improve the overall academic standing of the SSC. Currently the main

problem seems to be the discrepancy between quantity and quality: SSC brings together a large number of doctoral students, researchers and professors, but the research environment is not conducive to attaining higher levels of performance. In fact, the statistics found in the self-assessment report show little if any progress in terms of publication output, externally funded research projects, or awarded doctoral degrees. Before outlining the recommendations, it must be emphasized that the size of the unit made it difficult to identify variation between the academic disciplines. It is unclear whether the SSC sees itself as a single unit and it would be wise to perform similar evaluations at the level of individual disciplines or departments.

- Establish clear leadership structures. Currently the SSC is spread out across Riga, but most of the disciplines will soon be located under the same roof. At that point the SSC should redesign its organisation and leadership structures. Currently it seems that each discipline or faculty largely operates as an independent unit, and this may hinder academic development in units with weaker international presence. In tandem with interdisciplinarity, SSC should consider appointing a small team composed of more internationally oriented, active scholars responsible for overseeing the implementation of the unit's research strategy. Such a team, backed with administrative resources, would also monitor the work of the interdisciplinary research groups, organise researcher training and joint research seminars, and provide help with funding applications.
- Find a balance between cross-disciplinary research and individual academic disciplines. SSC and the UL at large should engage in a critical reflection of the research environment. Interdisciplinary research groups should be established as a way of facilitating more innovative and larger research projects. Interdisciplinarity should also be beneficial in terms of applying for external funding and making the SSC more attractive as a partner in international projects. However, this should not happen at the expense of the individual disciplines as undermining their position would also undermine the ability of the SSC to establish successful cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- Invest in career paths and researcher training. The university has implemented some good incentive mechanisms, for example financial rewards for international publications. This is a step in the right direction, but more could be done to achieve a higher level of academic performance. Career advancement should be based on a transparent system where promotion is primarily based on scientific merits as opposed to other merits such as teaching or administrative experience. This would also be a strong signal for younger scholars, emphasizing the importance of internationally recognised research. Regarding researcher training, methods and academic writing in English are examples of joint doctoral studies courses that could be offered at the SSC level. Doctoral schools should have a strong interdisciplinary element. Younger scholars should be included in research groups that are ideally led by SSC scholars with an international publication profile. Crucially, younger scholars should not be encouraged to publish in low-ranking Latvian journals but rather in good international journals.
- Turn the SSC into a more attractive international partner. A clear challenge for SSC is becoming more involved in larger international projects. The partner universities listed in the self-assessment report are primarily institutions with a similar or lower academic reputation. These indicate that the SSC is not a sought-after partner in major funding applications or in cross-national research projects. Investing in interdisciplinary research teams should facilitate stronger international networking. Another recommendation would be to reserve annually funds for inviting select foreign scholars to SSC for research visits. Such visits could result in more long-term collaborative arrangements and increase the visibility of SSC among the international social science community.

- Safeguard basic research. For a small country, Latvia has a large number of universities and research institutes, most of which focus more on applied research and topical, specialized themes such as digitalization and sustainability. Large in size and based in Riga, the SSC has strong links with ministries, non-governmental organisations, companies, and the media. While these contacts should be nourished, SSC should not do it at the expense of basic academic research. Much of the research and teaching at SSC deals with core questions in economics, psychology, geography, law, political science etc., and such basic research forms the foundation of all successful larger academic departments and cross-disciplinary research projects while benefiting also the society at large through generating in-depth understanding of the key questions facing Latvia.

3 Summary of findings across the set of institutional evaluations

3.1 The organisation of the field

Overall, the picture of Social Sciences in Latvia presented during the review is significantly different from that of 2013. In the last Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) there were 30 units submitted for evaluation; in the current review there were 16. Some institutions remain the same but with different faculties/departments grouped together for assessment purposes. The most significant example here is the *University of Latvia Cluster of Social Sciences* which was returned as a single unit on this occasion compared with 6 separate units in 2013. Some institutions remained largely the same, for example Riga Stradins University, Platform for Social Sciences. Others appear to have been entered for the first time, for example Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences; while yet others appear to have changed the panel they are covered in - for example the *National Library of Latvia*. Given this very considerable change, it is challenging to assess how some institutions and indeed how the field as a whole has changed over the review period.

One particular notable feature of the sector is that the size of the different units varies substantially. One institution, *University of Latvia Cluster of Social Sciences*, was very large; it made a return reporting 197 FTE academic and research staff in 2018. This figure represents approximately 40% of all social science researchers in Latvia. While there were 8 mid-sized institutions – with between 11 and 50 academic and research staff – there were also a significant number of very small institutions, seven reporting less than 10 FTE academic and research staff including two reporting less than 5. As a result of this very significant variation, cross institutional comparisons are difficult to make.

Table 1 Numbers of FTE academic and research staff employed in research units in 2018

FTE Academic and Research staff 2018	Numbers of institutions
Less than 5	2
6 - 10	5
11- 20	3
21- 30	2
31 – 40	0
40 – 50	3
50 +	1

3.2 The quality of research in the field as a whole

Of the 16 institutions reviewed, a large majority was rated as either a 3 or a 2 – satisfactory or good national players. No research unit was judged to be either 4 or a 5. Eight units were rated as a 3, six were a 2, one was a 1 and one was judged not to be a research institution and was therefore not scored. There was therefore significant 'bunching' of the overall scores with the largest number being rated 3 – strong national players. However more detailed analysis shows that some 3s and 2s had elements of their work that was more highly rated (they were in effect a high 3 or high 2s) while others showed a weaker profile.

If one analyses the data in terms of FTE academic and research staff employed in these different units, then a somewhat more positive national picture emerges. In 2018, approximately 80% of all returned staff were employed in institutions judged to be level 3 – strong national players with some international recognition.

Comparison with the last RAE undertaken in 2013 suggests that at an institutional level, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of research in Social Science during the review period. In 2013, of the 30 units reviewed, 8 were assessed as three, 15 as two and 5 as one. Two further units were not considered to be proper research units and were therefore excluded from the review process. Ratings of social science research units in 2013 and 2018 are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 RAE ratings of social science research units in 2013 and 2018

Ratings	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2018 Numbers of units	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	6 (37%)	8 (50%)	0	0	16
2013 Numbers of units	2 (6%)	5 (16%)	15 (50%)	8 (26%)	0	0	30

Overall, this would suggest that the quality of social science research in Latvia has improved considerably over the last review period with the overwhelming majority of institutions now judged to be performing at a good national level.

Finally, bringing the issues of size and quality together it is noteworthy that all but one of the larger institutions was graded 3. Most larger institutions had a relatively broad portfolio of research. At the other end of the scale, most of the 8 lower scoring institutions (those rated 2 or less) were small with the majority of them undertaking research on some aspect of business and management.

More detailed summaries of the different research institutions are presented below.

3.3 Research quality in individual institutions

Institutions scored as 3

Institutions assessed as 3 are seen as strong national players with some international recognition.

S4 Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Regional Studies. This is small, regionally strong unit (6.36 FTE) with a good research profile. The unit is in two parts, bringing together research that is focused on the Latgalian Language and research concerned with personality and socialisation. It is financially successful with a good number of publications in SCOPUS and WoS outlets, however its publication profile in high quality international journals is more limited. While its publications in the field of the Latgalian language are strong, others are more variable. It has a strong record in terms of impact both socially and economically and is judged as having good development potential.

S8 Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences. This medium sized unit (24.9 FTE) has a good level of research despite the fact that it has limited though increasing basic funding for research. It conducts research important for the economy, including studies on tourism, marine diversity, and virtual reality technologies. The quality and quantity of the publications are good and the number of peer reviewed articles shows the University has some impact on the field of science, although publications in top journals are missing. The requirement to apply for external project funding means that much of the research conducted is strongly applied in nature. In the view of the Panel, the unit has developed a strong research infrastructure and has a good development potential.

S9. Foundation "Baltic Studies Centre. This very small research institute (4 FTE) is entirely dependent on external project funding, almost exclusively from the EU. The research is driven

by policy relevance and the unit's focus of expertise is in food system and food supply chain analysis, food and nutrition security, agricultural knowledge and innovation systems and rural development. The research output is consistently high, and while much of the unit's research is applied in nature, publications also make a significant contribution to basic science in the field. Overall, the Panel judged that the quality of this unit's outputs were probably the most impressive among Latvian social science units. The economic and social impact of the unit's research is also very strong. At the same time however, the Panel judged the research environment to be poor; it was particularly concerned about the unit's small size and how this might affect its future sustainability and development.

S10 Riga Stradins University, Platform of Social Sciences. This small research unit (10.9 FTE) is a strong national player with some international recognition. Its vision is to become a leading education and research centre in Eurasian regional studies of International Relations and Strategic Communication. It has a strong economic impact and a reasonable quantity of outputs and doctoral completions. However, the Panel judged the quality and impact of the research to be more limited, compared with some of the other institutions reviewed. There are also concerns about the sustainability of the research organisational structure. The panel was of the opinion that a strong vision and strong management toward strategic specialisation priorities are necessary to keep up with international and national developments.

S12 Daugavpils University research programme "Educational sciences, psychology, economy, and law". This is a large social science research unit (43.85 FTE) linking together a range of different departments and research centres within Daugavpils University. These include: pedagogy, sport, economics and sociology, social psychology, law, sustainable education and social research. Academic staff members pursue and publish research in their own disciplinary field, but the unit also tries to foster interdisciplinary research and publications. Given the complexity and the scope of the unit's research, the Panel found it difficult to fully understand specific aspects of each discipline. However, there was evidence of growing interdisciplinary work and integrative projects bringing together academic staff from different disciplines. There was also evidence of a growing trend towards publishing internationally. The research output has been increasingly published in journals recognized in international databases such as SCOPUS. However, a substantial portion of these journals are local or regional (Latvian or Baltic) publication outlets which suggests that there is room for improvement in terms of both the quality and the quantity of the research output.

S14 Riga Technical University Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management. This relatively large research unit (46.38 FTE staff) undertakes research in the fields of engineering economics, management engineering, security, innovation and technology transfer. The panel found that overall it produces research of a high national standard with sound international recognition. It also has good social and economic impact. Ranked outputs on WoS and SCOPUS are increasing, as are collaborations with researchers abroad. Both of these aspects are indicators that a comprehensive and ambitious research strategy is in place which is aimed at positioning the unit as an academic and thought leader in the fields of sustainability and responsible management.

S15 Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Social Sciences. This is another relatively large research unit (42.94 FTE). It is organized into three teams that work horizontally across other faculties at the university. These are: sustainable bioeconomy, sustainable and smart territorial development, and business and sustainable development of society. The unit receives little basic funding for research, and depends on external competitive funding that makes up 86 percent of the total research budget. Over the past five years the unit has increased that research funding considerably to about E100k annually; the main sources are EU structural funds. This unit is considered a solid good performer across most dimensions but it is particularly strong in terms of its social impact. The unit has made considerable strides to

increase the quality of its research over the assessment period and now has an ambitious but realistic strategy for further development. In that light, the development potential of this unit is considered to be very good.

S17 University of Latvia, Cluster of Social Sciences. This unit, with 196.9 FTE academic and research staff, is by far the largest grouping of social scientists in Latvia representing over 40% of the total. The unit brings together researchers based in a range of different university faculties and research institutes across the following fields: Psychology, Economics and business, Educational sciences, Sociology, Law, Political Science, Social and economic geography, Media and communications. Given the large size of unit, the panel found it difficult to establish clear variation between the academic disciplines. The panel also found it difficult to develop a good understanding of whether and how the various disciplines work together. The Panel did find examples of valuable work that was internationally recognised – for example research in the field of social and economic geography which is important for understanding Latvia's high internal and external migration rates and how they shape the country's future; and interdisciplinary research by educational sciences and psychology, notably on technology enhanced learning. However, it was also evident that at present only a relatively small percentage of staff members publish internationally, and that there is a tendency to focus on Latvian or Baltic publication outlets. The involvement of staff in larger international research projects is currently quite limited. Despite some positive developments concerning research training and incentive schemes, the unit does not appear to have a convincing strategy for improving its position in the international academic community. It is also unclear to what extent considering the Cluster as a single unit is wise or should be the basis for the future of academic development of Social Sciences in this university.

Institutions scored as 2

Institutions assessed at this level are seen as satisfactory national players

S1 The BA School of Business and Finance. The BA School of Business and Finance (BASBF) was established by the Bank of Latvia in 1992. Currently the school has 1400 students and 43 academic staff members. The research staff is small with 6.38 FTE academic and 2.00 FTE research personnel. The school has a firm national education position in business management and finance, conducts student-related, applied research for the industry, and is well-connected to other institutions. The joint doctoral programme with RISEBA is a strong asset. Most studies of BASBF are led by students and have an applied character. The unit produces a reasonable number of publications. The quality of the unit's research is adequate, but does not excel. Basic research is underdeveloped; papers with international impact, published in high quality journals are limited. BASBF undertakes few international activities and its international status and international research impact is therefore limited.

S2 RISEBA Faculty of Business and Economy, RISEBA University of Business, Arts and Technology
This is a small research unit with 8.60 FTE staff based in a private self-financing university. It has two main research directions: management, administration and real estate management and economics. At present, most of the research output is local in nature and therefore attracts little international attention. The general publishing strategy appears to aim at academic journals at the lower end of the scholarly status spectrum and proceedings of less well-known international conferences. Technically the research infrastructure is adequate, however the unit is too small to provide a supportive team-based research environment that would be attractive internationally. The economic and social impact of the unit's research is one of the stronger aspects of the research undertaken at this institution.

S5 Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Business and Social Processes. This is a relatively small unit of 13.60 FTE staff. Their research draws on a range of academic

disciplines including: management, administration and real estate management, economics, law, internal security and civil defence. Overall, the research quality is satisfactory for an institution that operates primarily within a domestic environment; however, at present their work attracts little international attention. The general publishing strategy appears to aim at academic journals at the lower end of the scholarly status spectrum and proceedings of less well-known regional conferences.

S11 National Defence Academy of Latvia, Centre for Security and Strategic Research (CSSR). This is a very small unit (7.7FTE) carrying out research on narrow, yet societally highly salient themes concerning security and defence. Its primary function is to provide information to policy-makers and this is reflected in its output, which largely consists of policy briefs and topical commentaries instead of actual scientific publications. Its papers on Russian military strategy seem well-cited. CSSR has established a wide range of contacts with similar 'military studies' centres abroad, but it rarely cooperates with the broader academic community. Unlike other Latvian academic social science institutions, CSSR is not reliant on external funding as it is entirely funded by the National Armed Forces. Staff have good access to research materials and administrative support. At the same time, the strong dependency on the Ministry of Defence and the narrowly defined research field limit the future academic development of the unit.

S13 Liepaja University Educational Sciences Unit. This is a mainly teaching-oriented institution though with some research in specific areas of education. It reported 25.6 FTE researchers. Overall the quality and volume of research is relatively limited and, based on citation number of the published articles, it currently does not have a strong impact internationally. The focus seems to be rather on quantity than on quality of the articles. The institution has an important social impact as a teacher education unit in Latvia; however, its economic impact does not appear to be strong. The research environment in general is relatively weak for a number of different reasons: because the funding per researcher is limited; because there are insufficient strong workgroups of researchers; and because the international focus and networking is limited. The Speech Therapy Centre and Music Therapy Centre seem to be separate units within the institution with a stronger research profile; they are involved much more in international collaboration (projects, conferences, publications) which increases their development potential significantly.

S16 Liepaja University Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit. This is a relatively small sized research unit, reporting 15.52 FTE academic and research staff. The focus of its research is on business administration, public administration and educational management as well as sustainable economic development and tourism in the Baltic region. The Panel found that the *Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit* is still in the process of development as a centre for research; its current work is primarily nationally and regionally focused. Collaborations with international partners, the attraction of grants, both national and international, and staff collaborations with international research projects are limited. As a result, the unit's research to date has only limited impact on the scientific field though there are some signs that this is now improving. There is access to datasets and research journals, and technical support staff available. However, the allocation of research time for staff is contingent on their obtaining research funding; the long-term viability of the unit's research aspirations are therefore dependent on the unit attracting adequate research funding.

Institutions scored as 1

Institutions assessed at this level are seen as having a poor national profile.

S3 ISMA University Research Institute - Business Laboratory conducts research in the areas of business and management such as human resource management, consumer behaviour and the mathematical modelling of economic processes. In recent years the University has been

making progress in improving research infrastructure and facilities through some diligent and focused investment in a multi-purpose building and an organisational restructuring of Business Laboratory as a new research centre. However, the actual research performance to date is weak with few if any quality publications and little direct research investment; only 0.42 FTE research and academic staff were reported in the self-assessment document. Nevertheless, the Panel did conclude that the Business Laboratory does have some potential to improve in the future.

3.4 Strengths of the field

As has already been noted, there is good evidence to suggest that the quality of social science research in Latvia has improved significantly since 2013 with now some 80% of all academic and research staff employed in institutions rated as 'good national players' – level 3. Other more specific strengths of the field noted by the Panel are as follows:

Economic and social impact

One of the major strengths of Latvia's social science is its social and economic impact. In almost every institution visited, external collaborators spoke highly of the relevance of the research and consultancy work undertaken by their particular local institution. Examples of strong social impact included work on the Latgalian language undertaken at *Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Regional Studies*; migration research undertaken at the *University of Latvia, Cluster of Social Sciences* and research in educational studies at a range of different universities. All of the institutions visited that were engaged in educational work showed evidence of strong social impact with good networks across the schooling systems within their region. Economic impacts were also strong. Examples include research undertaken at *Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences* on tourism and marine diversity; and research on innovation and technology transfer at *Riga Technical University Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management*.

Within this applied work a number of themes stand out. Substantively, the largest research area was concerned with different aspects of business and management. At its best, some of this work was of good quality. See for example research undertaken at *Riga Technical University Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management*. However, at the same time, many of the lower scoring institutions also focused on business and management. There was good quality work focusing on sustainable development in a variety of different contexts. Examples here include research on sustainable bioeconomy, sustainable and smart territorial development undertaken at *Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Social Sciences* and research undertaken at the *Baltic Studies Centre* on food system and food supply chains. *Riga Technical University Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management* also undertakes research on sustainable development. Another strong theme was research on new technologies. For example, there was considerable emphasis on the development of new educational technologies at a number of institutions. Examples here included research undertaken at *Liepāja University Educational Sciences Unit*; *Rezekne Academy of Technology, Research Institute for Regional Studies*; *Daugavpils University research programme "Educational sciences, psychology, economy, and law"* and *University of Latvia Cluster of Social Sciences*. But there was also strong interest in the impact of new technologies on the economy as well, for example research undertaken on virtual reality technologies at *Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences* and research at *Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Social Sciences*.

Doctoral training

A further strength is the provision for doctoral training. It would seem that in social science, significant numbers of funded doctoral positions are now available, though in some

cases the number at any one institution is small. Doctoral programmes across different universities appear to have a similar structure, with significant taught elements combined with independent research. There was also a requirement for students to publish some of their research during their training which is a significant strength. The students the Panel met during their virtual visits were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of provision and the support they received from staff. Several of the institutions reviewed were engaged in recently established networked doctoral programmes, mostly with other Latvian partner universities though one or two with international partners as well. The Panel considered these to be excellent innovations, providing students with increased research opportunities and potentially raising the quality of provision even further.

3.5 Main weaknesses

A number of different weaknesses emerged during the review process.

Funding and its impact on research quality

In the RAE 2013, it was noted that there was very little funding for social science research in Latvia. While some institutions did receive state funding for their teaching, none was provided to support research itself. Social science research at that time was largely a voluntary activity undertaken by academic colleagues in their own time. This situation has now changed; there is more funding available for research. Although basic funding has increased it is still insufficient to cover needs of research institutions and basic funding amounts are insufficient when compared to resources available in other countries. The vast majority of funding takes the form of competition-based project funding- from the government, from industry and from the EU. Some institutions have proved highly successful in winning such research grants. For example, *Rezekne Academy of Technology*, *Research Institute for Regional Studies* has been very successful in attracting regional funds from the EU; *Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences* attracted significant structural funding from the EU. *Riga Technical University Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management* reported a range of funding resources including state budget financing, private funding, and both international and national projects.

While being successful in competitive funding is in principle something to be commended, if it is the only source of funding it does have consequences for the type of research undertaken and hence the shape of the field as a whole. As has already been observed, social science research in Latvia is highly applied in nature; the majority of it is also very narrowly focused on local issues. There is also a strong commitment to interdisciplinary research in order to help solve locally defined practical problems. While applied, interdisciplinary research that addresses local issues does have significant value, its weakness is that it is more challenging to achieve strong international impact with this sort of work. International impact from applied research is not impossible as is demonstrated by the work of the *Baltic Studies Centre* that has an excellent record in international publications. However, the Panel felt that far too often, because of their funding requirements, Latvian researchers were satisfied with publishing in national journals and participating in national conferences. As the Panel repeatedly note in their comments on individual institutions, the underlying quality of research undertaken in Latvia will not improve until researchers regularly engage in collaborative projects with leading international researchers; until they participate in high quality international conferences; until they routinely publish in internationally recognised journals. These may not be funding requirements but they are essential if the field as a whole is to improve.

A further challenge of project based applied research is that it provides little opportunity for researchers to undertake basic research within their constituent discipline. The Panel found

very little evidence across the whole of the country of basic research being undertaken in any of the social sciences - psychology, sociology, economics, geography, law, anthropology etc. The Panel observed a similar trend amongst the doctoral students they met, most of whom were undertaking highly applied research projects. Again, this is not to question the importance of applied work; rather it is to suggest that if this is the only type of research that is undertaken, it will inevitably hold back the development of the field as a whole. If it is to be rigorous, then applied research needs to be able to draw on and contribute to basic research. Without at least some funding for basic research, it will be challenging for Latvia to achieve the levels of international recognition that it rightly aspires to in this field.

A final consequence of dependence on project-based funding is the need for institutions constantly to seek out new funding sources. As a consequence, some institutions seemed forced to cover a very wide research agenda and found it difficult to build up core expertise in specific areas. The Panel noted that this was a particular challenge in institutions that highly depend on competitive funding.

Research management and organisation

One of the most significant weaknesses to emerge during the review process was the fact that two of the largest research units, which together make up approximately 50% of research capacity (*Daugavpils University research programme "Educational sciences, psychology, economy, and law"* and *University of Latvia Cluster of Social Sciences*) are currently organised in ways that bring together very large numbers of independent disciplines. The same strategy was observed in a number of smaller units as well. In each case it seemed that different research groupings had been combined with little rationale apart from the evaluation itself. In order to justify this type of clustering, self-assessment documents often prioritised initiatives designed to support collaborative interdisciplinary work. While such initiatives may well be important and indeed worthwhile, in the review process they seriously overshadowed the research achievements of each of the different constituent elements. As a result, it was extremely difficult for the Panel to form an understanding or make judgements about any of the constituent fields. For example, the area of research which in the 2013 RAE was considered the strongest, with significant international potential - Education and Pedagogy – has now become almost invisible; research areas which in principle are strategically very important for Latvia such as Law or Economics were very difficult to judge. It may be that if a different strategy had been adopted, a larger number of high quality but smaller research grouping could have been identified. The Panel were unclear as to where the impetus for this common organisational strategy came from, whether it was from the institutions themselves or from the Government. Whatever its origins, the Panel strongly questioned whether it was productive either for individual institutions or for the future of social science in Latvia more generally.

The impact of metrics

In the 2013 it was noted that publishing in internationally recognised journals was rare; for most researchers, their primary means of dissemination was via conferences, the majority of which were locally or regionally oriented. In the current review period, the Panel noted that this situation had changed substantially with virtually all institutions encouraging and sometimes financially supporting their staff to publish in SCOPUS and WoS recognised journals and conference proceedings. The Panel learned that in some institutions, regular publication in SCOPUS or WoS journals was now a formal requirement for contract renewal. The Panel also noted that a significant proportion of institutions had started their own SCOPUS recognised journals and conferences. This was seen as a highly effective strategy for raising their publication profile. While the situation has therefore improved over the review period, Panel members were concerned that the focus on SCOPUS and WoS metrics

(increasing quantity of publications) was now holding the development of the field back. As the Panel has repeatedly noted in its individual reports, simply because a journal or conference proceedings are recognised by SCOPUS or WoS does not mean they are of high quality, nor does it guarantee high levels of impact. While publication profiles may have improved, even in the most successful institutions, the panel noted far too few publications in tier one and tier two international journals. Overall, the Panel was concerned that it was publication metrics rather than achieving real internationally recognised quality that was currently driving the field. Until the sector moves beyond metrics, until researchers themselves develop an understanding of and aspiration for achieving internationally defined levels of quality, then the sector as a whole is unlikely to improve.

3.6 Recommendations

In the Panel's judgement, the quality of social science research in Latvia has improved significantly during the review period. However, it still has a long way to go if it is to achieve the level of quality and international recognition to which it aspires. During the review period, social science research in Latvia has done much to demonstrate its value to society; a majority of the research reviewed had a strong social and economic impact and was widely appreciated by external partners. However that impact is only justified, if the underlying research is itself of the highest quality. Aspirations are high but at present the sector is not yet functioning at a level comparable to that achieved in many neighbouring European countries. The Panel hopes that over the course of the next review period, the following recommendations will help the sector close that gap, raising both the quality and international recognition of Latvian social science.

- *Funding.* As has been noted, funding is fundamental to the focus and quality of research. At present there is little basic funding for social science research in Latvia. While it seems unlikely that in the short term, the government will be in a position to increase core research funding, it could and should establish at least some national sources of research funding that are not narrowly tied to specific projects. One strategy would be to establish a quasi-independent research council that was tasked with distributing research funds on a competitive basis. While government itself might be involved in setting the broad research agenda on a periodic basis, there should be an important degree of responsiveness in the funding process so that researchers themselves can be involved in selecting and designing research projects.
- *The size and shape of the sector.* The 2013 RAE report for social sciences noted at that stage with 30 submissions, there were too many small research social science research units in Latvia. In 2018 that number was almost halved. However, in the view of the Panel, the size and shape of the sector is still far from ideal. On the one hand there is still a significant number of very small research units, many of which, though by no means all, have only a very modest research profile. At the same time, two of the largest submissions covered very diverse research portfolios which made it extremely difficult for the Panel to review their research quality with any confidence. Both the Government and institutional leaders need to give careful thought to this matter. For smaller institutions it may be sensible for there to be further rationalisation of provision with strategic alliances between different units. This might for example mirror the very useful collaborations that have recently been established with joint doctoral programmes. For the very large institutions the Panel were of the view that there should be greater separation of research units; managing such diverse research portfolios is neither helpful for the day-to-day management of research nor for any future evaluation exercises.
- *Raising research quality.* Although the overall quality of research in Latvia has improved considerably of the review period, the fact that no institution was

graded above level 3 (a strong national player) should give both Government and university leaders pause for thought. In raising quality further there are a number of different issues that need to be addressed.

- *Metrics.* There is an urgent need for both Government and institutional leaders to review the current use of publication metrics. While in the past there may have been some justification in focusing on publishing in SCOPUS and WoS recognised journals, in the view of the Panel the centrality of this metric is now holding back the development of the field. Means need to be found to encourage and support researchers publishing in high quality internationally recognised journals and to participate in high quality, internationally recognised conferences. Whatever metrics are used in the future either by Government or by institutions they need to be very carefully selected so that they encourage quality over quantity.

- *Greater understanding of international standards of research quality.* One of the consequences of the applied and local focus of much research in Latvia is that at present there is not a consistent understanding in the research community of international norms of quality. This factor is compounded when researchers, encouraged by simplistic publications metrics, only focus on publishing in local or regional journals. In the Panel's view there is an urgent need for research leaders in institutions to develop a clearer understanding of international norms of quality and to devise means (e.g mentoring, internal quality reviews of research applications and reviews) to support their colleagues in achieving these levels of quality.

- *International collaborations.* One of the key strategies for raising the quality of research is through international collaborations – both personal and institutional. While in a small number of cases these were seen to be highly productive, too many did not seem to be put to the best use. If they are to be effective then collaborations firstly need to be with high quality institutions and individuals; at present too many are with institutions that are themselves not strong research players. There also need to be opportunities for researchers – those from Latvia and those visiting Latvia - to spend sustained time with each other. Only in this way is it possible for individuals to develop the types of research relationships that will result in high quality projects and publications. If they are to benefit fully from international collaborations, institutions as a whole also need to have a clear developmental plan. The aim, over time, should be for Latvian researchers to be full and equal partners in research and publishing projects rather than the junior partners which they now often are.

- *Learned societies.* During their review, the Panel were struck by the lack of reference to any national or regional (Baltic) organisations or learned societies that play an active role in supporting social science research. In many countries, such bodies, with their associated conferences and publications, play an important role in raising the quality of research: they support networks across the country and internationally, they support professional development and they induct new entrants to the research community. Again, in other countries, these societies may have a variety of different foci: some are related to particular substantive areas of policy and practice such as education or business; others have a disciplinary base – e.g psychology or economics. In Latvia it would seem that there is a particular need for such organisations to in the social science disciplines which as the Panel noted, are not currently well supported. Developing such organisations is not the responsibility of Government; it is a responsibility that falls to the academic community itself. The Panel would therefore strongly encourage leading Latvian

social scientists to work collaboratively across the Baltic region to help establish a number of such learned societies. Over the course of the next 10 years, such societies could play a major role in raising the quality of research in Latvia and in increasing its international visibility.

Feedback received from Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

26.02.2021. No. _1-9/ 18

**Technopolis Group
Social Sciences expert panel**

Comments by Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) on the scientific evaluation of ViA performed by the international group of experts

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences highly appreciates the work done by the experts, and expresses gratitude for the overall objective assessment and the provided recommendations for the improvement of the work in the future.

The included statistical data are generally correct; however, we would like to emphasize that in the period after 2018 the institution has experienced a rapid growth. The amount of scientific work and the attracted funding has increased. ViA increasingly strengthens its positions in the international scientific community by joining and also leading consortia of various projects. ViA researchers are also involved as members in the Stakeholder Expert Board within several consortia in Horizon2020 projects (CyberWiser, SPARTA). Leading researchers are participants of the programme committee of several international scientific conferences (PoEM, BIR).

Based on our presentation during the meeting with the expert panel and a more detailed explanation about the progress made during the period since 2018, we would like to emphasize that our growth potential, is higher than "3". This is confirmed by the results achieved in recent years. In 2020, the funding for science amounted to EUR 2,198,164. This is almost the same as the total for the whole evaluation period (2013-2018) (EUR 2,472,258). In 2020, the funding for science exceeded the funding for the study process, and the first months of 2021 suggest that this trend will continue. There is also a significant increase in the total number of research staff and FTE.

International cooperation has also grown rapidly in recent years. In addition to the participation in the Horizon2020 research project STARGATE (since 2019), the participation in the EUDRES project has started (since 2020), in which a future European University is being established in cooperation with universities from five other European countries, which also envisages developing a joint science strategy. This is a very important step towards strengthening the concept of strategic partnerships, it will allow strengthening and deepening cooperation with specific institutions and embedding within the European Research Area. The international

reputation and capacity of ViA research is attested by the results of the 2021 European Economic Area and Norway Grants, Baltic Research Programme project competition. The project application submitted by ViA is among the eight approved projects. The consortium led by ViA will also include the largest Baltic universities (University of Tartu and Vilnius University), as well as the Norwegian School of Economics (the total project funding - 999,092 EUR). Significant achievement is also the participation in the Life programme for the environment and climate action project (year 2020 – 2028).

ViA regrets that the team of experts did not have the opportunity to visit our institution in person and see our excellent infrastructure. The proposed introduction video developed for the experts included only part of our premises because of the time limitation. The successful participation in various development and infrastructure improvement projects has allowed us to provide everything necessary for the international study process and research. The same can be said about the research environment. The involvement of young researchers, the development of doctoral study programmes, and the effective, result-oriented process management are important elements that allow us to look to the future with confidence. Therefore, we believe that we deserve a higher evaluation in the component "research environment and infrastructure" within social sciences. Our viewpoint is strengthened by the interdisciplinary approach in the scientific teams and field-specific ICT infrastructure. ViA laboratories (virtual augmented reality, geospatial laboratory, data security and media laboratory) are fully aligned with new trends and technologies applied in social sciences and provide an excellent background for research work.

Once again expressing thanks for the work of the experts and the ability to implement it remotely, we would like to add this information as an annex to the report of the expert panel.

Gatis Krūmiņš,

Rector of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Feedback received from Baltic Studies Centre

BSC comment on the external evaluation report

Dear experts,

Many thanks for the external evaluation report of the Baltic Studies Centre. We find the assessment process and report very thorough, professional and helpful. The assessment allows us to place our institute in the broader Latvian and international social science landscape. We appreciate the overall evaluation of the institute's performance. In particular, we value the positive evaluation of the quality of our research, impact on the scientific discipline, and economic impact.

We also consider that the assessment of the institute's social impact and development potential reflects our continuous efforts and increasing capacity. We equally accept most of the critical comments which are predominantly related to the assessment criterion 'research environment and infrastructure' and often associated with the status of the institute being small and independent from larger research organisations. We are fully aware what it means to be 'small' and believe that small institutes can also contribute to research and innovation. Likewise, we appreciate the tailored recommendations of the panel and will consider them in our future strategic decisions. We also appreciate other recommendations addressed to Latvian science policy makers that would improve the infrastructure and financial situation of institutes like ours.

However, we would like to draw the panel's attention to a possible discrepancy between the qualitative assessment of the 'research environment and infrastructure' and the numerical score. We agree with the qualitative assessment. We quote it, with positive comments in bold and the critical comments underlined:

"The unit is well-managed with a democratic management system guided by a strategic plan for research and staff development. The unit is able to attract and retain very high quality research staff - as is evidenced in the very high success rate in attracting external funding. Both because the unit has to rely solely on competitive research funding, and because of its very small size, the unit does not constitute a research environment in the conventional meaning (i.e., there are no shared databases, no seminar series, etc.). All staff simply have to focus on attracting funding and deliver results. If the same activities had been carried out within a larger institutional setting, this unit can in many ways be best described as a well organized, highly supportive, and successful research group."

The numerical score for this criterion is 1, which according to the methodology of the international evaluation of scientific institutions stands for "Poor. The institution is poor national player. The institution is still only in the process of creating an internationally comparable research environment."

In our opinion, this raises a question about the consistency between the textual description and the score. According to our interpretation of the methodology, the textual assessment resonates more with higher numerical scores, e.g. 2 ("Adequate: The institution is satisfactory national player. The

institution's research environment is still evolving to achieve a level that is expected in the international scientific community of a respected institution in the given discipline.”).

We would appreciate if the panel could consider this point.

Once again, it was a pleasure to meet you during the institutional visit. Thank you for your work and thorough evaluation report. It will become a reference document in developing our future institutional strategy.

Sincerely yours

Talis Tisenkopfs

BSC Board member and senior researcher

1. A discrepancy has been found regarding the numerical assessment of the "Quality of the research" criterion: Figure 15 indicates a rating of "1", while the summary indicates a rating of "2" (see page 2.).
2. The word "Faculty" is used in the summary. We point out that research in economics and business is being carried out both at the Institute of Management Sciences and the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, thus, it shouldn't be indicated only one of the structural units of Liepaja University in the summary, accordingly, the word "Faculty" needs to be replaced by the "Liepaja University".
3. According to the self-assessment report of Liepaja University Economics and Business Unit there is listed 33 articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings included in Web of Science or SCOPUS databases in period 2013-2018. Listed 33 articles were used for Collation of Self-Assessment and Bibliometric Data. According to self-assessment report of Liepaja University Economics and Business Unit there is listed 46 articles in peer reviewed scientific edited journals and conference proceedings not included in Web of Science or SCOPUS databases, thereby 46 articles were used for Collation of Self-Assessment and Bibliometric Data. A number of articles published in 2018 were not yet included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases at the time of submitting the self-assessment report, but for the time of meetings with experts, it has been noted that 5 articles published in 2018, were included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases. Accordingly, it is considered that, for the period 2013-2018, there have actually been 38 articles included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases (33+5) and 39 articles which have not included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases (46-5). This means there is actually another indicator of outputs, as well as another outputs included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases per researcher and another indicator of outputs not included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases, as well.

Feedback from Research Institute for Business and Social Processes, Rezekne Academy of Technologies

The researchers and personnel of the Research Institute for Business and Social Processes, Rezekne Academy of Technologies (RTA), would like to express their gratitude to the International Expert Committee for assessment of research institutions, which made a lot of efforts to analyse the institute's internal and external regulatory documents and relevant information available publicly and from specific databases, did an in-depth examination of the institute's self-assessment report and devoted their time to online interviews.

During the assessment, the expert committee developed reasoned and important recommendations for raising the quality of the institute's scientific research output. Given the fact that the assessment was done for a period from 2016 to 2018 or the period when the institute, as a sub-organizational unit of RTA, began its activity, some of the expert recommendations are already being introduced or implemented. At the same time, the assessment found observations that might be misinterpreted or incomplete, possibly because of incomplete data or information, as the impacts of socio-economic and political factors on the institute's activity were not taken into consideration.

More information on the scientific environment in Latvia and the research activities of the institute:

- **The expert committee indicated in relation to “Impact on the scientific discipline” that “Competitive funding is based on national, European structural funds and other "support and coordination action" like measures,” while in relation to “Development potential” that for the institute it “..might be necessary to develop a through strategic planning exercise to realistically set particular goals for the institution in terms of developing its own research potential, to increase its visibility, and to initiate new areas of research that build on existing capabilities.”**

The RTA Research Institute for Business and Social Processes operates in accordance with the legislation and strategic documents of the Republic of Latvia, which apply to both higher education and research and affect the funding granted to the institute. Besides, the institute functions in strong interaction with RTA, for example, the institute does not have elected international scientists, yet such scientists are employed by RTA, thereby contributing to the overall research process. The activities of the institute are also affected by the basic funding received from the government. Additional funding for both research projects and international visits by scientists and researchers is acquired through involvement in various projects. Science and research and development are strongly linked with national innovation policies, which should be a comprehensive national-level solution. To increase its capacity and competitiveness, the institute makes a lot of efforts to acquire funding through various EU funds and programmes. This, of course, affects the involvement of researchers in in-depth research who devote more time to fundamental research, the results of which have received widespread international recognition. During its short duration, the institute has established cooperation with public and private sector partners and research institutes in Europe: Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Romania, and Bulgaria. The institute develops

international scientific projects under Horizon 2020 in cooperation with various foreign research institutions. It provides researchers with easier access to public and private sector business data and facilitates the transfer of their research results to practice, thereby contributing to economic development in Europe.

- **The expert committee indicated in relation to “Quality of Research” that “Assuming that the research output submitted for this evaluation exercise is indicative of the research undertaken at this institution, it appears that this research is not very theory-driven and is technically rather basic. Theory-driven and methodologically advanced research is usually required by international, top journals...”**

The activities of the institute during the assessment period were also determined by the Operational and Development Strategy of RTA for 2014-2020, and RTA, including the institute, acted purposefully to focus on technological knowledge and research (STEM and creative industries) vital for Latvia and Latgale region, which also affected the specializations of the programmes delivered by RTA and the topics researched, thereby contributing to the understanding and transfer of technologies and innovations to practice. Besides, in the period from 2016 to 2018 in Latvia in the social sciences, there was no requirement for neither ordinary researchers nor the researchers who were granted the right of the expert of the Latvian Council of Science to publish their research papers in international journals with high citation indices. Even today, the main requirement for researchers is to have their research papers indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. At the same time, the institute’s researchers are actively involved in various lifelong learning projects, seminars, workshops and training programmes, thereby building up their knowledge and research skills, including at the international level. The mentioned transfer of technologies and innovations to practice has ensured that the institute’s researchers have so far focused more on applied research, which is important for sectoral companies and based on fundamental research.

- **The expert committee indicated in relation to “Impact on the scientific discipline” that “Researchers are not members of internationally acknowledged research associations, e.g. Strategic Management Society, Academy of International Business or alike.”**

The leading researchers of the RTA Research Institute for Business and Social Processes are members of scientific editorial boards of various international journals and are members, experts, committee members etc. of various national and non-governmental, as well as private organizations in Latvia. The researchers of the institute also participate in various professional organizations, for example, the researchers of the Centre for Public Security and Law hold positions as sworn advocates and members of the Latvian Collegium of Sworn Advocates, researchers of the institute are auditors of the Latgale Tourism Association Ezerzeme, experts of the Latvian Council of Science, experts of the Entrepreneurship Sectoral Council, members of the Advisory Committee of the Rezekne Business Incubator, experts in the Tripartite Advisory Council of Rezekne City and Rezekne Municipality, a member of the Latvian Professors Association and members of the largest agricultural cooperative in the Baltics LATRAPs, an expert in the State Committee of the Media Support Fund. Their participation is important not only from the regional but also from the national perspective. The institute’s researchers mostly focus on participating in international editorial boards of journals and conferences, thus contributing to the institute’s scientific visibility.

- **The expert committee indicated in relation to “Development potential” that for the institute it “.. might be necessary to develop a thorough strategic planning exercise to realistically set particular goals for the institution in terms of developing its own research potential..” and “If the low number of FTEs for research and the fragmented**

research input is a major concern, this might remain a major obstacle for further development of the institution: the academic status of a university or research institute is based on its intellectual capital, embodied in researchers who are fully committed to undertake research within that particular institution.”

The institute is aware that in order to achieve a significant increase in the number of high-quality research papers, it is necessary to renew its personnel and cooperate with foreign partners. Not only the institute but the entire RTA academic personnel are involved in dealing with this problem, placing the key focus on involving more students in research, using mobility programmes and attracting foreign scientists and experts. For example, in 2020, the institute produced an international scientific monograph Communications Skills for Mentors and Mentees in Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice in cooperation with researchers from Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Latvia.

The Institute also implements projects involving students representing various EQF levels, from bachelor students to doctoral students and active young researchers. The involvement of students in research provides the institute with strategic potential for further long-term development and operation.

- **The expert committee indicated in relation to “Impact on the scientific discipline” that “the self-assessment does not report any visitors (apart from short-term visits of a couple of days)...”, emphasizing that this raises concerns about the quality of research.**

The assessment process of the institute is an example of the fact that nowadays high-quality communication is possible remotely. This also applies to research, and a long-term visit to a country for research and data exchange, especially in the social sciences, is not required. As at December 2020, the researchers of the institute were involved in the implementation of several new, interdisciplinary projects, for example, the project Development and Introduction of a Communication Competencies Model for Enhancing and Maintaining a Business Mentor Network; Life with COVID-19: an Assessment of Overcoming the Coronavirus Crisis in Latvia and Recommendations for Societal Resilience in the Future; Lyophilization Opportunities for Ensuring Zero-waste Food Consumption at Catering Establishments and Enterprises in Latgale Region; E-mentor as a Transformation tool for Ensuring Zero-Waste Food Consumption in Educational Institutions etc. All the projects are currently being implemented using remote communication options. Therefore, the statement that the institute’s researchers only make short-term visits to partner countries, which is true, does not indicate the most important thing: the length of stays in the project country does not correlate with the quality of the research.

- **The expert committee indicated in relation to “Research environment and infrastructure” that “Open access is not discussed...”**

We do not agree with this statement because the journals and research results published by the institute are free of charge and freely available in the RTA open access database journals.rta.lv. In addition, the research results are available in English, making them widely available to foreign researchers. Based on the draft of the RTA Research Strategy for 2019-2025, the institute plans to implement the Open Science approach with the aim of making scientific research, data and their dissemination opportunities internationally available to all levels of the scientific community – both professionals and future researchers as well as the public sector. The researchers of the institute are provided with access to leading scientific databases: Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, ASTM Compass, LNB Digital Library etc. Several databases are used remotely, yet all of them are accessible at the Library of RTA where, in addition to the Electronic Catalogue, the Library maintains a database of lecturer and researcher

works that includes journals, research papers and books. The bibliographic records are supplemented with hyperlinks to journals.rta.lv, which is a full-text database of RTA research papers.

- **We would like to draw the attention of the expert committee to the criterion “Development potential”, subsection “Potential to offer doctoral studies”, which includes erroneous information about two doctoral programmes delivered by the institute.**

Since the spring of 2020, the institute in cooperation with Ventspils University of Applied Sciences and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences have provided an opportunity for young researchers to acquire a doctoral degree in economics and business (Ph.D.), which is a single doctoral programme. It aims to prepare highly qualified experts and researchers for analytical and managerial work, so that they can work purposefully in the fields of research and innovation aimed at business and smart economic growth.

- **According to the conclusion by the expert committee in relation to “Research environment and infrastructure”, not all technological solutions and possibilities available at the institute have been taken into account.**

Already in 2010, the European Union prioritized smart growth, which envisages the development of a knowledge-based and innovation-based economy, yet in Latvia knowledge-based business research is at the initial stage of development. The institute is proud that its researchers already have an opportunity to conduct scientific and practical research unique in Latvia by means of the Applied Research Centre “Saleslabs”, which facilitates complex solutions, interactively combining science, research, practical activities and innovation.

By means of the centre, student learning is brought closer to the real market situation, and new specialists are employed to deliver the courses. It is an opportunity for young specialists to gain practical experience in finding solutions to local business problems.

The Applied Research Centre “Saleslabs” represents the following:

- ✓ a food processing laboratory (in cooperation with the RTA Institute of Engineering) having equipment for processing meat, milk and vegetables and producing cheese and other foods. Food processing practicals, training, seminars, workshops and consultations for catering enterprises and food producers are held at it.
- ✓ a local shop, which sells products made by local home producers, farmers and craftsmen, which was established in cooperation with the Applied Research Centre “Saleslabs”.
- ✓ a student co-creation room – a place where the students have an opportunity to meet one another and work in groups practically, doing the assignments given beyond the courses delivered at the Applied Research Centre “Saleslabs”. This is a place for creative activities – thematic events, seminars, training, meetings with entrepreneurs and industry experts.

The Institute also has the Centre for Public Security and Law, where it is possible to acquire in-depth knowledge, skills and competences in the field of law under the guidance of experienced law lecturers. Every year, the centre holds international practical conferences of various levels in the conference system journals.rta.lv, as well as discussion clubs and learning trips to various national institutions (prosecutor's office, court, prison etc.), offering students to get involved in scientific research. Researchers and students also have an opportunity to participate in an educational litigation game held by the centre.

Employing fundamental research, the institute can conduct high-quality applied research, which is an important step towards the development of research on the knowledge-based economy.

We appreciate your contribution to assessing the institute and hope that you will take into account the clarifications given, which represent unbiased justifications and allow the criteria “Impact on the scientific discipline”, “Development potential” and “Research environment and infrastructure” to be rated with “3”. It would also be an unbiased rating of the current development level of the institute – over the next 5-10 years, the institute will be able to strengthen its position in the international scientific community as a convincing actor and trustworthy partner within international collaboration networks.


Comments to the S-13 Liepaja University Educational Sciences Unit evaluation report, for 2013-2018


Thank you for the evaluation and recommendations of S-13 Liepaja University Educational Sciences Unit, for 2013-2018. It is now 2021, and we are pleased that we have already accomplished a lot towards the implementation of recommendations, which will also serve as a basis for our future activities in the field of educational sciences. However, here are some clarifications that we would like to bring to your attention:

- 1) Overall score: the time frame is not clear when LiepU website was viewed and when the information on the staff of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work was obtained. As the report was submitted for 2013-2018, the changes in staff and structure are logical.
- 2) Quality of research: it is stated that internationally well-connected research groups are only for the Music Therapy Centre and Speech Therapy Centre, but the online meeting was attended by several international research partners, eg. from Lithuania, Taiwan, Germany, Turkey, etc., forming cooperation networks with the centres mentioned in LiepU self-assessment report (see 1.1). The international partners, who attended the online meeting, cooperate with all the centres of Educational Sciences Unit, but, for the reporting period, the main foreign cooperation partners are stated in sections 1.8, 10.1 and 5.4.
- 3) In the experts' report, evaluating the research process and results, the terms such as 'relatively weak', 'relatively limited', 'relatively low' etc. are repeatedly used in various sections. For example, the publications listed in the self-assessment report (section 3.3), which are submitted in peer-reviewed editions in accordance with the requirements and are indexed in WoS and SCOPUS, are rated as "relatively low". We would appreciate a more specific explanation of these assessment categories.
- 4) Research environment and infrastructure: a lack of vision is mentioned with regards to to how to establish research groups involving all academic staff members. But Educational Sciences Unit is part of Liepaja University structure, therefore, the current LiepU development strategy, which is included in the self-assessment report, section 1.11, is respected.
- 5) Economic impact: the experts have assessed it as 'limited', because in the self-assessment report, 'the main claim to economic impact is through its teaching rather than its research'. However, in the field of education, the economic contribution is in the formation and development of the education system and the

teachers' professional competence, which cannot be described by specific quantitative data. However, in the self-assessment report, section 1.1, the main fields and foci of research are identified, one of which emphasizes exactly the research contribution to the provision of study programmes, to which a significant proportion of research is devoted.

- 6) Recommendation No.5 recommends not to develop 'own separate PHD program', but there has been no intention to do so: in the self-assessment report, and also during the remote meeting, the designing and implementation of a **joint** doctoral program was emphasized (see 1.15).

Dina Bethere, Dr.paed., prof. 
Director of the Institute of Educational Sciences

Linda Pavitola, Dr.paed., prof. 
Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work

5.03.2021.



NATIONAL DEFENCE ACADEMY OF LATVIA
CENTER FOR SECURITY AND STRATEGIC RESEARCH

Ezermalas iela 8B, Riga Latvia LV-1014 - +371 67076881 - naa@mil.lv

Riga, March 05, 2021.

Dear Sir,

The CSSR academic staff received, read, and discussed the CSSR's evaluation. Although we agree with most of the comments, we would like to disagree with some aspects. Also, since the evaluation period is until 2018, it does not reflect the CSSR's current performance. Since 2017, the CSSR academic staff has been focussing on publishing in academic journals. Nevertheless, sometimes the waiting time between submitting, reviewing, and the subsequent publication can be up to two years. This is especially relevant in the period until 2018.

The CSSR, as it is today, exists since May 2012. The staff has changed during the years, showing that there is some difficulty attracting and maintaining researchers. The first two researchers started working in October of 2012. One of them left at the beginning of 2013 after understanding the military field was not for him. The other left in 2018 to pursue a career at the EDSO in Vienna. A third researcher joined the team in the middle of 2013 and another at the beginning of 2014. A fifth researcher joined in 2015 but left in 2018 because of the CSSR specificities and limitations.

Simultaneously, we have invited some researchers to work on specific projects for the MoD and the Armed Forces. They spent a relatively short time and did not join the CSSR's core team. All researchers that joined the core team did not have previous experience in the security and defense sector. This means that they had to learn and understand the sectoral specificities, build their competencies and reformulate their research interests. As a result, the first scientific publications started to appear only after 2018. Some examples are, but not limited to:

- Nora Vanaga & Toms Rostoks' book "Deterring Russia in Europe" published by Routledge.

- Jānis Bērziņš article" "The Theory and Practice of New Generation Warfare: The Case of Ukraine and Syria" in the Journal of Slavic Military Studies, the leading journal for Russ-

ian military issues, published by Taylor and Francis, "Integrating Resilience in Defense Planning Against Information Warfare in the Post-Truth World." in Vasu, N., Ang, B. and Jayakumar, S. (Eds.) Distortions, Rumours, Untruths, and Smears. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, "The Russian Way of Warfare," in Deni, J. (Ed.). Current Russia Military Affairs: Assessing and Countering Russian Strategy, Operational Planning, and Modernization. Carlisle, PA: USAWC.

- Ieva Bērziņa's articles "Factors affecting willingness to fight for a country in the Latvian and Russian-speaking communities in Latvia" (National Identities, Taylor and Francis), "The Narrative of "Information Warfare against Russia" in Russian Academic Discourse" (Journal of Political Marketing, Taylor and Francis), Weaponization of "Colour Revolutions" (Journal of Political Marketing, Taylor and Francis).

We are not asking for changing the scores but to consider that during the evaluation period, three of the researchers were still pursuing doctoral studies, that some time is necessary to become an expert in military and security issues, and there has been significant personnel change. We ask the commission to consider the above also regarding the output number of scientific publications in scientific journals.

We also have comments about the following specific points:

CSSR staff does not have any real teaching and only some supervision duties, nor do they have to apply for external funding. Hence the limited scientific output of CSSR is disappointing.

This is not true. The CSSR staff, from the very beginning, has had considerable teaching and supervision duties. For example, the researchers teach such courses as Research Methodology, Project Management, Democracy and Security, Hybrid Warfare, Russian New Generation Warfare, Defense Economics, Geopolitics, Introduction to Politics, Introduction to International Politics. The CSSR academic staff also teaches short courses in the specific programs for military officers and NCOs. The CSSR academic staff also supervises a considerable number of bachelor theses. Since the CSSR coordinates the National Defence Academy's Masters program, each CSSR researcher also supervises between three and five master theses. Finally, the CSSR has been involved in developing the National Defence Academy's curriculum for the courses it offers.

Regarding applying for external funding, there are two issues to be considered. First, **we cannot apply for external funding** because of the Armed Forces and the MoD's bureaucratic limitations. Nevertheless, if this were possible, the wages would not change because of the bureaucratic limitations of the Armed Forces and the MoD. CSSR researchers have secured external funding from external sources for their ongoing research projects. T. Rostoks and N. Vanaga secured funding from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation to organize a workshop in Riga (June 2017). It was instrumental for developing the book "Deterring Russia in Europe." More recently, T. Rostoks secured external funding from the Konrad

Adenauer Foundation to publish the edited volume "Defence Policy and the Armed Forces in Times of Pandemic" (January 2021).

Second, the wage level, as in other academic institutions in Latvia, is considerably low. For example, a researcher's wage with a doctoral degree after taxes is around 900 euros/month. As a result, the CSSR researchers also work in other academic institutions, consulting, or taking any other job that complements their income.

There is very little genuine academic freedom in CSSR: the unit focuses strictly on security issues and even individual researchers must have their topics approved by the scientific council of the CSSR.

This is an exaggeration. It is true that the MoD and the Armed Forces commission specific issues to the CSSR. However, the approval by the Scientific Council is not a way to limit academic freedom. The Scientific Council's members are all CSSR's researchers. In reality, it is the contrary. First, it is a forum to discuss the CSSR researchers' research plans and improve them. Second, it is a manner to ensure academic freedom. The approval of the Scientific Council is a shield against external interference.

As most of the interaction is with either Latvian policy-makers or the military, the academic impact of CSSR is very limited. This applies both to the publications and to the international collaboration.

From Social Impact: *Even the public lectures seem primarily attended by military personnel and civil servants.*

Not really true. This is a contradiction in the report. It admits that "*many of the papers published by CSSR are nonetheless well cited, indicating that they do reach the international security studies community. Within its own narrow niche of military studies, the CSSR is, therefore, recognised internationally.*" Moreover, the CSSR researchers interact with NATO officials, diplomats, other countries' military, and members from civilian universities. Nevertheless, since the CSSR niche is very specific, the number of opportunities for collaboration with civilian universities is also limited.

The CSSR researchers are often interviewed by the media, organize an annual conference, public discussions, and lectures, participate in the LAMPA Festival, and publish with several think tanks.

Regarding the attendance of the CSSR public lectures, the criticism is not fair. The broader public's interest is limited, but this is the result of the lack of interest in defense and security issues. The events are advertised on Twitter, Facebook. Information is sent to civilian universities. If they are primarily attended by military personnel and civil servants, it is because there is no broad interest by the general public. For example, the next public lecture will be "Understanding Contemporary Air Power." It is not very likely that the broader public will be interested in attending it. We cannot be penalized because of that. However, some public lectures had a great public interest. For example, the ones about Strategic Communications and Hybrid Warfare had significant participation from the gen-

eral public and the academic community. Also, the CSSR annual conference has broad participation, although its thematic is quite specific.

The unit does not seem to have any real strategy concerning its future progress and growth.

The unit has very real strategic thoughts about possible future progress, but systemic idiosyncrasies limit them. The Armed Forces and the MoD determine the CSSR development. Internally, there is much clarity regarding the functions that the CSSR performs:

1. The CSSR is a research institution whose researchers aim to publish in peer-reviewed academic journals and to develop collaboration with other institutions.
2. The CSSR also provides policy analysis which is a function that is essential for government think-tanks.
3. The CSSR academic staff is actively involved in teaching, supervising, and other activities at the National Defence Academy of Latvia.
4. The CSSR academic staff participates in the ongoing public discussions on national, regional, and international security issues in Latvia.

CSSR perceives its role to be quite different from typical academic institutions, and this certainly limits the impact of work carried out by the unit.

The CSSR understands rather than "perceives" its role to be different. It is indeed different, and the Armed Forces and the MoD determine it.

Develop closer links with universities.

This is a complicated matter. On the one hand, it depends on the interest of colleagues from civilian universities. On the other, there are the limitations discussed above. At this moment, there was only one opportunity. It failed since the CSSR is unable to apply for external funding.

Another avenue of collaboration could be regular teaching and supervision of doctoral students at other academic institutions in Latvia.

As stated above, all CSSR researchers take teaching and supervising bachelor and master students and, in some cases, doctoral students in the other institutions where they also work.

Thank you very much for your evaluation and attention in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. oec. Jānis Bērziņš
CSSR Director

**Comments and Reflections on the Expert Panel Evaluation of the
University of Latvia's Social Science Cluster**

The Social Sciences Cluster at the University of Latvia (SSC-UL) would like to express its appreciation to the international group of experts for the considered, objective and constructive written evaluation of the cluster. We would, however, like to make two important comments about the evaluation report's sections on (i) the quality of research, and (ii) the research environment and infrastructure. In both cases we feel that the final evaluation text does not reflect the impact of the reforms that the cluster undertook following the recommendations from the previous evaluation report in 2012.

Quality of research

We note the evaluation report's statement that the scientific output of the SCC-UL is steady but not increasing in terms of quality or quantity. However, following recommendations in the previous 2012 evaluation report, UL adopted a strategy targeting higher quality publications. The success of this strategy is indicated by the increased number of publications in Q1 journals (by 2018 the number has more than doubled comparing to 2013) and metric indicators that characterise the quality of SSC-UL publications as comparatively high (as reflected in the presentation during the online 'visit'). This is also illustrated by the SciVal Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) that indicates how the number of citations received by an institution's publications compares with the average number of citations received by all other similar publications in the field. During the review period (2013-2018) the overall FWCI of the SCC-UL was 1.10, which indicates that SSC-UL's publications have been cited more than would be expected based on the global average for similar publications considering the entire Scopus database. This indicator is quite high across the disciplines within the SCC-UL (Law: 1.90; Social and Economic Geography: 1.70; Political Science: 1.50; Economics and Business: 1.25; Media and Communications: 1.10; Education: 1.05; Psychology and Cognitive Sciences: 0.75; Sociology: 0.70).

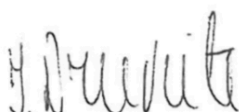
Research environment and infrastructure

We note the observation that institutional cooperation within the SSC-UL has space to expand but dispute the statement that only limited interdisciplinary collaboration was taking place during the review period. During the online 'visit', we demonstrated that the cluster's current collaboration is targeted and implemented through several research programmes at the national level (three programmes were mentioned in the report) and increasing cooperation under the framework of the fundamental and applied research projects. Research teams established under these programmes and projects are often involved in larger research consortia applying for international funding (such as the Norway grants or Horizon2020).

We would also like to emphasise that institutional and multi-disciplinary collaboration within the SSC-UL takes place in seven doctoral schools that were specifically designed to foster cooperation between disciplines and faculties: (i) European Integration and Baltic Sea Region Studies, (ii) Earth resources and their Sustainable Use, (iii) International Competitiveness of the National Economy, (iv) Lettonica and Intercultural Studies, (v) Political, Social and Economic Processes in the Post-Soviet Area, (vi) Strengthening Human Capacity and Learning in Life and Work in Inclusive Contexts of Diversity, and (vii) The Impact of Psychological, Educational and Social factors in the Development of Individuals, Groups and Organisations. As a concrete example of multi-disciplinary doctoral studies programme collaboration, academic staff from the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art work together with colleagues from the Faculty of Business, Management and Economics in the International Competitiveness of the National Economy Doctoral School and also serve on the Faculty's Doctoral and Promotional Committees.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the panel for the valuable recommendations that we have already started to discuss and which will be incorporated into UL's next 2021-2027 research strategy.

Sincerely,



Ina Druviete

Prof. Dr. habil. philol.
