

Latvia: Research Assessment Exercise

Panel Report: Social Sciences

technopolis _{group}, December 2013

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1. Introduction

The assessment panel for social science had six members from universities in the United Kingdom (2), Poland (1), Spain (1), and Sweden (2), representing most the major disciplines in European social science. The panel was assessed to review a total of 30 units within Latvian social science. In two cases, the panel did not think that the units could be considered proper research units, and thus the panel decided not to score and review those two units as extensively as the remaining 28 units. The panel review is based on a written self-assessment reports that were compiled by the units themselves and cover activities in the period 2006-2011 and, in most cases, supplemented with information for 2012. In addition, the panel have had access to a Data Analysis Report with key statistics for staffing, funding, publications, and citations for each unit. In order to get a clearer picture of some of the larger units, and to get a better sense of the Latvian social science context, the panel also visited 15 of the units over a two and a half day period in 15-17 October 2013.

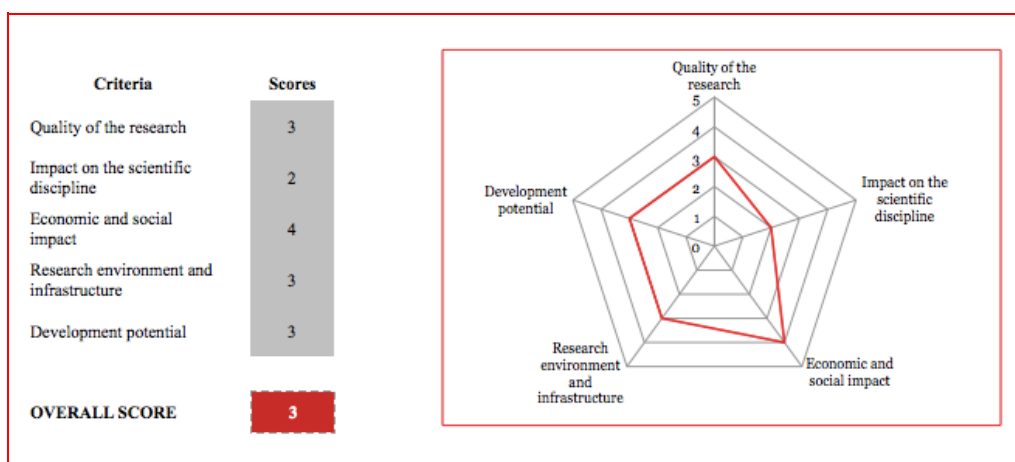
- 20 of the units under review are units within the state university structure. The remaining 10 units comprise of units under the Academy of Sciences, some business schools, the National Library of Latvia, and a couple of small private units.
- All 15 site visits were done at state university units, with the exception of one visit to Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration. All site visits were done in smaller groups of 2-3 panel members.
- The panel had an internal division of labour for drafting the evaluation of each unit according to the expertise of panel members. The panel had two joint meetings in which the grading instrument was calibrated and a joint decision made on all scores for all individual units. The final assessment presented in this report reflects the consensus view of the panel.
- A wide spectrum of academic fields are represented in the units under review, including Business and Management, Economics, Education, Pedagogy, Political Science, Psychology, Social Anthropology, Social Work, and Sociology. However, there is a strong dominance of research units that primarily do research in the fields of Business and Management, Education, and Pedagogy.
- In an international comparison, strikingly little of Latvian social science research falls into the established disciplines of Economics, Political Science, and Sociology. There is of course an historical explanation to this, and it has to be noted that contemporary social science in Latvia is really very, very new. Many of the units that the panel has assessed are only some ten years old.
- When relating the state of Latvian social science to more mature disciplines in both the natural sciences and the humanities, it should be kept in mind that Latvian social science is only an infant. Despite the fact that the panel assessment is overall fairly critical, taking into consideration the poor financial support for social science in Latvia and the fact that it has been built-up more or less from scratch over the last 20 years, the panel wishes to stress that it finds the achievements of Latvian social science highly commendable.

Assessment of Research Institutions

2. S_01_UL Advanced Social and Political Research Institute

The Advanced Social and Political Research Institute is one of the largest research centres in the social sciences in Latvia, situated in the University of Latvia and bringing faculty together in a series of inter-linked and inter-disciplinary research projects. There is a large number of research-active staff and a substantial PhD programme.

Figure 1 S_01 - Scores



Overall score

The unit is working to increase its international publication record and has significant social impact. The unit seems to lack a comprehensive clear vision, but the Panel nevertheless believe that there is good potential for development.

Quality of the research

The Institute has above average levels of research productivity though currently only modest level of SCOPUS publication. There is evidence of some limited citation of such published work. Yet there is no real evidence of a greater targeting of international peer-review publications over time (such that would generate a higher number of citations). Levels of research funding are average, with further evidence of some non-state funding, solid to impressive levels of Latvian Science Council grants and of some ESF/ERAF funding. The submitted publications were of varying quality, judged by prevailing international standards - one published in a reasonably prominent international journal, one a solid piece of comparative political science, the others in rather more specialist sub-field journals. Overall the work tends to be descriptive in character and it tends (with the exception of the comparative article) to focus solely on the Latvian case. The Latvian Human Development Report is an important and valuable publication - though perhaps more for its societal and political reach and impact.

Impact on the scientific discipline

There is some evidence of international peer-reviewed publications and citations accrued through such publication, but the low levels of citation do not indicate a major external international influence. There is limited evidence of international co-authorship, though greater evidence of international collaboration. Good and large doctoral programme clearly contributes very significantly to the development of the

social sciences in Latvia. Overall, the impact on the development of the social sciences would seem to be primarily national rather than international in character.

Economic and social impact

There is good evidence of impact generated in the wider community, particularly through the role of the Institute in the dissemination of its research and in media commentary - clearly the Institute provides many commentators in the public debate on a whole range of social and political issues and this is much to be commended. There is little or no evidence of a similar international role.

Research environment and infrastructure

The research environment would appear to be one of the best in the Latvian social sciences. That said, the research strategy of the Institute is rather underdeveloped and appears to comprise mainly a restatement of the core fields of research of the Institute - a steady-state approach. There is little or no evidence of the targeting of fresh opportunities, nor much of a sense of how greater international recognition might be achieved, though it was good to hear of developments which might enhance levels of international publication and citation. The research strategy and management, however, appeared largely top-down and support for younger/early career researchers beyond the completion of their doctorates appeared limited.

Development potential

The potential of this Institute is clearly very high. It is well-staffed, has an excellent reputation, has a high public profile and some evidence of international standing - though its principal contribution, both academically and in terms of societal impact, is clearly domestic.

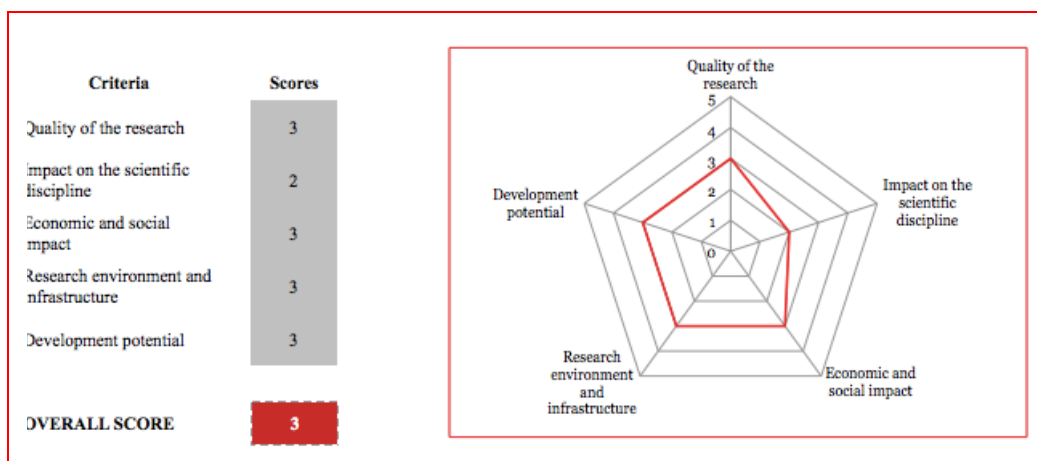
Conclusions and recommendations

This is a strong research unit with undoubted potential. It needs to consider the support and mentoring of younger/early career researchers beyond the completion of their doctoral studies. The panel would see this as crucial to the attainment of higher levels of publication and citation in international peer-reviewed outlets. The Institute needs also to consider the development of more of an organic, or bottom-up, research culture and supporting research structure. Research management and research strategy both appeared largely top-down with the effect that younger and/or more junior faculty did not appear well supported by or incorporated within it.

3. S_o2_UL Institute of Pedagogical Science

Pedagogical science has a long history at the University of Latvia. Today, that work is undertaken within the Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, which is part of a single Faculty within the University of Latvia: The Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, Institute of Pedagogical Sciences. The Institute itself reported 15.9 FTE researchers in 2011. The Institute currently undertakes work on three topics: the history of pedagogy, life-long learning and educational diversity.

Figure 2 S_o2 - Scores



Overall score

This is a well-managed unit, with a strong PhD program and an established position as a respected international research partner. There is an ambition to apply innovative research methods, and the unit is taken seriously on a societal level. The panel sees clear potential for development.

Quality of the research

There is good evidence of high quality research in the history of pedagogy with work that has strong international standing. There is also an emerging profile in life-long learning. There is strong evidence of international collaboration with a range of international collaborative projects and significant numbers of visitors both coming and going. There is also a good funding profile from both the EU and Latvian Science Council Grants. However the actual papers submitted were variable in terms of quality: some were very good, others less so. There is a strong profile of publications in conference proceedings but much less in refereed journals though there are a good number of books. There is evidence of an upward trajectory on publications in the 2012 self-assessment.

Impact on the scientific discipline

There is good evidence of impact in terms of collaboration. This is particularly evident in the numbers of research students supervised collaboratively with other HE institutions. There is also evidence of good collaboration for research, again with Latvian institutions. There is some evidence of international collaboration as well, demonstrating that the Institute is well networked internationally. However it is more difficult to judge the impact of the institute in terms of its actual research. A good number of conferences have been led by the institute and conference participation is generally strong. However, the relatively low publication rates in international refereed journals means that its academic impact is not perhaps as strong as it should be given the quality of some of its work.

Economic and social impact

There is excellent evidence that the Institute collaborates with other academic institutions within Latvia, particularly in relation to PhD supervision, – this is a real strength of the unit. However there is much less evidence of its impact beyond higher education. There is some evidence of impact on the teaching profession, but perhaps less than might be expected from an ‘applied’ unit such as this one.

Research environment and infrastructure

There is good evidence of a supportive and well-developed research infrastructure. There is above average success in attracting external research funding and there seems to be excellent support for doctoral students. There is also a good flow through from masters programmes, to doctoral studies. Again international links seem strong, with a good flow of academic staff to the unit from overseas and good opportunities for Institute staff to travel. The Institute has sponsored and contributed to an important number of conferences, which again suggests a strong research environment. One possible weakness is in terms of technical and administrative support.

Development potential

The development potential would appear to be strong. The Institute is successful in two key areas; it is also strong in doctoral training and attracting external research funding. Where it has been less successful is in demonstrating its significance in terms of refereed publications. However, it does have clear development plans and seems well aware of its development needs.

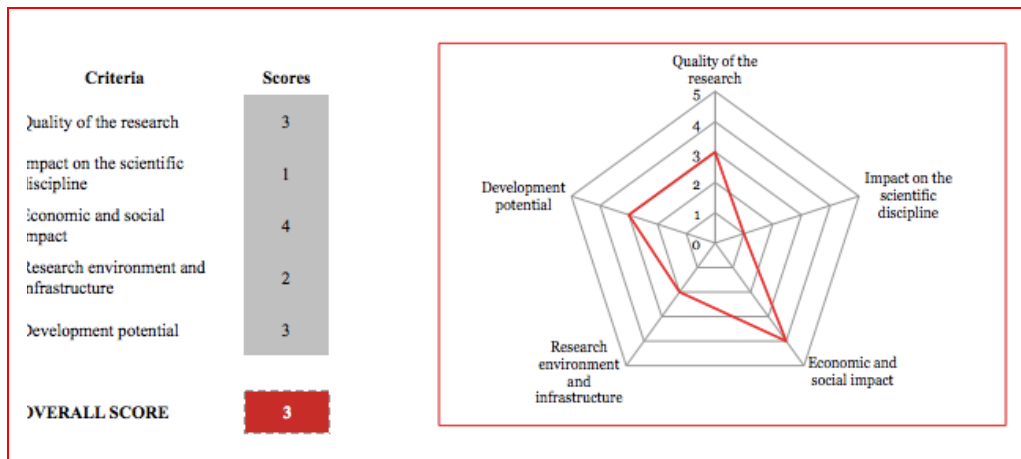
Conclusions and recommendations

This is a strong unit with a long history of good quality educational research; as such it is well placed to develop further in the future. However, if it is to move to its next stage of development then there are a number of issues which it needs to consider. At present it would seem that the unit is more often a participant than a leader in its collaborative international projects. It needs to consider how it can move more often to be a leader in such work. The unit also needs to develop a clear plan of how to raise the number of its international publications. In doing that, it needs itself to review the quality of its current output, particularly in terms of research design and methodology. At present, some of its research is excellent, others, less so. It also needs to recognise that publishing conference proceedings, even when they are refereed, is not a substitute for publication in internationally refereed journals. Conference participation and publication should be seen as a stepping stone in the process of dissemination, not an end point in itself. A helpful strategy might be to recognise this distinction in internal promotion procedures. The unit might also consider how further to increase international mobility for its staff and students. Although there is good evidence of international academics visiting the unit for a short time, it is clear that staff and students would benefit substantially by longer term attachments. This might be achieved by developing institutional partnerships with one or more universities abroad that have similar research interests.

4. S_03_UL Department of Educational Sciences and Institute for Educational Research

This is a relatively small quantitative research group based in the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, Institute of Pedagogical Sciences. The unit reported 5.8 researchers in 2011.

Figure 3 S_03- Scores



Overall score

The unit does high quality research in a research niche that is unique in Latvia and has high status internationally. The potential is not at all utilized at the moment, but the Panel see strong potential for development.

Quality of the research

This small group of researchers sees itself as relatively new. Even so it shows evidence of high quality work. They are the chosen Latvian partner for a number of high visibility comparative international studies (e.g. PISA, etc.) which seem to demonstrate a high level of statistical competence. The unit has also attracted a high level of research funding given its size. However, it has comparatively few international visitors and the staff does not yet seem well established in terms of editorships of journals and other key appointments.

Impact on the scientific discipline

This group would appear to be unique in Latvia in conducting strongly international and statistically based research. Given that they are ‘the Latvian partner’ on these international projects, it is clear that they potentially have an important contribution to make to the international literature. However, at present they do not have a strong profile in international refereed journals. There is also little evidence that they are utilising their important research expertise and excellent data in projects that they themselves initiate. Their potential impact on the discipline both inside and outside Latvia is therefore strong, but is not currently being realised.

Economic and social impact

The type of research undertaken by this unit is extremely important for the development and management of the educational system in Latvia. In principle therefore this unit does have high economic and social impact. It is also clear that even more could be achieved, if the unit were able to further exploit both its data and research skills on projects of its own.

Research environment and infrastructure

This aspect seems satisfactory. Doctoral students seem particularly well supported. However, the research environment could be improved substantially if the unit itself were better networked internationally and linked more effectively with educational research elsewhere in Latvia.

Development potential

The unit does have strong potential. The research niche it has is extremely important substantively. In addition, this is the only group in the country that has strong quantitative research expertise in education. In principle therefore, there is strong potential for development. However, it is clear that at present virtually all of its capacity is taken up with delivering its existing research contracts. In order to achieve its full development potential, it would need additional investment.

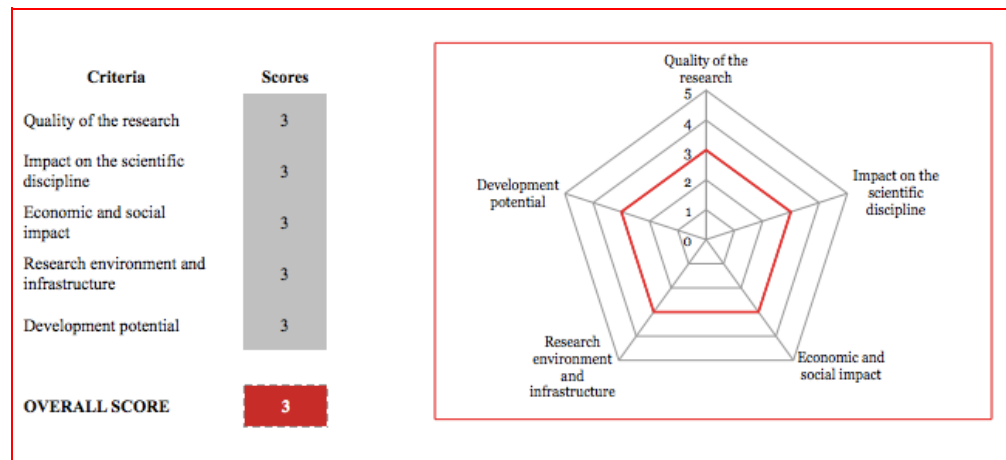
Conclusions and recommendations

This is a unit that is producing high quality research that is of real significance for the future development of education in Latvia; the unit also has really important expertise in quantitative educational research. However, while at present it is producing the research evidence that it is contracted for, it is not realising its potential either in terms of its international visibility or in terms of its impact on educational research in Latvia more broadly. The unit needs to develop a clear strategy as to how to increase its publication profile in internationally refereed journals, how to exploit the excellent data it also already has in projects of its own and how to share its quantitative expertise more effectively within Latvia. While the unit could increase its publication profile within its current resources, achieving its full potential in other ways will probably be difficult without further funding. Developing additional funding in order to exploit its expertise should therefore become a key priority for the unit and for the University itself.

5. S_04_UL Department of Psychology

The Department of Psychology at University of Latvia is placed within the Faculty of Education, Psychology, and Art. Although psychology has a longer history at the university, the current department has been in place since around 2002 when the doctoral program got started. The department primarily does research on Political and economic psychology, Psychological test development and adaptation, and Traffic psychology, and lean towards clinical and cognitive psychology. It is a fairly small department with about 12 active academic staff, but in a national perspective it is certainly one of, if not the, major department for Psychology in terms of size. The department itself reported a total of 5.4 FTE researchers in 2011.

Figure 4 S_04 - Scores



Overall score

This is a well-organised and cohesive unit. However, it is also clear that the department is working in a challenging funding environment and will perhaps need stronger institutional support if it is to achieve its potential.

Quality of the research

As a research unit, this department is only about 10 years old. During the review period it has been developing itself for the first time and has made significant progress though there is clearly more to do. The department does not receive any central funding for research, but even so has established a number of important international collaborations and been relatively successful in winning grants from the Latvian Science Council. At present it seems to have very little international funding. The quality of research is consistently good across the core areas of research. There is also evidence of a reasonable publication profile over all, with good representation in peer-reviewed publications and good citation statistics. The unit, for its size, also has a good throughput of doctoral students.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Given its size the department does a good job. They have hosted several international conferences and collaborate with several international research groups in neighbouring countries and further afield. The unit does seem to be undertaking some work that is likely to be recognised in the international literature. This is particularly true of the collaborative international projects. Members of the unit are also contributing to the discipline through journal editorships and membership of a range of important committees.

Economic and social impact

This is an area of the department's work that is not well developed at present. Although there is some reported contact with the media, overall there is relatively little interaction with non-academics. Graduating PhD students take up jobs also outside of academia.

Research environment and infrastructure

The department is small, approx 5.5 academics, 0.5 admin (FTE) with very little funding for research. The physical facilities seem reasonably good at present. The University of Latvia has excellent library facilities. The research potential seems to be somewhat restricted by the standard of laboratories and technical support. However, a new research facility is being set up that will significantly strengthen the possibilities of further development. Given the circumstances they do a good job. However, there is a lack of core funding for research which means staff has to teach extensively as well as undertake research. The fact that the unit is very small, and covers a wide range of different research topics also potentially weakens its research environment. To department does appear to be under good leadership with a clear sense of strategic issues.

Development potential

A significant share of publications in English, promising international collaboration, awareness of key challenges, and a strong research ethos makes the panel believe that there is good potential for development. The department has already achieved a great deal in its short history and seems to have strong potential to develop itself substantially over the next 5-10 years. The department is acknowledging its need to establish a more strategic approach to research management; as a result, its SWOT analysis and future plans are convincing. However, it is also clear that the department is working in a challenging funding environment and will perhaps need stronger institutional support if it is to achieve its potential.

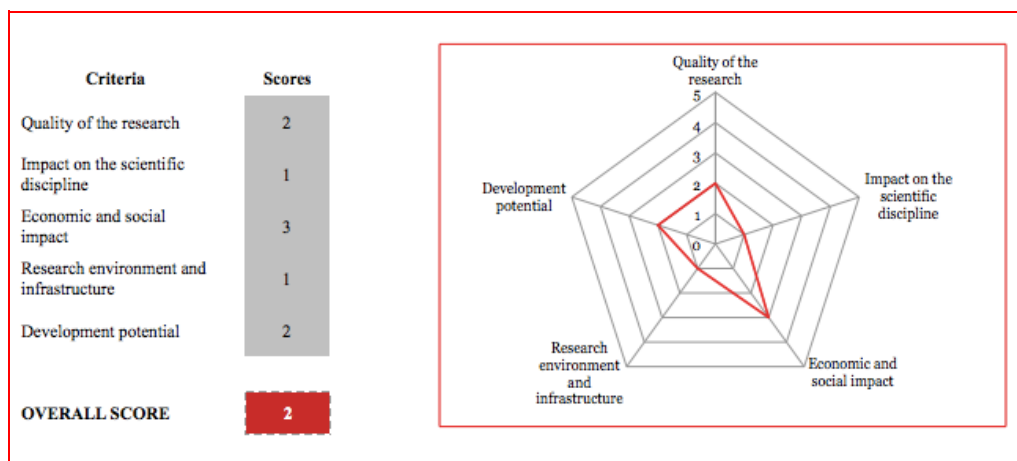
Conclusions and recommendations

The panel find this to be an extremely well organised unit with a focused research strategy and a clear sense of priorities. The developing potential of this unit appears to be strong. Despite the recent unexpected loss of a key research professor, the unit is in good shape and its researchers highly motivated, which is a demonstration of the resilience of the department. The department edits the *Baltic Journal of Psychology* that plays a vital role in regional psychological research, and researchers are embedded in strong international research collaborations. This is one of the few units that the panel reviewed that have been exposed to and interacting with the international research community for an extended period of time and at several levels, including membership of a Nordic-Baltic doctoral programme. As such it could serve as a good example for Latvian social science, underscoring the utility of international mobility and exchange. The panel recommends that the department work even harder to publish its work in solid international peer-reviewed journals in favour of other outlets. The panel would also recommend the unit to work together with other units in the area of traffic psychology (i.e., S16).

6. S_05_UL Faculty of Economics and Management

The Faculty of Economics and Management is the largest in the Social science panel and it is part of the University of Latvia. Its focus areas of research include Labour Market, Tourism, Crisis Management, Sustainability, Regional Development and Human Cognition. The unit is formally organised in chairs, one for each of the research areas. Funding is public. It includes mainly state funding, but there is also a part of EU funding.

Figure 5 S_05 - Scores



Overall score

The institution occupies a respected scientific position at the national level, but it is still in the process of opening up to the international scientific community. And it still has to achieve its status as a recognised member of the discipline.

Quality of the research

Being the largest institution included in the research assessment exercise, only 8 original papers are provided in the list of best publications of the institution, of which 7 are published in international outlets. Of those 7, 3 are Baltic outlets. None of the 7 reaches a top 30 journal list. Only 1 has been published in an outlet with significant international academic impact factor (Economica). Latvian management and economic problems are the main inspiration for research, which tend to be done without much proper international benchmarking. It is telling in this respect the large number of the PhD dissertations reported with the name 'Latvia' in the title. Although a focus on home problems is understandable, doing almost exclusively country oriented research with scarce international benchmarking tends to limit the relevance of the research to national level and tends to reduce its average quality.

Impact on the scientific discipline

With virtually no publication and no presence in editorial boards of top journal lists, the impact of the unit on the scientific discipline is non-existent. Besides, only 9% of the research output reported appears in SCOPUS (international peer-reviewed literature), of which 59% does not have non-self-citations.

Economic and social impact

The unit has a substantial list of invitations to conferences in social forums (some of which are European). The unit also collaborates in projects with non-academic entities, mainly public. But by far, the main social impact comes via participation in the boards of non-academic private and public Latvian institutions.

Research environment and infrastructure

The institution does not have a well-defined research focus. A clear identification of target fields of contribution is lacking, with research output expanding over a wide range of disconnected topics. Research funding per capita is low. Its relative output per capita is in the bottom half of the panel. A highly visible weakness is the lack of clear management coordination that sets standards and incentives for research activity in the institution and its connection with teaching loads and time devoted to non-academic collaborations.

Development potential

The self-assessment highlights that faculty has international tradition. But research output does not reflect that, both in terms of quality and geographic scope. The overall assessment is that the institution is playing a visible role in looking at national economic and business problems. It also has plans for improving the research incentive scheme and environment. But prospects are that the unit will have to improve its research focus, open up to the world, and work hard if it wants to establish itself as an international notable institution.

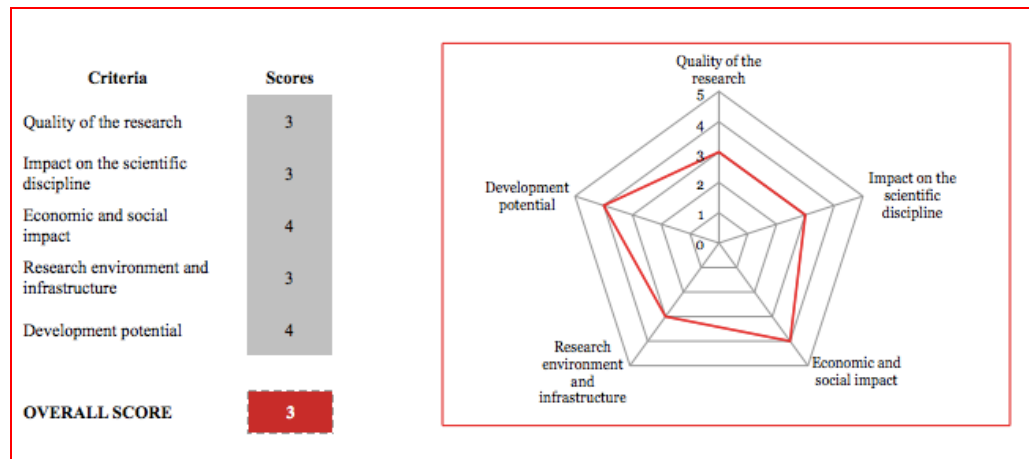
Conclusions and recommendations

The unit has a huge task ahead in order to improve its research activity and gain international recognition. The panel would like to make the following recommendations to move in that direction. 1) The unit should shift its presence from non-academic boards to academic and journal boards and strive to increase the international methodological and empirical benchmarking of nationally focused research. 2) The unit should reshape its research management, setting a visible coordinator for the research activities of the unit. Among the task of the coordinator must be the following: Identify and list the relevant international target journals for the discipline; Set publication targets and incentives (economic and promotion) linked to the journal lists; Develop expertise in the identification and application for research funds, preferably of international origin; Set a systematic frame for visiting faculty and PhD students that actually puts the unit in touch.

7. S_o6_UL Faculty of Law

The Faculty of Law belongs to the most important and biggest units of the University of Latvia in terms of employed researchers and students, including PhD students. All leading lawyers including judges of Constitutional Court and Supreme Court have been educated at this Faculty.

Figure 6 S_o6 - Scores



Overall score

The unit produces research of somewhat varying quality but with a clearly improving trend. It is the leading player nationally and has good potential to develop into a strong player in the region.

Quality of the research

The Faculty of Law of the University of Latvia is the strongest research institution in the area of legal studies in Latvia. It has managed to create a team of outstanding Latvian legal scholars who produced, during the period under review, a significant number of valuable academic publications. There is good evidence of high quality research. However it has only very limited international recognition and its participation in international network of legal academic institutions is still below expectations. The papers submitted for review were variable in terms of academic quality; however some of them were of very high quality and it seems that there is a visible tendency of improvement of research quality.

Impact on the scientific discipline

The Faculty of Law has conducted an impressive number of important research projects. It has established itself as leading research institution in Latvia. However it has not yet managed to gain a reputation of a strong partner in international scientific community. It has a potential for such a position in a near future. At the same time there are good evidences of impact in terms of the numbers of research students. There is some evidence of international collaboration as well, demonstrating that the Faculty of Law is reasonable well networked internationally. The Faculty has led a number of conferences and conference participation is generally strong. However, the relatively low publication rates in international refereed journals means that its academic impact is not perhaps as strong as it should be given the quality of some of its work. It is important to mention that research activities of the Faculty contribute also to the practice of law.

Economic and social impact

Legal analysis plays a very important role in countries under transitions like Latvia. The scientific and research activities of the Faculty of Law of the University of Latvia have contributed to creation of favourable legal environment of the development of national economy. The scientists of the Faculty have provided invaluable input in formulating various legislative acts. At the same time legal analysis conducted by its scholars contributed largely to creation of proper understanding of legal norms in the process of their application in courts. The scholars of the Faculty of Law have also provided significant input in personal data and consumer rights protection.

Research environment and infrastructure

The Faculty of Law is offering adequate working conditions for its research staff. It has managed, in spite of various difficulties, to conduct an impressive number of important research projects. It has established itself as a leading research institution in Latvia. There is good evidence of a supportive and well-developed research infrastructure. However external research funding is rather limited. On the other hand, there seems to be excellent support for doctoral students. There is also a good flow through from masters programmes, to doctoral studies. The Faculty of Law has sponsored and contributed to a number of conferences, which again proves a strong research environment. Technical and administrative support for research activities seems to functions quite well.

Development potential

It seems that the Faculty of Law has a strong potential to become a meaningful international player. A number of promising young scholars are producing more and more valuable legal analysis. In spite of difficulties, the Faculty has managed to secure rather stable funding for its activities. It is able to provide adequate selection of research topics. The Faculty manages to attract a growing number of high-level doctoral students. It also participates in one of the biggest international academic networks - European Inter-university Centre for Human Rights & Democratizations based in Venice. Based on information provided by the Dean of Faculty it seems that the Faculty does have clear development plans and seems well aware of its development needs. At the same time it is clear that the Law Faculty should become more active in post-soviet region.

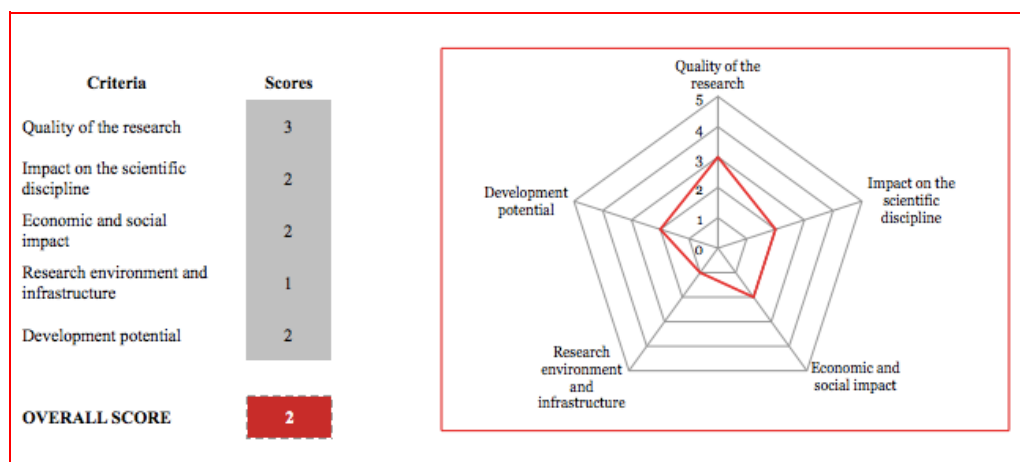
Conclusions and recommendations

This is by far the strongest research unit as far as legal sciences are concerned. At the same time the Faculty has promising potential. An impressive number of PhD students and young researchers create opportunity for further development. The faculty has not yet gained adequate international standing. However it is slowly building more visible international presence. In order to achieve it the attainment of higher levels of publication and citation in international peer-reviewed outlets is absolutely necessary. The Faculty needs also to consider becoming more active in post-soviet region. This can be achieved both by attracting research students from post-soviet countries in particular from Central Asia and Caucasus regions, and by initiating and coordinating joint research projects.

8. S_07_Riga Stradins University, Division of Social Sciences

Riga Stradins University is primarily known for its teaching and research in Health and Medicine. Since 2008 research is organised under the Vice Rector for Science, who is not only responsible for the social sciences, but also for research in Health and Medicine. The Division of Social Science organises research across a large number of disciplines, including anthropology, communication, ethics, law, political science, sociology, and social work. The division has a new (first thesis defence in 2010) and fairly large doctoral programme with students pursuing PhD's in law, political science, and sociology. The division has a rather large sized staff, primarily engaged in teaching duties, but reports only 9.8 FTE research positions in total for 2011.

Figure 7 S_07 - Scores



Overall score

The division is large and heterogeneous and lack a clear focus and identity. The SWOT analysis shifts all responsibility to the structure of research in Latvia. However, the fact that faculty pursues research along a range of areas, suggests that what this unit is lacking is not the energy but a strategic leadership and support.

Quality of the research

The total volume of the output from this institution is acceptable, although there is a shortage of publications in high quality peer-reviewed international outlets. It would be advisable to redirect efforts towards more visible international publication. Many of the top 5 publications are co-authored with external partners. With the exception of Ethics, there is very little overlap between, on the one hand, the research strategy of the university, and, on the other hand, research publications and hosted conferences in social science.

Impact on the scientific discipline

The division organises many conferences on crime and security, but this topic only seems to engage one of the researchers and it is not reflected in the best publications of the division. There are several international collaborations, but researchers from the division are seldom first authors, and it seems that often researchers are invited rather than initiating collaborations. Publications need to be in more visible international journals to make an impact.

Economic and social impact

The division has a strong presence in society and faculty members sit on many non-academic boards and committees. So far, the graduating PhD students stay in

universities. If social science research was more closely tied to the research strategy of the university the social science division could cover topics that are of very high relevance to Latvian society.

Research environment and infrastructure

The division has little funding for research. The self-evaluation makes explicit an ambition to line up with the university's health profile, but there does not seem to be a clear strategy on how to reach this goal. For its size, the institution is too heterogeneous and lacks a clear identity. Faculty is actively pursuing research and the division has an ambitious group of doctoral students. The division seems to lack management with the skills and ambition to strategically support high quality social science.

Development potential

This is a small institution that strives to contribute to many areas, many more than they have researchers. The research focus, as well as the publication output, has a very strong national and Baltic component. There is international exchanges and research collaboration that has led to publications. There is no clear self-evaluation of academic strengths and weaknesses, but lots of comment on the institutional setting. The link between social science and health and medicine has enormous potential that is only being exploited on the margin. With coherent leadership, a stronger focus on selected research areas, and a shift towards international peer review publication the institution has potential to develop.

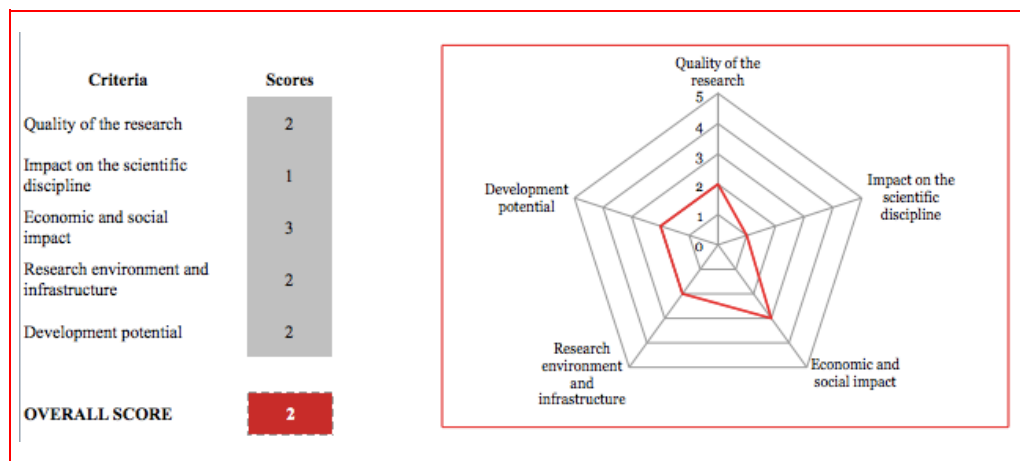
Conclusions and recommendations

At present, research in the Division is too heterogeneous and seems to lack both a clear focus and strategic leadership. The research faculty, and the doctoral students, are enthusiastic and there are undeniably islands of high creativity. However, as a research environment, the Division is scattered and management does not seem to fully appreciate and support the efforts made. Given its position within a solid research university in Medicine and Health, there is potential to develop significant research in, for example, medical sociology and social policy. However, with the exception of Ethics, which seem to fruitfully explore this connection, there is very little evidence that the Division is moving in this direction. During the site visit, faculty told the panel that they experience no opposition or hostility from colleagues in the medical faculties but despite this such cross-disciplinary collaboration does not seem to be either supported or fully exploited. The panel recommends that the Division of Social Science develop an ambitious and realistic research strategy that aligns with the university's research strategy and takes full advantage of the unique national position of being embedded within a medical university. The panel would recommend that the university put in place dedicated management in charge of the Division of Social Science (at the level below the Vice Rector for Research). Such a 'Dean for Social Science Research' should not only have deep knowledge of social science in order to appreciate and critically evaluate ongoing research, but also be given the resources and mandate to support and strategically develop social science research at Riga Stradins University.

9. S_o8_RTU Institute of Production and Entrepreneurship

The Institute of Production and Entrepreneurship is part of the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management (FEEM) at Riga Technical University. It is the largest of four institutes within FEEM which are being assessed in this research exercise. By international standards the institute is large. The institute conducts research in many fields related to production, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Figure 8 S_o8 - Scores



Overall score

This is a relatively large institute in a nationally recognized university. It demonstrates an increase in research publications, particularly in refereed journals, hence the trajectory is positive. In order to move towards international recognition it should focus the research more.

Quality of the research

In terms of research output and quality the institute is a satisfactory national institution. The unit has reported an average of approx 0.5 refereed journal articles and conference proceedings per faculty member in the last six years with around a fifth are Scopus listed publications. None of the publications are in top international outlets.

Impact on the scientific discipline

With no publication and no presence in editorial boards of top 30 journal lists, the impact on scientific discipline is inexistent. The number of Scopus listed publications is also low.

Economic and social impact

The institute develops a substantial range of national & international academic collaborations both in teaching and research, with other academic units and enterprises. It is active in the organization of national and international conferences, predominantly in Eastern Europe. It also participates actively in national journals and scientific boards. The institution has a doctoral programme and has produced approx. two PhD's per year in the last six years.

Research environment and infrastructure

The research focus of the unit is relatively broad. Entrepreneurship is the headline, but a more clear identification of target fields of contribution is lacking, with research output expanding over a relatively wide range of topics. Research funding per capita is very low.

Development potential

The self-assessment describes ambitious plans to become a recognized reference in entrepreneurship and innovation. The development potential is available but funding is a key challenge. It is a nationally recognized engineering university, heavily involved in teaching. The institute is rather active and can fight to have recognized 'neighbouring' reach (former soviet republics). But maybe having national potential as an academic business unit, research is a long way behind of international quality standards.

Conclusions and recommendations

Riga Technical University is the leading technology university in Latvia and its students are in high demand in Latvia and internationally. The size of the Institute of Production and Entrepreneurship is an asset with regards to research, so long as faculty can be devoted time and space to conduct research. The institute's faculty is loyal and devoted to the in university and clearly research active. Most of its research is applied.

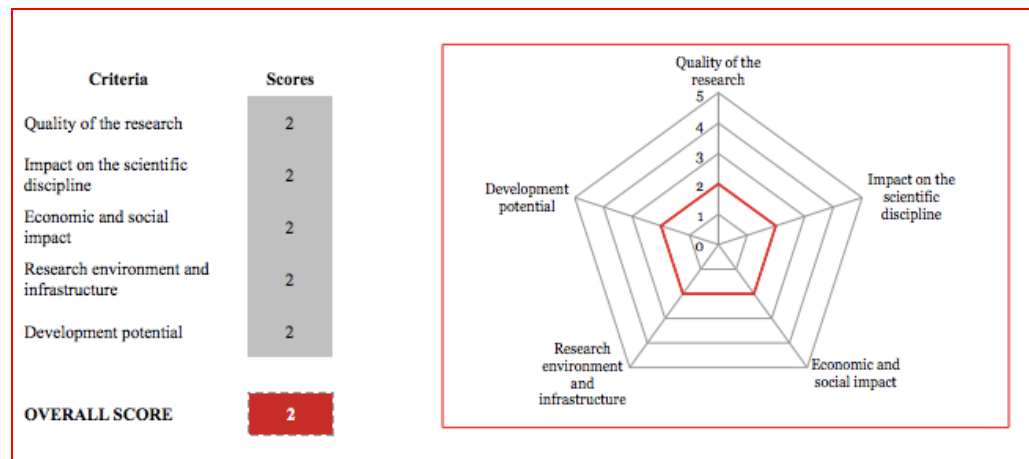
In its self-assessment report the institute lists no less than 20 different areas of research. It appears that there is a strong potential to gain more focus. It should consider delimiting the research areas by forming research groups where leaders are assigned responsibility and earmarked resources. Research projects should be based on core disciplines, e.g. entrepreneurship. The research group should be encouraged to outline a research strategy in which research fields, expected outcomes and preferred publication outlets are defined.

In order to gain international recognition the institute must aim for presence in recognized international outlets. Such publication strategy can be combined with its current strength in applied research through incentivising faculty to transform applied research outcomes to theoretical contributions. In this context the institute should consider conference participation; is conference participation an end or is it a mean towards publication in recognized outlets?

10. S_09_RTU Institute of Building Entrepreneurship and Real Estate Economics

The Institute of Building Entrepreneurship and Real Estate Economics is part of the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management (FEEM) at Riga Technical University. It is the third largest of four institutes within FEEM which are being assessed in this research exercise. The institute conducts research in six areas related to building and real estate, e.g. engineering economics, socio-economic, political and ecological aspects for sustainable development, and land management.

Figure 9 S_09 - Scores



Overall score

The Institute of Building Entrepreneurship and Real Estate Economics is one of the smaller institutes within Riga Technical University. Nevertheless its research output is increasing, its faculty is nationally well connected and given its size and funding opportunities it is performing satisfactorily. The route towards wider international recognition is clearer goals in internationally recognized outlets.

Quality of the research

This is a small institute which, given its size has produced relatively many Scopus listed publications in later years. The number of other publications is also high in relation to the size of the institution, and so are conference proceedings. Publication in top international journals still lacking.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Faculty members appear on many conferences, the institute is active in organising many workshops and seminars, there are no visits from or to abroad, but several international research collaborations are listed.

Economic and social impact

Proportionally the institute organises many scientific conferences and seminars and lists many international collaborations and more than 20 collaborations with non-academic units. However, there is no collaboration with enterprises, and no international visits in either direction. Several faculty members are active on boards.

Research environment and infrastructure

The objective of the institutions research is well outlined. The direction is applied research in energy efficiency including taking into consideration environmental and socio-economic effects. Aging infrastructure is identified as a risk; it may prevent the

institution in research linked to the latest technologies. The institute hires its own PhD's but is aware of risks of young academics moving abroad. Funding is a challenge.

Development potential

The institute appears to be mainly domestic but with international ambitions. Funding is a challenge and it is looking to EU initiatives.

Conclusions and recommendations

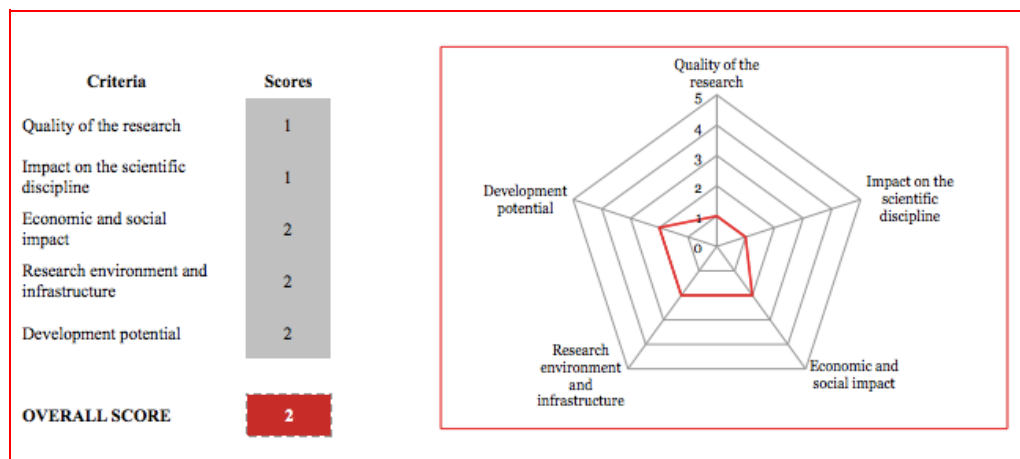
Riga Technical University is the leading technology university in Latvia and its students are in high demand in Latvia and internationally. The Institute of Building Entrepreneurship and Real Estate Economics is one of the smaller institutes. The institute is primarily occupied with applied research and addressing issues currently topical in Latvia. For example, the self-assessment report states that its research on socio-emotional impacts of the volatility of the Latvian real estate market could be utilized to draft a progressive tax system in Latvia. The institute is also engaged in ecological aspects of regional development in Latvia and sustainable energy use in relation to housing renovation in Latvia.

It is not clear from the self-assessment report if the institute is clearly organised in research groups. If not, it should consider initiating such groups. The research groups should be encouraged to outline a research strategy in which research fields, expected outcomes and preferred publication outlets are defined. In order to gain international recognition the institute must aim for presence in recognized international outlets. Such publication strategy can be combined with its current strength in applied research through incentivising faculty to transform applied research outcomes to theoretical contributions. Such contributions should be in discipline oriented outlets, e.g. economics, rather than research field oriented outlets, e.g. land management. In this context the institute should also consider conference participation; is conference participation and end or a mean towards publication in recognized outlets?

11. S_10_RTU Institute of International Business and Customs

The Institute of International Business and Customs is part of the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management (FEEM) at Riga Technical University. It is the second largest of four institutes within FEEM which are being assessed in this research exercise. The institute conducts research in fields related to (entrepreneurial) management, economics and customs administration.

Figure 10 S_10 - Scores



Overall score

The institute is medium sized and conduct nationally relevant applied research in predominantly customs issues. Its publications output is low and not in internationally recognized outlets. It has primarily national development potential.

Quality of the research

The institute reports one published article in anonymously refereed scientific journals and an annual average of approx 15 articles in other refereed scientific journals and conference proceedings. A total of eight Scopus publications. Two journal papers are provided, both of them published in Baltic outlets of low impact. None of the publications reaches a top 30 journal list.

Impact on the scientific discipline

There is no publication and no presence in editorial boards of recognized international journals, hence the impact on the international scientific discipline is inexistent. Additionally, only a small proportion of research output reported appears in Scopus.

Economic and social impact

The institute develops a reasonable range of national & international academic collaborations both in teaching and research, with academic and public national agencies. It has an active visiting exchange program. It also participates in national journals and scientific boards.

Research environment and infrastructure

The institute claims to have adequate infrastructure resources. The goals of the institute's research coincides with the government's ambitions, implying an applied approach. The research of the institute seems rather focused on macroeconometrics. The focus on management is in distribution, customs and taxation. Seminar, visiting and doctoral activities look very active. Funding per capita is very low.

Development potential

According to the self-assessment, the mid-long term target is to ensure financing and continue with its research activity. The institute's doctoral output shows that the institute takes its aim seriously. But funding is low and uncertain and output long behind international standard. The institution claims to provide worldwide expertise in customs research and training. It is planned to increase volume of scientific research through participation in international networks. It recognises that it relies heavily on state funding and sees little opportunities to extract external commercial funding. Instead it will seek new/different research funding, presumably through EU grants. Given the fact that the institution has few international established contacts, it will take time to have some visible international impact.

Conclusions and recommendations

Riga Technical University is the leading technology university in Latvia and its students are in high demand in Latvia and internationally. The Institute of International Business and Customs is the second largest research institute. The institute is primarily occupied with applied research in customs regulation. However, the self-assessment report also lists theoretical and methodological issues of entrepreneurship logistics. The self-assessment report also mentions collaborations with the Institute of Building Entrepreneurship and Real Estate Economics.

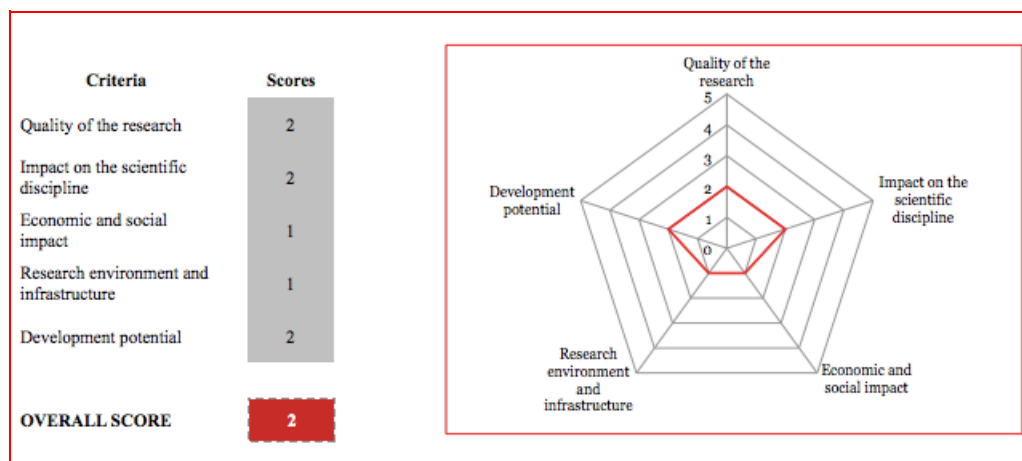
The currently rather weak research record is partly a strategic issue for the faculty management. It seems that the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management should consider reorganising the institute by separating international business from customs research. The faculty and researchers in international business appear to have more in common with either the Institute of Production and Entrepreneurship or the Institute of Building Entrepreneurship and Real Estate Economics. The Customs research unit is obviously a unit which makes national and somewhat international contributions in applied research. The potential for international scientific recognition is more remote.

A more general comment is that in order to gain international recognition the institute must aim for presence in recognized international outlets. Such publication strategy can be combined with its current strength in applied research through incentivising faculty to transform applied research outcomes to theoretical contributions. Such contributions should be in discipline oriented outlets, e.g. economics, rather than research field oriented outlets, e.g. land management. In this context the institute should also consider conference participation; is conference participation an end or a mean towards publication in recognized outlets?

12. S_11_LUA Faculty of Social Sciences

The Faculty of Social Science at the Latvia University of Agriculture is a very young institution, set up in 2011. The primary focus of research is in rural sociology and regional development. As a social science unit, the Faculty of Social Science is of average size (about 15 faculty with a PhD degree), but according to the self-evaluation all research is done outside of the regular working hours, which are completely taken up by teaching, also for Professors.

Figure 11 S_11 - Scores



Overall score

The unit is primarily a teaching unit within the Latvia University of Agriculture. Despite the demanding teaching load most faculty is research active and does publish. However, there is an urgent lack of a coherent research strategy that can help raise both the quality and impact of research.

Quality of the research

The research focus and the publication strategy is predominantly national. The funding levels here are below average; yet the volume of research outputs produced in the review period is somewhat above the average. It is good to see a sizeable number of Latvian Council of Science research grants and also some evidence of capturing of European funding (ESF/ERAF) - though such funding levels still remain low. Even given the huge teaching load, for over 20 researchers only 5 SCOPUS-listed international peer-review publications in the period 2006-2011 is low. Publications have not yet attracted international citations. The provided publications are only closely related to the unit's research focus on rural sociology and regional development. More encouragingly, the publications are all recent and this is a young Faculty so there may well be potential for further improvement.

Impact on the scientific discipline

This is a national player who primarily does research on Latvia and primarily publishes in national outlets. It is just starting to get involved in international collaboration. Though the increase in SCOPUS publications in recent years and the potential for such publications to garner citations gives confidence that the impact of the research of the Faculty will grow in the years ahead - the Faculty would appear to be on an upward trajectory. There is no evidence of journal editorships, no prizes or awards and no committee membership etc. reported. Evidence of international collaboration is limited, but most of the international collaboration reported is based around research projects, not just conferences and visits. The research submitted for consideration tends to be of a

highly specialised character and tends also to be focussed almost exclusively on Latvia itself, limiting the potential for it to garner an international audience.

Economic and social impact

The self-evaluation does not provide much basis to assess the economic and social impact of the unit. Given the focus on regional development, there is surprisingly little collaboration with the surrounding society. Also the doctoral programme does not aim at a labour market outside of the university. So far, the graduating PhDs stay on in the same institution. However, the applied nature of much of the research leads the panel to assume that there is potential for a fair degree of user and practitioner engagement and in that sense it is likely that the economic and social impact of the research is at least reasonable.

Research environment and infrastructure

The technical infrastructure seems adequate, although there is very little funding for research, including access to databases. The unit does not have a research strategy – the panel is merely directed to a statement about the research already underway. The SWOT analysis is refreshingly candid, but there is little or no sense how the various issues identified in it might be resolved or managed. On the plus side, the Faculty has clearly supported younger researchers well.

Development potential

The Faculty of Social Science lacks a research strategy and the SWOT analysis of the self-evaluation points to a number of serious problems that make such a strategy all the more important if its potential is to be fully realised. On the positive side, the Faculty has supported well young staff and there is some evidence of movement in an upward trajectory - it is especially pleasing to see more evidence of staff seeking international peer-reviewed outlets for their work.

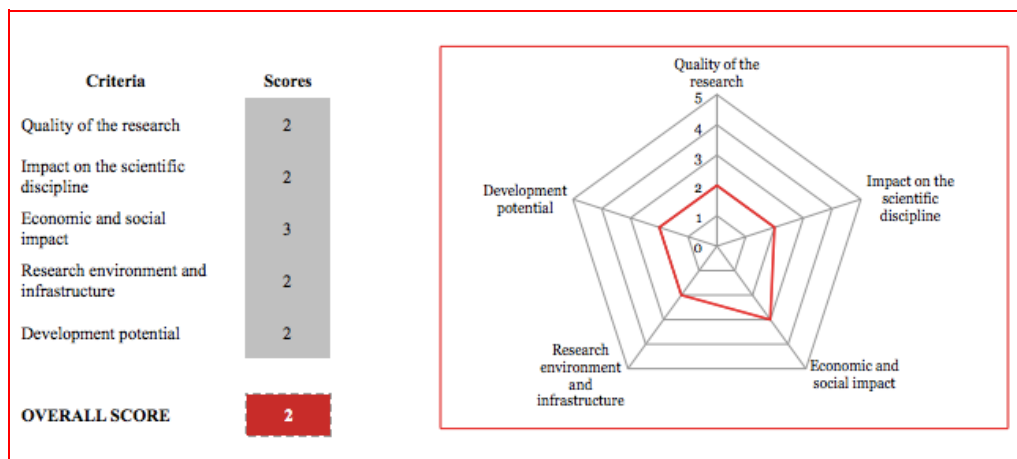
Conclusions and recommendations

The Faculty of Social Science at Latvia University of Agriculture is a teaching unit whose faculty also pursues research when time permits. If the research priorities listed on the university's international web page for research is anything to go by, the university seem to offer weak support for social science research: only 1 in 9 listed priorities fall somewhat under social science ("sustainable development of the countryside"). As can be expected when the Faculty of Social Sciences lack both a research strategy and financial support, the submitted research publications lack a coherent focus and are of rather poor quality. There is some indication that the research and publication strategy is shifting towards international peer-reviewed publication outlets. The self-assessment gives evidence that faculty is awareness of the situation there is but no plan in place to impose strategic changes. However, the faculty is young and ambitious and with some support from the university the faculty could develop into a strong national player. The panel recommends that the Faculty devise an articulate research strategy making particularly clear how the research could generate more impact. The panel also recommends that the Faculty continues to support its younger faculty and strongly encourages the submission of research reports for international peer-reviewed publication.

13. S_12_LUA Institute of Education and Home Economics

The Institute brings together academics working in the areas of pedagogy, psychology and applied art. It undertakes research in the following five areas: Ecology of Education; Professional and Career Education; Competence in Rural Environment; Life Quality in the Context of Home Environment; Science and Engineering Sciences Didactics. In 2011, the unit reported 24.55 FTE research staff.

Figure 12 S_12 - Scores



Overall score

The unit does a range of different things spanning across several disciplines, which leads to fragmentation and a lack of focus. The focus is on rural education, but it is not clear how the unit engages with the university environment.

Quality of the research

The real challenge of this unit is its intellectual diversity: it covers five very different areas from ecology, to careers education to science and engineering didactics. There are some common themes – sustainable development, competences and above all, pedagogy - but it is difficult to say where the common threads really are and therefore to evaluate the group as a whole. The papers submitted were mixed in terms of quality, mainly focused on unit’s own teaching; theoretical framing was mainly good but research methods were limited. Research funding is not that strong and no grants have been won from the Latvian Science Research Council. The numbers of completing doctoral students per academic member of staff is rather low and there is a low level of publication in international journals.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Given the intellectual diversity of this unit, this is hard to judge. It would seem that there is solid pedagogical work going on, but it was unclear whether it was making a major contribution to the development of the field nationally and especially internationally. Much of the publication is in conferences, though there is evidence from the 2012 report that publication in refereed journals is improving. Some of the staff are represented on editorial boards. Staff have also participated in a wide range of academic conferences, in Latvia and internationally.

Economic and social impact

The main claim to social and economic impact comes through the regional role of the university in a rural community; they are the only university in their particular region. In principle therefore they could well have a strong regional impact but this was not

spelled out in the self-assessment document. Staff members have published a significant number of textbooks which could well be counted as having an impact on the teaching profession; again though very little detail on their impact on the profession is given.

Research environment and infrastructure

Numbers of academic staff have halved over the review period; this combined with the absence of any reported international staff visits, in or out, does not indicate a strong research environment.

Development potential

The biggest challenge for this unit would appear to be the lack of intellectual coherence of the research programme. The significant reduction in size in recent years perhaps also implies some difficulties at an institutional level. That said, this is the only unit that apparently has a remit for rural education. It is therefore potentially important in the country as a whole.

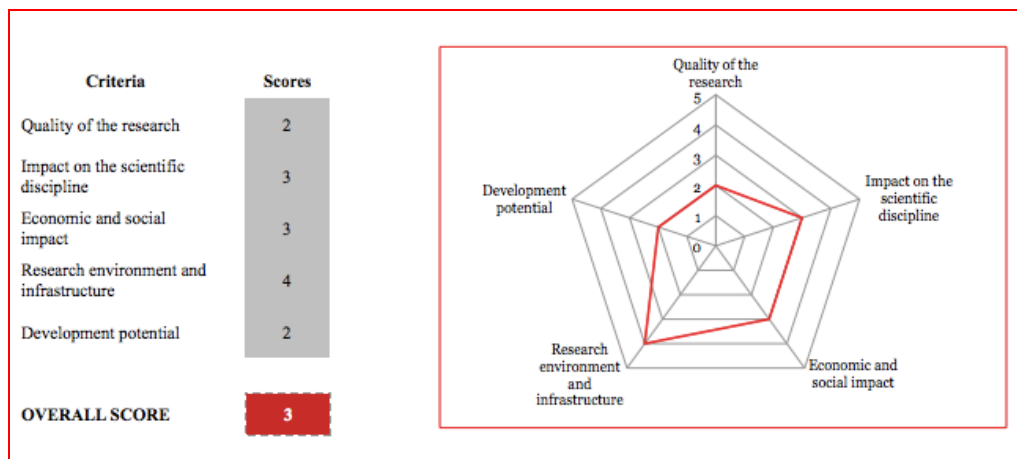
Conclusions and recommendations

Because of its rural location, this is a potentially important unit. However, before that potential can be achieved, the unit needs to develop a clearer vision in terms of its research development. That presumably means concentrating on a smaller number of research themes than at present. The unit also needs to develop a clear plan of how to raise the number of its international publications. In doing that, it needs itself to review the quality of its current output, particularly in terms of research design and methodology. At present, some of its publications are good, others, less so. It also needs to recognise that publishing conference proceedings, even when they are refereed, is not a substitute for publication in internationally refereed journals. Conference participation and publication should be seen as a stepping-stone in the process of dissemination, not an end point in itself. A helpful strategy might be to recognise this distinction in internal promotion procedures.

14. S_13_DU Institute of Sustainable Education, Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Department of Social Psychology

This is a large unit within the Faculty of Education and Management at Daugavpils University. In 2001, it reported 31.8 research staff. The Institute for Sustainable Education is a research body which is responsible for coordinating the majority of research in the unit as a whole.

Figure 13 S_13 - Scores



Overall score

The unit has a very clear focus and vision, and visible impact on the field of sustainable education. However, there is room for improvement in research methodology and the quality of research. It is a very dynamic research group with strong and productive research management.

Quality of the research

It is clear that the Institute has established itself as a lead player nationally in the area of sustainable education. It also has very strong international links which enhance its reputation significantly. There is strong evidence of competitively won research funding, much of it from overseas. There is also a good and improving profile of publications in peer reviewed journals. All of this is very strong. However, the actual articles submitted for review of mixed quality. While one or two were of good quality, others were less good. Most were well placed in the literature, but their substantive research base was largely very small scale research, often carried out in relation to the Institute's own students. There is therefore a mismatch between the Institute's profile and visibility and the quality of some of its actual research. It was hard to assess the quality of research undertaken by the significant number of staff not associated with the Institute.

Impact on the scientific discipline

It is clear that in the field of sustainable education within Latvia, the Institute is a leading player. How much though the Institute has an impact on the development of the field is internationally is more difficult to judge. Their publication profile in refereed journals is good and they have established their own international journals which are now attracting a growing number of international contributors. However, given that the quality of the actual research is mixed, the impact on the field may be more limited than might appear at first sight. Again it is hard to assess the impact of research beyond that undertaken by the Institute itself.

Economic and social impact

The area of research undertaken by the Institute is extremely important; potentially its impact beyond academia is therefore significant. From the documentation provided however it was difficult to assess the extent to which that potential was being realised at present.

Research environment and infrastructure

The Institute provides a strong research environment in that it is clearly led and explicitly focused on a coherent set of issues. There is also evidence of considerable success in relation to attracting external research funding. However, it would seem that in terms of substantive research expertise, there is still much that needs to be developed. The Institute also seems to have relatively few international visitors, despite their good links.

Development potential

One of the strengths of the Institute is its clear vision, both intellectually and practically. The SWOT analysis and forward plans are both very good. The unit clearly has a strong potential to become a strong international player. However, before that can happen, the unit needs to strengthen its capacity to undertake research that is of the highest quality. It also needs to develop its potential in relation to a broader range of research methodologies than it currently utilises.

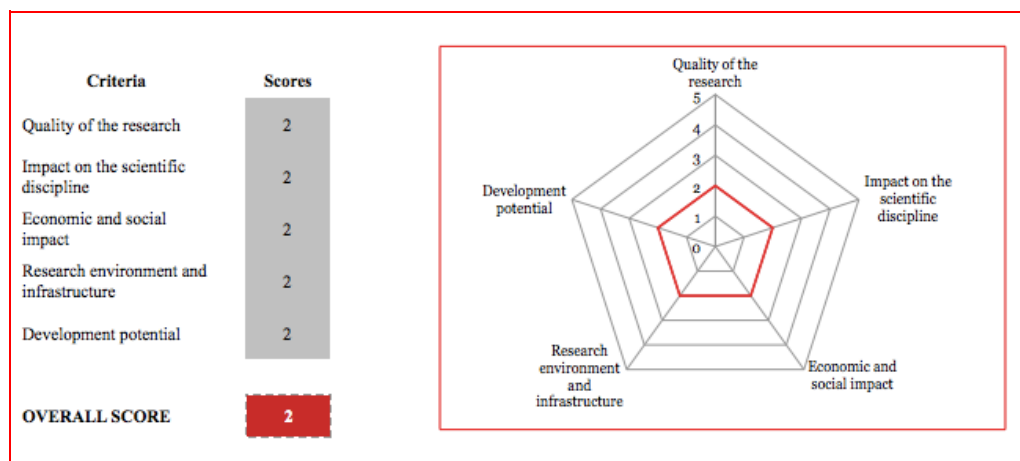
Conclusions and recommendations

The research undertaken by the Institute is both interesting and important. At best, the research it undertakes is also of high quality. The Institute has been extremely successful in establishing international links; its strategy for developing its publication profile is also excellent. However, not all of its current research would appear to be of high quality and is perhaps too often based on a rather narrow range of research methodologies – most particularly action research. While action research is an excellent methodology for promoting research engagement and dissemination, a well-founded research strategy for the Education as a whole should encourage a broader range of other research methodologies. Perhaps the biggest challenge for the University is to consider whether a specific research institute, such as this one, is actually the right structure through which to manage and coordinate all educational research. The leadership provided by the Institute in its own area of expertise is clearly good; however its leadership in relation to other important areas of research was much less clear. The university might well benefit if there was a clearer distinction between the work of the Institute and other educational research activities, which at present seem to lack a clear focus.

15. S_14_Liepaja University, Social Sciences Direction

This is a university that receives most of its funding from the EU. Social Sciences is a large unit reporting 85.5 research active staff in 2011. It has a number of different research groups within it: Educational Science Institute; Management Science Institute; Sociological research centre; Music Therapy Centre; Natural and Social Science Faculty; Pedagogy and Social Work Faculty. Within each of these groups, there is a range of different research specialisations.

Figure 14 S_14 - Scores



Overall score

This is a large and diverse unit with research that spans across several disciplines. The quality of research varies between disciplines. The major strengths of the unit are its enthusiastic staff and the interaction with the local community.

Quality of the research

The difficulty in terms of evaluating the quality of its research is that this unit is an amalgam of a wide range of areas of work – education, management, sociology - and within those areas there is also considerable diversity. There is therefore little sense of a coherent whole in terms research quality. Some areas, such as pedagogy and sociology seem to be relatively strong; management science and psychology are less strong. The papers presented for evaluation were also very diverse in terms of quality ranging from the good to the poor. At present rather too many of the publications are in conference proceedings. That said, the unit does have a reasonable number of publications in refereed journals and have attracted some competitive research funding. Details of publications have been only supplied for 25 academic staff, implying that there are a considerable body of staff who are currently focused primarily on teaching rather than research.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Given the very wide range of areas in which they publish it is hard to assess the impact of the unit as a whole on their respective disciplines. There is some evidence of national collaboration though perhaps less than might be expected for a unit of this size.

Economic and social impact

Economic and social impact is an area of strength. There is strong evidence of close links with those beyond the academy – both at the level of regional government and business.

Research environment and infrastructure

The physical and technical resources seem to be good, presumably as a result of substantial investment. However, most of the self-assessment documentation on this point refers only to pedagogy/education which accounts for only a relatively small part of the unit's activities.

Development potential

In terms of its development, this unit still seems to be at an early stage. Nevertheless a strong vision for future development is provided and the SWOT analysis was convincing. It will however be hard to ensure that the unit moves forward in the way that it wants, while it remains so diverse in terms of focus.

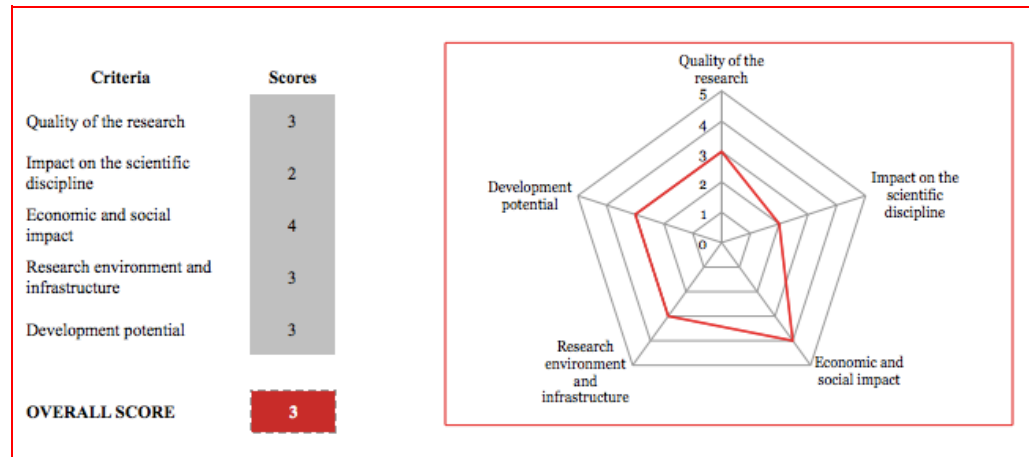
Conclusions and recommendations

Although this unit does have its strengths – particularly in the area of pedagogy and perhaps to a lesser extent in sociology – it does face a number of challenges. The most significant challenge is in relation to the diversity of its research focus. The unit currently lists contributions to a wide range of different fields. In order to move forward, some re-organisation and perhaps prioritising will be needed. A second major challenge concerns the balancing of teaching and research. Some academic staff seems to have very substantial teaching responsibilities which undermine their ability to undertake research. Some institutions, both in Latvia and internationally, with similar teaching profiles, have increased their research success by creating separate research institutes where staff can have somewhat reduced teaching loads. Such institutes also allow the development of more focused research priorities.

16. S_15_Rezekne HEI Personality Socialization Research Institute

This is a small research group reporting 3.3 FTE researchers in 2011. Its focus concerns the problems of personality socialisation and re-socialisation of all age groups. It does this principally through three specialized laboratories: Special Pedagogy Laboratory (SPL), the Social Pedagogy and Rehabilitation Technologies Laboratory (SPRTL), and the Pedagogical Technologies Laboratory (PTL).

Figure 15 S_15 - Scores



Overall score

This unit is very well connected in the local community and at the same time demonstrates international potential.

Quality of the research

This is a mixed picture. The institute certainly has many strengths: excellent external research funding, good publication profile in international refereed journals and a very clear vision of what it intends to achieve. In some ways, considering its size, it is highly productive. However the actual papers submitted for review were of mixed quality. Two were good, others less so. All papers seem to display a clear sense of the theoretical background to their work, but most did not demonstrate particularly original or robust research designs.

Impact on the scientific discipline

As a specialised research centre it is clear that the Institute does have an impact on the research community, both in Latvia and beyond. Staff are well connected to their research community through conferences, editorships etc. The extent to which the unit's actual research is itself contributing to the advancement of the discipline per se, is more difficult to judge.

Economic and social impact

Social impact is one of the real strengths of the Institute – it is well connected with the regional community and much of the work is specifically intended to have practical application. The Institute has the capacity to identify serious problems and challenges and shows the ambition to channel international research into solutions to those challenges. Self-assessment shows clearly and convincingly the importance of economic and social impact and provide evidence of links with a range of different organisations.

Research environment and infrastructure

In terms of resources, this unit seems strong. The Institute has a number of specialist research labs and other good physical resources. It also has reasonably good international links.

Development potential

The unit seems very clear about its development strategy. Its SWOT analysis is impressive. However, before becoming an international player the Institute will need carefully to consider how to raise further the technical quality of their research.

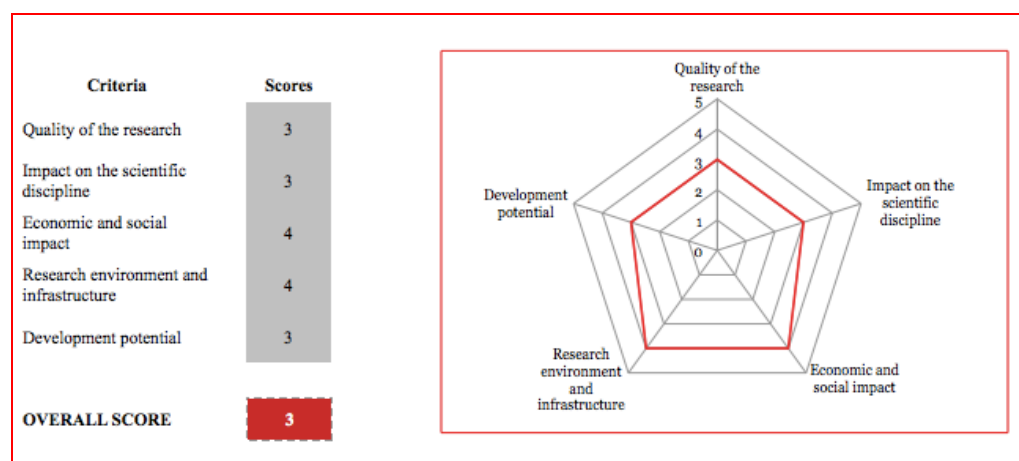
Conclusions and recommendations

This is an important unit both in its region and nationally. It already has a strong and growing profile of publications in international journals, which is to be commended. However, it does have some way to go before it becomes an internationally recognised leader within its research community. In order to move forward the unit should consider carefully the quality of its methodological expertise. This might be enhanced by developing more collaborative links with similar units internationally, perhaps with some exchange of staff for sustained periods.

17. S_16_Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy

The Academy is a specialist free standing institution focusing almost entirely on education. The research unit is a large one reporting 65 researchers in 2011. Research is organised into a number of different themes. They include: pre-school and school pedagogy; music and dance pedagogy; child language research; educational management; psychology; creativity and the psychology of creativity; science didactics and method work environment.

Figure 16 S_16 - Scores



Overall score

This unit is well run and has a strong social engagement. It has the potential to develop into a strong international player. The overall score is a 3, but it is very strong one.

Quality of the research

This is a very large research unit, though it has reduced in size substantially during the review period. As well as being large, it is also well funded. The unit receives substantial core funding for research. It has also been successful in winning Latvian Science Research Council Grants and has significant funds from State Research Programmes. In addition it has reasonable international funding, though perhaps not as much as might be expected by the size of the unit. Overall research funding seems to be on an upward trajectory, which in the current climate is commendable. Overall the quality of scientific quality of research is 'good'. Papers were recorded for virtually all eligible staff suggesting a strong research culture. Most of the papers submitted for review were graded as level 3 (good). In comparison with papers from other units, they displayed a consistently sound quality in terms of research design; most were well located within their respective literatures. One possible weakness is that although there is evidence of publication within international peer reviewed journals, a large proportion of the publications were in peer reviewed conference proceedings. The doctoral training programme seems relatively small, though numbers of students being admitted has risen substantially recently. International links through institutional visits, both internal and external, are small, suggesting that the unit has some way to go in establishing itself as a 'partner of choice' in international collaboration. Despite these weaknesses, the overall quality of research is clearly 'good'.

Impact on the scientific discipline

The size and quality of the work undertaken by this unit imply that it is, by definition, a strong national player. It has a number of very strong areas of excellence, particularly in

relation to music and dance education, where it has a significant international reputation. Other areas of expertise have good national recognition.

Economic and social impact

This is one of the unit's strengths. There is good evidence that the unit has significant impact beyond the academy in a range of different ways. It has a particularly strong impact in music and dance education, but it is clear that it has impact in many other ways too, for example, by engaging with the school system, locally, regionally and nationally and through the publication of school text books and other materials.

Research environment and infrastructure

The research infrastructure seems to be good. There are excellent physical research facilities and a clear vision of the importance of research within the institution.

Development potential

Although the unit has not yet become a strong international player, it seems well placed to do so in the next stage of its development. It has critical mass, it seems to have a depth of commitment to the importance of research (evidenced in the number of staff listed as currently producing high quality research publications) and it has a reasonably clear vision of the next stages of its development. It has also already proved its success in winning competitive research grants. Overall, research here seems very well managed and there is a strong strategic vision for further development.

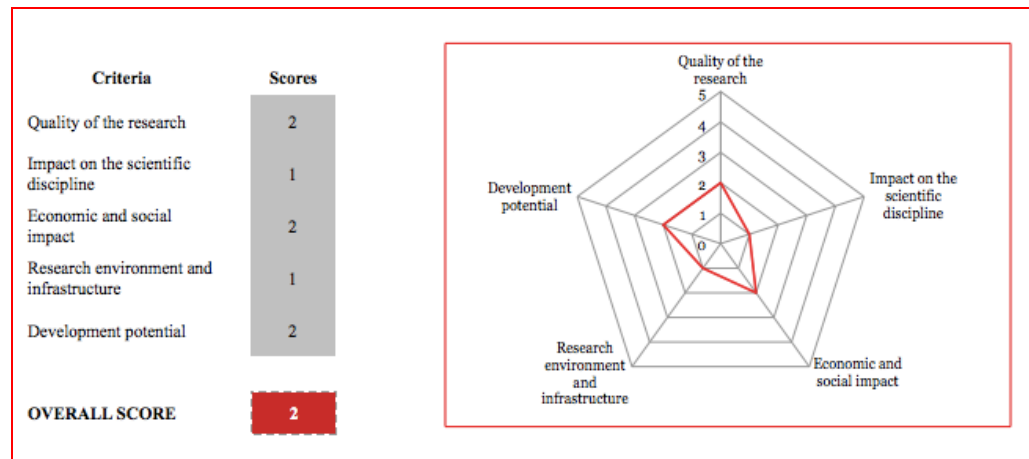
Conclusions and recommendations

This is a research unit with many strengths. It as a coherent focus, is well managed, and has a clear strategic vision for its own development. In terms of moving forward there are a number of issues which it needs to consider. At present it would seem that the unit is more often a participant than a leader in its collaborative international projects; it needs to consider how it can move more frequently to be a leader in such work. The unit also needs to develop a clear plan of how to raise the number of its international publications. It needs to recognise that publishing conference proceedings, even when they are refereed, is not a substitute for publication in internationally refereed journals. Conference participation and publication should be seen as a stepping-stone in the process of dissemination, not an end point in itself. A helpful strategy might be to recognise this distinction in internal promotion procedures. The unit might also consider how further to increase international mobility for its staff and students. Although there is good evidence of international links, these do not often result in longer term exchanges by staff or students. This might be achieved by developing institutional partnerships with one or more universities overseas that have similar research interests.

18. S_17_RTU Institute of Occupational Safety and Civil Defence

The Institute of Occupational Safety and Civil Defence Production is part of the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management (FEEM) at Riga Technical University. It is the smallest of four institutes within FEEM, which are being assessed in this research exercise. The institute conducts research in fields related to Sustainable development of fire security systems and identification of technogenic environmental risks and harmonisation of occupational safety information systems in EU member states.

Figure 17 S_17 - Scores



Overall score

The institute is small and producing satisfactory national research in its fields. Funding is a great challenge. The international publication record is weak.

Quality of the research

The institution consists of seven active researchers and has during the last five years produced on average some 15 articles in refereed scientific journals and conference papers. No journal papers have been produced. It reports seven Scopus listed publications.

Impact on the scientific discipline

With no publication and no presence in editorial boards of top 30 journal lists, the impact on scientific discipline is inexistent. There are no doctoral dissertations reported. Only a small percentage of the research output reported appears in SCOPUS (international peer-reviewed literature).

Economic and social impact

The institute reports collaboration with a number of Latvian higher education institutions, a few educational establishments and a couple of enterprises. Faculty members take part in conferences. Almost non-existent int'l collaboration. Several faculty members are represented on national scientific boards.

Research environment and infrastructure

The strategic goal is to reach the status of an expert in technogenic environment research, to take part in the implementation of national programmes in fundamental and applied research, as well as carry out scientific work, to maintain links between science and national economy. The institute seems to have awareness of its objectives but research funding per capita is low and according to the institute's own analysis funding is a great challenge.

Development potential

The institution is very small and funding seems a great challenge. The institute is attempting to be both applied and theoretical research institution. But the publication record shows that the unit is a long way behind of international quality standards.

Conclusions and recommendations

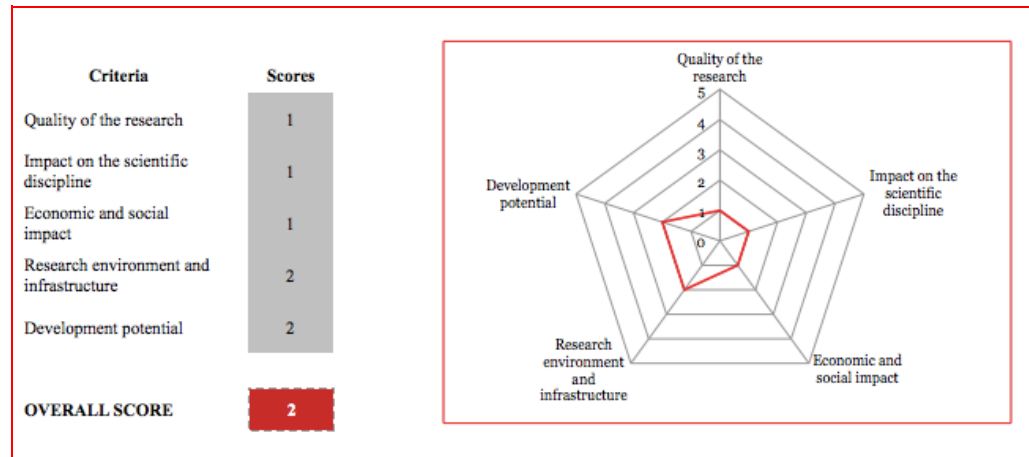
Riga Technical University is the leading technology university in Latvia and its students are in high demand in Latvia and internationally. The Institute of Occupational Safety and Civil Defence is the smallest research institute. The institute is primarily occupied with applied research in occupational safety, particularly fire safety and technogenic environmental risks. The institute seems relatively more dependant than the other institutes within RTU on sufficient funding for infrastructure investments, which it requires in order to conduct technical experiments.

The institute upholds a satisfactory national position, but if it aims to gain international recognition the faculty members must produce more reports in English and aim for a higher international visibility. The research agenda seems well understood and sufficiently focused. The institute should consider formulating a publication strategy with the aim to devote some of its time to seeking publishing in generic research outlets. Given the size of the institute, the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management (FEEM) may want to consider the existence of the institute: is it necessary to retain teaching capacity and competence in occupational safety and civil defence? Or are current and future expected resources spent on the institute better spent on FEEM's other activities?

19. S_18_Latvian Academy of Sciences, Baltic Strategic Study Centre

Foundation “Baltic Strategic Study Centre of the Latvian Academy of Sciences” (LZA BSPC) is not a typical academic institute but rather research centre offering possibilities to conduct research projects. So far it aims at research directions that are also relevant and based on several disciplines: political science, legal science and, partially, on history (all studies are of an inter-disciplinary nature).

Figure 18 S_18 - Scores



Overall score

The unit is suffering from the lack of strategic research planning and the lack of administrative support in attracting funding, both of which are essential for the successful running of a research foundation.

Quality of the research

The focus on this centre is on EU foreign and security policy, a highly topical and important set of issues that have given rise to very significant levels of debate and international scholarship. The centre, thus, focuses on a range of crucial research questions and has specialised in particular in work on non-violent resistance. Yet, other than work on this topic practically all of its research outputs are not in English and it has no SCOPUS-listed publications and no international citations. More positively it has attracted significant levels of Latvian Council of Science research funding and has received some European funding.

Impact on the scientific discipline

It is difficult to identify the impact of research on the development of the scientific discipline. Some of those research in the area of national and international security or theoretical aspects of non-violent resistance; world-wide experience drawn from campaigns of non-violent resistance; non-violent resistance in Latvia, and in the neighbouring Baltic states during the period of Soviet occupation, with particular focus on processes that transpired during the period of Awakening and after the Declaration on restoration of state independence are having interesting innovative aspects. However it has been largely confine to the domestic context. Therefore its impact on the scientific discipline is very limited.

Economic and social impact

According to information provided findings have been utilised in taking political decisions and passing legislation, as well as contributing to rising political consciousness of the general public (largely through public lectures and dissemination of popular

scientific publications). However, based on documentation made available it is difficult to assess such impact. Also interactions with non-academic actors are rather limited.

Research environment and infrastructure

This infrastructure comprises office space, computers, telephones and telefax machines. Staff has access to various databases and libraries. The centre is in the process of creating a database of documents produced by the Latvian exile community. It is foreseen that this database will become accessible to scholars from other research institutions and students. A small-specialised library has been created for use by staff members. At the same time according to self-evaluation report there is lack of administrative capacity to support search for external funding.

Development potential

In future the centre intends to retain and consolidate its present niche position as regards research topics. At least one (if not several) research centres dedicated to research of security issues are to be found in most democratic states in Europe and elsewhere in the world. In this respect the existence of the centre is consistent with international practice. However it has yet to show that it can produce peer-reviewed publications of international standing. The greatest threat to future activities would be the lack of clear research strategy. The Centre need to seek research partnerships with other Baltic countries in order to take up comparative work.

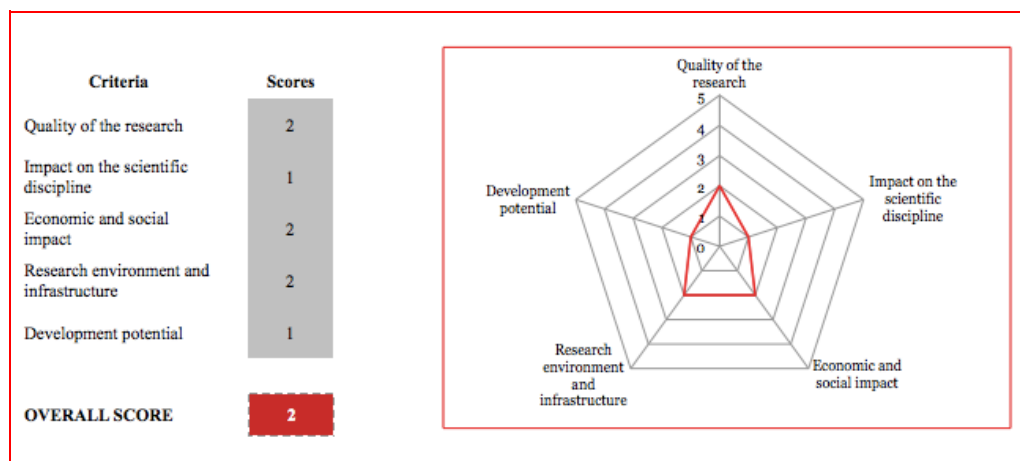
Conclusions and recommendations

The Centre as a research unit aims at offering possibilities to conduct research projects with the view to provide flexible and rapid response to challenges. The legal status of the foundation, which permits effective use of resources and allows engaging additional human resources, should be considered as an asset. However, so far it has published very few articles in English therefore it cannot be judged to have a significant international reputation. The Centre needs to seek research partnerships with other Baltic countries in order to take up comparative work. It will be necessary to focus on publishing effects of research studies in peer-reviewed journals. More than anything the centre needs a more ambitious research strategy to seek international audiences and funding in the years ahead.

20. S_19_Latvian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Economics

The Institute is hosted by the Latvian Academy of Science and it is one of the smallest units under the Social Science Panel review. Its focus areas of research include Demographics and Regional Development. Funding is the third highest of the panel. Its main component splits in approximately equal amounts between state funding and private domestic research contracts, but there is also a part coming from international private contracting.

Figure 19 S_19 - Scores



Overall score

The institution has occupied a stable position at the national level. But its small size, funding uncertainty and lack of links with the international scientific community makes unlikely that the unit will achieve a status as a recognised member of the discipline.

Quality of the research

From the 8 documents in the list of best publications of the unit 4 are provided. This research output boils down to government projects and a range of private contract projects connected with the focus areas of the unit. There is no academic journal paper in a strict sense. And no international publication. Likewise, the research output of the unit has not been published in internationally recognised outlets, and so it has not undergone an evaluation based on the international standards of the discipline. The unit focus on what seems to be part of the list of priority problems for the national economy (demographic transition and regional development). This may provide useful output for current policy needs, but letting research be determined by the topicality in Latvia is not the way to guarantee quality of research.

Impact on the scientific discipline

With no publication and no presence in editorial boards of listed top journals, the impact on scientific discipline is inexistent. Besides, only 13% of the research output reported appears in SCOPUS (international peer-reviewed literature), of which 82% does not have non-self-citations.

Economic and social impact

Given the size of the unit, its participation in national journal and advisory boards is acceptable. On the other hand, its research output is mainly connected with projects of direct current national social interest (Demographics and Regional Development). The social relevance of the unit's activity further highlights the weakness of keeping it isolated from international scrutiny.

Research environment and infrastructure

The research focus of the unit is relatively clear (Demographics and Regional Development), and research funding per capita ranks relatively high in the panel. However, funding uncertainty looms large, both in terms of state funding and specific contract funding. On the other hand, the unit recognises that staff recruitment and retention is increasingly challenging.

Development potential

The self-assessment highlights the competence of the researches of the unit. However, their research is not academic research, and the institute does not seem to plan a move in that direction. Prospects are therefore that it will remain as what it really is: a domestic consulting unit or think tank, not an institution targeting research that can be published in internationally recognised academic outlets.

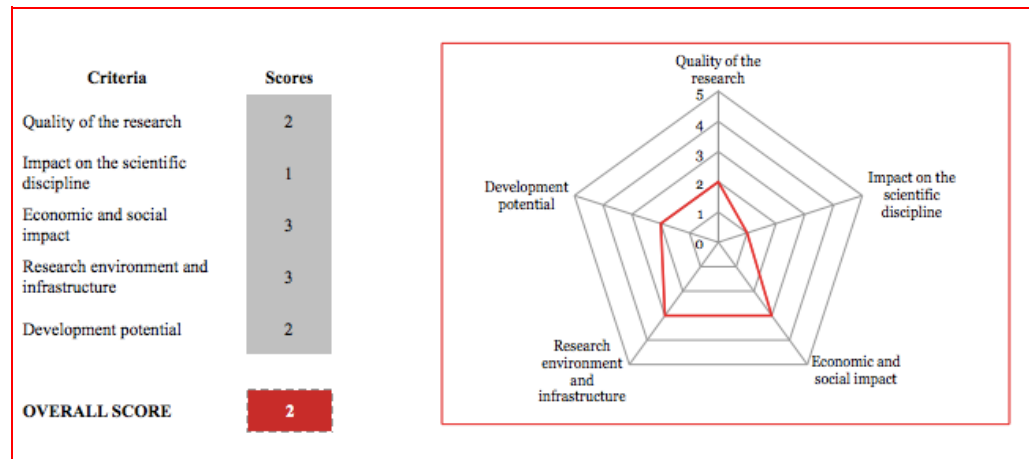
Conclusions and recommendations

The strategy and output of the unit resembles a thin tank rather than a scientific institution, and prospects are that it will keep that status. The recommendation is either to close the unit or consolidate it with unit S_05 University of Latvia, Faculty of Economics to build a critical mass for a fully-fledged research group in economics.

21. S_20_Business University Turiba, Business Technology Institute

Business Technology Institute is the research unit within the School of Business Administration Turiba (BAT) at Business University Turiba. Its main research areas are business management and communication. It does some research in law and innovation. It is a small entity of some ten researchers representing approx. five FTE's. Its main aim is to foster competitiveness of Latvian businesses and to assist in improving BAT's study programmes with scientific content.

Figure 20 S_20 - Scores



Overall score

Given its size the institute is research productive. Most of it is Latvian oriented and applied. It seems to have a relatively strong position in Latvia. The institute is successful in gaining external research funding. The challenge is to combine action or consultancy based research with that of academically oriented.

Quality of the research

The institute is research active and reports 45 articles in "other refereed journals and conference proceedings" during the period of investigation. Four publications are Scopus listed. None in top 30 journals. While it has a potential for becoming a strong national player it still has not reached that level.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Since only a small portion of output are Scopus listed publications and few in international outlets, impact on the development of the scientific discipline is little. It seems that the Institute is gaining respect within the national scientific community. It conducts many applied research projects and it is difficult to judge their impact on the development of the scientific discipline.

Economic and social impact

Research conducted is important for Latvian society. The institute is constantly working on the development of new projects for the improvement of the economic, social and technological environment of Latvia and collaborates with relevant national organizations like the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia, Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Tourism Development Agency of Latvia, the Rural Tourism Association of Latvia, as well as with municipalities and enterprises. This has enhanced applied research within the fields of communication and tourism. It shows that the Institute interaction with non – academics are at satisfactory level. Additionally the

institute's leading researcher is actively involved in applied research on the mass media market in Latvia.

Research environment and infrastructure

The institution's SWOT appears realistic and it appears to have some comparatively good researchers including international cooperation. It sees itself as an institute where its niche is to act as interface between businesses and researchers who wish to commercialize their results. At the same time it claims to be scientifically orientated and aims to increase its scientific publication rate. It is successful in acquiring external funding and attempts to balance academic recognition with consultancy / applied research. The research environment seems to be adequate and comparable with recognised academic institutions. The personnel of the Institute is provided with the premises necessary for the work, as well as with the technical equipment like computers, printers, copy machines, etc. The modern library located in the territory of the School of Business Administration Turība is available for the researchers six days per week.

Development potential

The ambition is there to establish itself as a nationally recognized player and to be an international player. The institute is active on the EU project market and can probably benefit from EU's benevolence towards less developed member countries. If, as planned, scientific institutions established by commercial bodies will be able to develop freely, the institute may be in a relatively good position, since it has a culture of self-funding.

Conclusions and recommendations

The institute is conducting applied research in business management, law and innovation in a Latvian context. The business research areas are predominantly in tourism. It relies much on external funding. If it is to remain independent it will probably have to continue to conduct applied research and EU-funding. In order to achieve a higher international recognition it should aim at growth, probably with a larger partner. It should develop a publication strategy and consider reducing its efforts in organising conferences, unless these are essential for marketing and funding reasons. Securing a steadier base funding can possibly be gained by collaborating with a state funded university, e.g. Riga Technical University in the fields of innovation and tourism, which shares the ethos of applied and sector oriented research.

22. S_21_Foundation Latvian Technological Centre

This unit is among the smallest under the review of the Social Sciences Panel. Its focus areas of research include Knowledge and Innovation Management, Regional Innovation Strategy, International Technology Transfer, E-studies for Education System. Funding is the highest per capita of the panel. It is mainly EU funding, but there is also a part of state funding. Its output shows that the unit is organising conferences and providing consulting and training services, but not doing research. Certainly, none of these activities would be suitable for a recognised academic outlet.

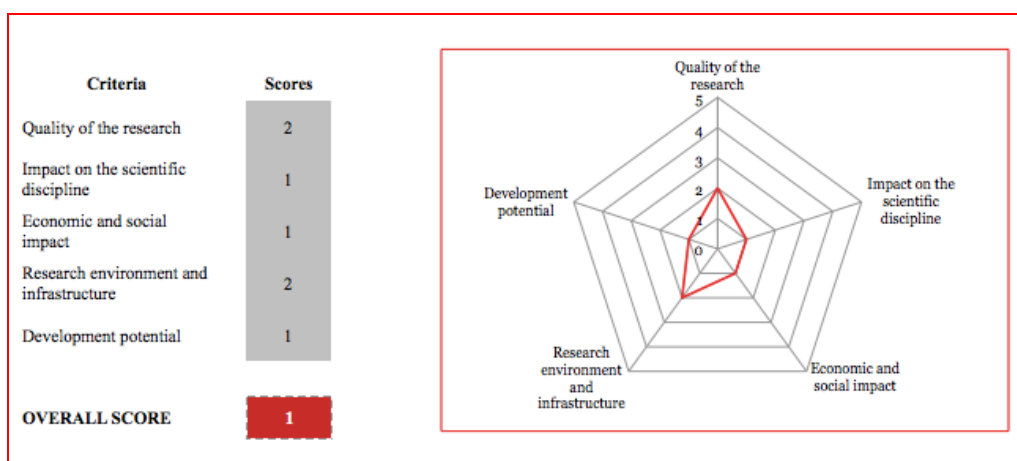
It is somehow surprising that a scientific unit with the highest funding per capita is not doing academic research. If funding is for research but it is being allocated for non-research activities, the recommendation is that the unit's activity must be subject to scrutiny. This scrutiny should lead to a reallocation of resources toward research work. Otherwise, the unit should not be in the list of Latvian scientific institution.

Score – 0

23. S_22_Institute for National Economy Research

It is a small research unit with the focus area on the ‘Analysis of the Latvian Economy’, including competitiveness, macroeconomic policies, resources and development capabilities. Funding per capita is above the panel average. It comes entirely from the state.

Figure 21 S_22 - Scores



Overall score

The institution has produced research output focused on the national economy development potential. However, both its academic and domestic policy making relevance are weak. On the other hand, its small size, funding uncertainty and lack of links with the international scientific community make unlikely that the unit will achieve a status as a recognised member of the discipline.

Quality of the research

The output reported as ‘publications’ are mostly conference proceedings/ presentations of national and Baltic scope. In fact, in response to the request of its best publications the unit mainly quote conference proceedings. There is no academic journal papers in a strict sense and publications that resemble one are local or of neighbouring scope. The research output has not been published in internationally recognised outlets. Lacking relevant international feedback, the unit output has not undergone an evaluation based on the international standards of the discipline. This is a basic shortcoming of research quality, especially if one has in mind that the focus areas of the unit (macro and development performance of the Latvian economy) are well-established fields in the discipline of economics.

Impact on the scientific discipline

With no publication and no presence in editorial boards of top journal lists, the impact on scientific discipline is non-existent. Besides, only 10% of the research output reported appears in SCOPUS (international peer-reviewed literature), of which 33% does not have non-self-citations.

Economic and social impact

The unit does not participates in national journal and advisory boards, even though its research output is mainly connected with projects of high social interest (economic development opportunities of the Latvian economy). Likewise, there is no collaboration with non-academic institutions. In particular, one would expect connection with government bodies directly involved in economic policy making. This missing piece is

telling about the social relevance of the unit. The unit claims that its output is used by national authorities as a policy guidance, but there is no formal evidence of that actually happening.

Research environment and infrastructure

The research focus is relatively clear (Latvian national economy), although too broad given the size of the unit. An effort to clarify focus would likely help to improve the allocation of research time. Research funding per capita is above the Panel S average. However, the unit identifies funding uncertainty as a key threat. In this sense, the relatively large weight of short-term projects in the research portfolio of the unit is a key source of concern.

Development potential

The self-assessment highlights the ambition of the unit to become a relevant academic international player. However, 10 years after foundation, its research output is still of low academic relevance and the unit remains mainly national both in scope and funding. This looms on the development potential of the unit. For being as it seems the only 100%-research-devoted academic unit in the country with focus on economics, its role as a relevant player will only be reached through research excellence. This needs full international exposure, which is not precisely what the unit has been targeting. Prospects are that the institution will have to work very hard to survive domestically and establish itself as an international notable institution.

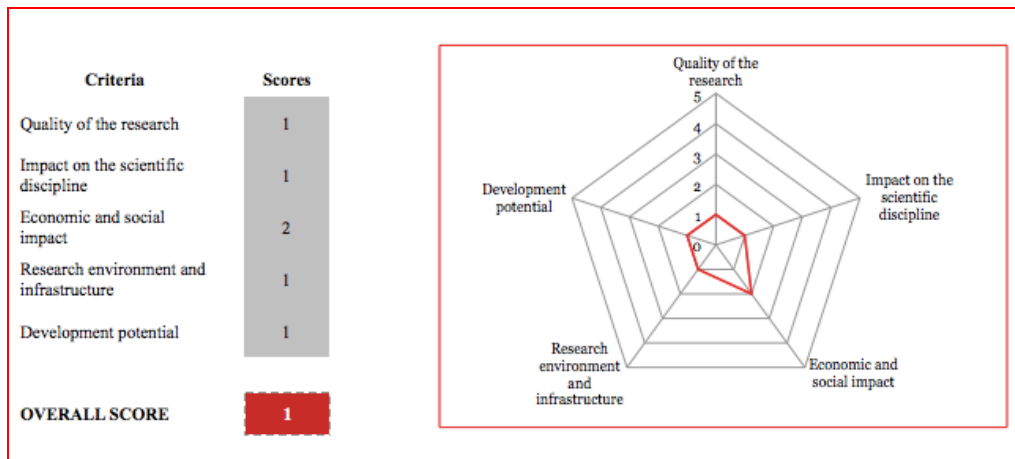
Conclusions and recommendations

Being the only institution in the panel with exclusive focus on economic academic research its survival is desirable. However, its size and funding uncertainty make unclear why is beneficial for it to remain a stand-alone entity. In this context, consolidation is recommended. The University of Latvia has collaborated with the Institute and would be a natural partner. The Institute does quantitative analysis, which can add analytical capabilities to the research work in economics at the University of Latvia. At the same time, a more clear perception of the need to open up seems to be present at the University of Latvia, which may provide the environment that pushes the Institute toward the task of increasing the international benchmarking of its methodological and empirical work. All in all, the merge would provide an additional step forward in the way to build a fully-fledged research group in economics.

24. S_23_Information Systems Management Institute, Business Institute

The Information Systems Management Institute (ISMI) was established 2010 and conducts applied research in economics and entrepreneurship management. It is a small unit which relies entirely on external funding. The research fields also encompass business organisation and human resource management, business education management and social psychology.

Figure 22 S_23 - Scores



Overall score

The institute is young, small and focused on applied research in economics and entrepreneurship and relies entirely on external funding. Its current position doesn't warrant a higher grade. Its future development will benefit from further collaborations with established national partners in entrepreneurship.

Quality of the research

Most of the research is published locally and in other languages than English. A handful of publications are listed in Scopus and no publications reach a top 30 journal list.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Since most publications are in other languages than English there will be little impact on the scientific discipline. The institute has presence in one national or international editorial boards. There is no doctoral programme.

Economic and social impact

The institute lists a few non-academic collaborations and a few with international collaborators, particularly in Eastern Europe. It develops a minimum acceptable activity both in terms of national and international academic collaborations and in terms of participation in national journals and social boards.

Research environment and infrastructure

The institute is young. No administrative staff is listed in the self-assessment. All faculty members joined 2010 or later. The institute itself mentions great potential for development. Most research is applied and the funding per capita is low, for 2012 the funding is listed as 0. The strategy plan is ambitious but unrealistic.

Development potential

See above. It may be that the institution can take off and become a significant national player, but it seems a risky entity. Academic activity is in its infancy and research is a long way behind of international quality standards.

Conclusions and recommendations

The institute has presented an ambitious research strategy in which it lists fields it aims to focus on. It has also outlined a publication strategy involving the publication of monographs and an aim to continue its participation in EU and national projects. All of this is commendable. The strategy is further based on the assumption that it will continue to focus on mainly applied research. The institute also suggests that it sees inter-disciplinary research as the way forward.

It is our contention that the strategy will at its best take the institute to the level of a strong national player. In order to reach international recognition the institute will need to also adopt a more focused and journal based publication strategy. The inter-disciplinary approach may be relevant in applied consultancy based research. Such approach less rewarded by the international research community and by the structure and focus of international scientific journals.

The panel notes that the faculty members are active conference presenters. The institute should reflect on the purpose of taking part in conferences – is it an aim in itself or a means towards publication in internationally recognized outlets?

The institute should consider collaborations with other national entities for academic research in a few internationally recognized fields where the institute has its strengths. It seems that entrepreneurship could be one such field and perhaps Riga Technical University could be a potential partner.

25. S_24_National Library of Latvia

The National Library of Latvia is obviously a tremendously important institution in the national research landscape in providing state-of-the art library services. According to Law, the Library is tasked to perform scientific research in library science, bibliography and book science. However, the Library seems to have been given no dedicated resources to pursue research and for this reason the Panel S does not consider the National Library of Latvia a research unit.

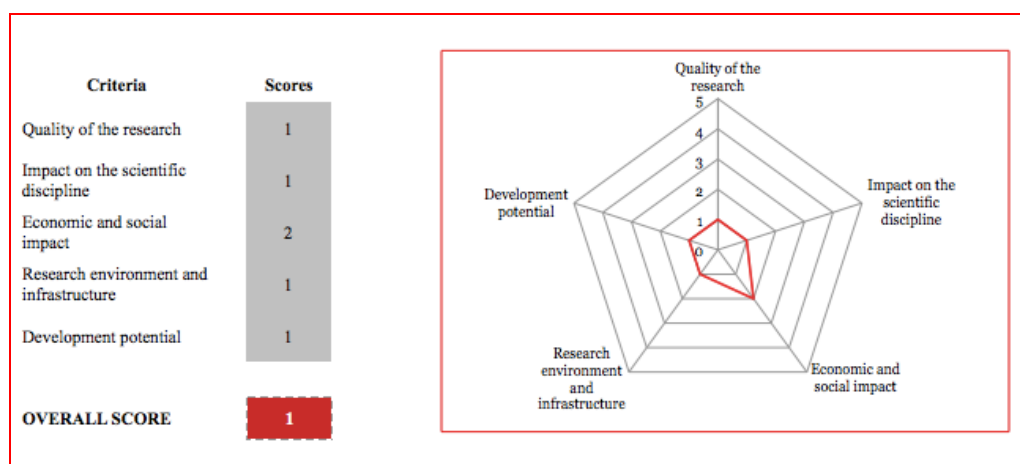
Despite this fact, the panel would like to make the following comment and recommendation. The library has roughly 7 staff who pursue research. However, most publications are in Latvian, and thus could not be assessed by the international panel, and several of the best publications do not seem to fall within the research focus of the library (as stipulated by Law). The unit has hosted an international conference on Digital Libraries and is embedded in national and international inter-library collaborations and up-to-date on recent developments in library science, suggesting that there is great potential for developing into a research unit. With the right backing, the panel believes that the unit could develop into a key player among libraries in the Baltic region. The panel would recommend that a dedicated research unit is set up at the National Library of Latvia and that this unit is affiliated to the University of Latvia.

Score – 0

26. S_25_Business Competence Centre

The Business Competence Centre is a small private limited liability company conducting research since 2009. The core activity is within social sciences and humanities. Researchers also engage in engineering projects. The research staff has degrees mainly in economics. It conducts research in the following areas: Management of business micro and macro environment, business environment management, marketing management in new market economies, innovation marketing and marketing measures. The research covers topical issues with the aim of providing solutions of critical business issues relevant for Latvia and internationally. It is involved in PhD education.

Figure 23 S_25 - Scores



Overall score

The institute is a private company, young, small and focused on applied research. Relative to its age and size it produces a fair amount of research report and has a reasonable network. It needs to establish itself as a strong national player before it will reach international recognition.

Quality of the research

The institution is young, small and research is published in national outlets. There are no publications in internationally recognized journals or with international book publishers. Faculty members are research active, however. No publication reaches the top 30 journal list.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Since only a small portion of output is in international outlets, impact on the development of the scientific discipline is inexistent. Besides, only 0% of the research output reported appears in SCOPUS (international peer-reviewed literature).

Economic and social impact

The institute has some interaction with non-academic institutions. There is more collaboration with national universities and research institutes, including projects and seminars. Relative to size, the range of academic and non-academic collaboration activities with national institutions is substantial. Similarly, its international academic collaboration is visible. The institute also has a reasonable presence in journals and boards of national scope.

Research environment and infrastructure

This is a very small institution with very limited amount of researchers and administrative support. It defines its activity as applied research and regards itself being flexible. The institution expects to grow only slowly through further cooperation with newly established competency centres and business incubators.. Funding per capita is very low. Research activity has not generated any PhD thesis as of yet, but the institute does have PhD candidates.

Development potential

The institution is young and small. It probably attempts to cover too many areas (management science, economics, education and IT). According to the self-assessment, the main target will be applied research (technology transfers, business incubators and the like). It has to establish itself as nationally recognized entity before it will attract international attention.

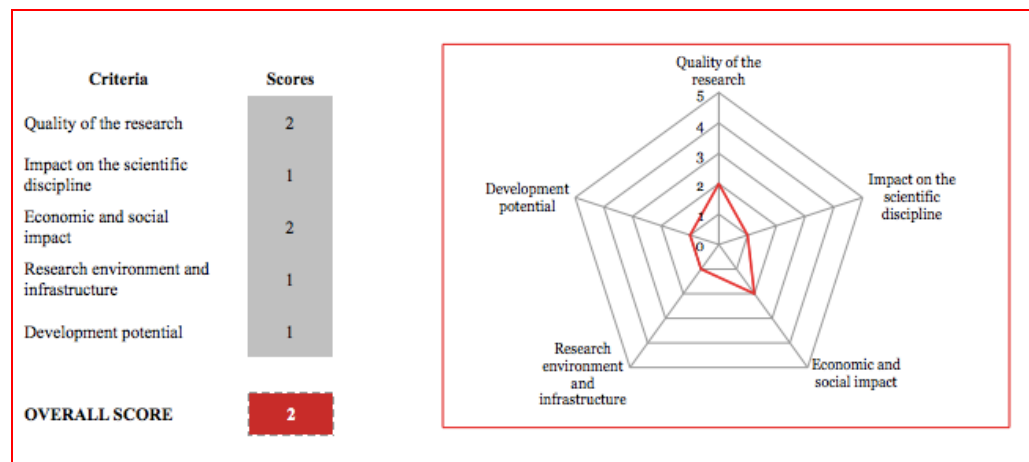
Conclusions and recommendations

The institute is a young private company and relies on external funding. It is active in applied research, which is the main source of income. In its self-assessment report it states that it aims to continue focusing on applied research and that general research only will be performed under the national research programmes and EU funded projects. Gaining international recognition will require presence in the international publication arena as well as presence at international conferences. At the moment the institute is engaged in several fields of research. Unless the institute can find significant growth opportunities it should consider limiting the fields in which it conducts general research and focus its research efforts. This should be coupled with outlining a journal publication strategy. In order to strengthen the general research the institute may benefit from seeking further collaboration with more established institutions such as Riga Technical University or University of Latvia with whom it already has some collaboration. This can probably be combined with the sharing of PhD projects.

27. S_26_Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration

Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration (RISEBA) is a private business school which conducts research in evaluation of macro business environment issues including competition research in Latvia, strategic management and elaboration of business cases in Latvia, management and economics, psychology, finance, IT and transport. It is a relatively large free standing institution and its main competitor is the Swedish private business school Stockholm School of Economics which has a branch in Riga. RISEBA publishes the Journal of Business Management in collaboration with Ventspils University College and BA School of Business.

Figure 24 S_26 - Scores



Overall score

The institution is a good national business school with international ambitions. Research and number of PhD students is on the increase, so is international connections. Balancing teaching obligations with research is a challenge. If the institute is to increase its international recognition research output must be directed towards recognised outlets.

Quality of the research

The institution has low Scopus scores and publications are mainly national. None of the publications feature on the ABS list or a top 30 journal list. Research output is on the increase. The doctoral programme is emerging.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Since hardly any work at the institution is published in top journals the institution will have little impact within its fields of research. According to the self-assessment report of the institution the research topics are management and economics, psychology, finance, IT and transport. This appears to be too eclectic. The research topics are rather more focused on applied empirical investigations of Latvian issues than on developing the scientific discipline. The research funding and the number of PhDs are low.

Economic and social impact

The institution develops national and international academic collaborations both in teaching and research, with other academic units and enterprises. It is active in the organization of international conferences. It also participates actively in national journals and scientific boards.

Research environment and infrastructure

The institution's research is organised in a scientific council, led by the Head of the Scientific Council heads of departments and professors. This body creates the strategy, plans of research and makes research related decisions. It is unclear how plans are operationalized and to whom researchers are accountable. Given that all professors are involved in the decision-making, the Research Council may be too large to be effective. The goal orientation should probably be more focused. The administrative and technical staff to faculty ratio indicates that personnel support services appear sufficient. Technical and infrastructure sufficient. The research focus of the unit is relatively broad. Business Macro Environment is the main headline, but a more clear identification of target fields of contribution is lacking. Research funding per capita is very low. Doctoral output is very low.

Development potential

The institution is one of the larger in the country. The self-assessment report describes ambitious plans to become a recognised reference in its areas of activity. The unit is certainly rather active and can fight to have recognized 'neighbouring' reach. It struggles to have good international connections but has some and should aim at developing these. Its research strategy and plans are promising. Many faculty members have been recruited during the last 3-4 years, which may imply an opportunity. Funding is entirely private and needs to be monitored and well managed. Its focus seems to be mainly in training /consulting. And although maybe having national potential as an academic business unit, research is a long way behind of international quality standards.

Conclusions and recommendations

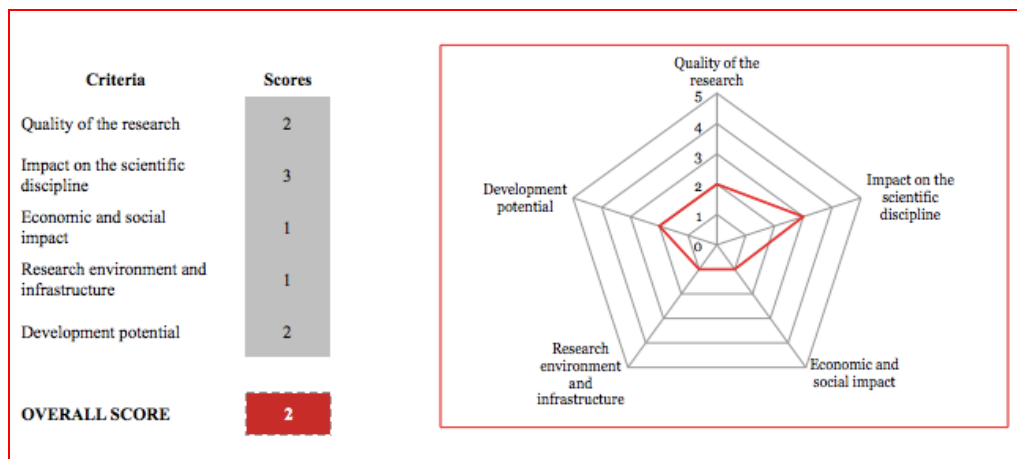
Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration (RISEBA) is a private business school which has ambitious international aspirations. The current activities are very much dominated by teaching but research is gaining in importance, and the number of PhD students increasing. Research is still dominated by Latvian issues. The institute's research fields seem many and eclectic and would benefit from greater focus. The institute's research organisation is ambitious but probably relies too heavily on committee work. It is not clear from the self-assessment report how research groups are formed or organised, nor to what extent research groups or units are operationally accountable, and to whom. The research groups should be encouraged to outline a research strategy in which research fields, expected outcomes and preferred publication outlets are defined.

In order to gain international recognition the institute must aim for presence in recognized international outlets. Such publication strategy can be combined with its current strength in applied research through incentivising faculty to transform applied research outcomes to theoretical contributions. Such contributions should be in discipline oriented outlets, e.g. economics, marketing, et cetera, listed for example by the Association of Business Schools. In this context the institute should also consider conference participation; is conference participation and end or a mean towards publication in recognised outlets?

28. S_27_Baltic Studies Centre

Baltic Studies Centre is a tiny private and self-governing research centre funded to date almost exclusively by the EU Framework programme.

Figure 25 S_27 - Scores



Overall score

This unit is highly successful in what it does. However, it is relying solely on external funding and it seems to be only weakly integrated in the Latvian social research community, which is to the disadvantage of both the unit and the community.

Quality of the research

It is slightly difficult to assess the research performance of this Centre. It has a very small number of staff and has clearly been exceptionally successful in attracting large quantities of Framework funding (FP5, FP6 and FP7). Indeed, it has been involved with 13 such programme awards. That said, it is depressing to see that most of this funding has generated not a single SCOPUS-listed international peer-reviewed publication or citation. On the positive side, there is some evidence that this is now being rectified, with all of the SCOPUS pieces having been published in 2011 or 2012. It is too early to tell if these will attract significant levels of citation.

Impact on the scientific discipline

This is clearly a very successful research unit albeit with a rather limited and narrowly focussed research strategy. It is very good for Latvia to be involved in the Framework Programme and this research centre has played a leading role in that. What is perhaps more impressive still is that this centre has managed to integrate a new generation of scholars, during their PhD studies, into a series of such international networks. That is a major achievement, which deserves recognition. What is less clear is how this experience and the lessons one might draw from it are being shared more widely with the Latvian social scientific community.

Economic and social impact

On the basis of the submitted evidence, this is difficult to assess. It appears that the research of Framework Programme grants have involved engagement with publics and policy-makers on sustainable development initiatives in particular, but not a great deal of detail is provided in the documentation on the nature of such engagement nor the resulting changes in public policy etc.

Research environment and infrastructure

There are obvious concerns here about the sustainability of a research centre such as this which relies almost entirely on access to competitively secured external funding. In case of the absence of such funding it will simply cease to continue the work. That said, this Centre has been remarkably successful over a long period of time in garnering fresh resources for its research effort. Its research strategy is also clear and cogent. But one has to worry about the future of a research centre largely reliant for its existence on a single, competitively allocated, source of funding. It is also a great shame that this unit is not better integrated within the wider Latvian social scientific community, so that its expertise in securing European research funding might be shared.

Development potential

Ideally, a centre like this need to be or become embedded within a wider university research base. That might well allow it to grow and to be less dependent on a single source of external funding, with all the risks associated with that.

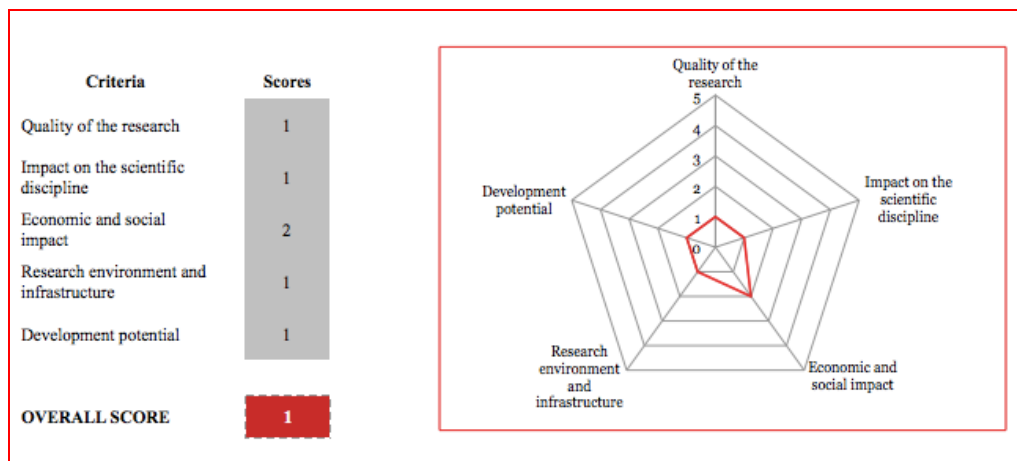
Conclusions and recommendations

This is a strong research unit with a limited but highly successful research strategy. It has been extremely successful thus far, but it is highly exposed and vulnerable to changes in the research funding environment. It needs to become far better integrated within the wider Latvian social scientific community and should, ideally, be incorporated within a University department or research centre (S_01 University of Latvia, Advanced Social and Political Research Institute would appear the obvious choice). This would resolve many of the concerns the panel have about its sustainability over time and ensure that the lessons of its success are more widely shared. The Centre needs to target more effectively publication in leading international outlets.

29. S_28_RTU Institute of National and Regional Economy

This Institute is a medium size research unit hosted by Riga Technical University. Research focus includes Economic Problems of the National Latvian Economy, Regional and Urban Sustainable Development, Local Public Finances, Public Investment, History of Economic Thought, Negative Economic Side Effects. Funding for the unit is provided by the state.

Figure 26 S_28 - Scores



Overall score

The unit is mainly a teaching-training institution, which is very active in terms of collaboration with the rest of society. But in terms of research it lacks focus and a clear mid-term strategy. Without that and without additional funding it is unlikely that the unit will achieve a status as a recognize member of the discipline.

Quality of the research

The research output reported by the unit is mainly of national and neighbouring (Baltic countries) scope. 5 original papers are provided in the list of best publications of the institution, 3 of which are conference proceedings, 1 is a manuscript, and the last one is a journal article. None of the submitted publications reaches a recognised international journal. The focus on the domestic stage allows the unit to have an active role in the policy-making debate at national level, but it keeps it from facing true international scientific scrutiny of its work, escaping the evaluation based on the international standards of the discipline. This clearly hinders research quality.

Impact on the scientific discipline

With no publication and no presence in editorial boards of top journal lists, the impact on scientific discipline is inexistent. Additionally, 0% of the research output reported appears in SCOPUS (international peer-reviewed literature).

Economic and social impact

Relative to size, the unit develops a substantial range of national and international (Baltic, CIS) academic collaborations, both in teaching and research and with academic and public national agencies. It is active in the organisation of national and international conferences in Riga. It also participates in national journals and scientific boards.

Research environment and infrastructure

The research focus of the unit is too broad. A clear identification of target fields of contribution is lacking, with research output expanding over a wide range of relatively unrelated topics. The broad focus reflects a more worrying problem, namely the lack of a very clear future-oriented research strategy. The research agenda seems to be determined by adding whatever topic that be eventually identified as a national problem. Both research funding and research output per capita are among the lowest of the units under the Panel S review.

Development potential

The self-assessment suggests that the core activity of the unit is in the teaching-training area, where its academic activity is visible and has 'neighbouring' reach. But in terms of research the potential seems limited by the absence of a clearly articulated, focused and forward-looking research strategy, targeted at securing funding and international quality standards. Prospects are that the unit will have to work very hard to establish itself as an international notable institution in its discipline, and risk to remain as a mainly teaching-training unit in the foreseeable future.

Conclusions and recommendations

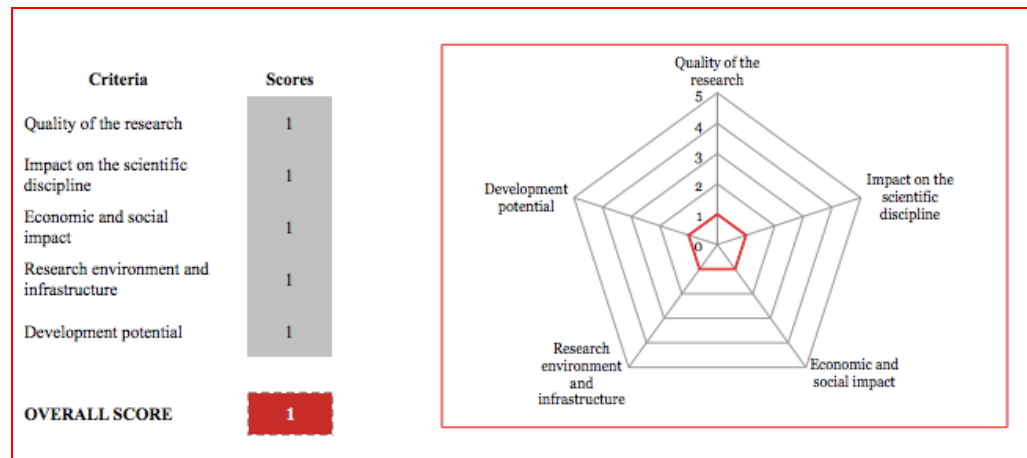
The unit's engineering background is visible in the technical nature of its research work. And the unit probably has the human capital needed to move in the direction of becoming a truly research unit. But it lacks the compass, and so looks at specific national economy problems seemingly selected out of policy concerns, more than out of a research plan.

The recommendation to achieve recognition in the discipline seems clear: (i) set a field-focused research strategy, (ii) set a list of internationally recognised target journals in selected field, (iii) set economic and professional incentives for publications in the target journals, (iv) complement all that with an active research fundraising strategy. In any case, the unit seems to have capabilities to provide good teaching and training, which is also an important way to contribute to human capital development.

30. S_29_RTU Institute of Humanities

The Institute of Humanities was established in 1993. Today the core of the Institute is its two chairs: the Chair of Social Sciences and the Chair of Sport. The Institute has four areas of activity: 1) provision of social subjects and humanities and sports activities to RTU students; 2) provision of further education courses; 3) provision of the courses for school teachers for acquiring fundamentals of pedagogy; professional advancement course for the academic staff of tertiary establishments; development of competences of the academic staff in pedagogy and IT; 4) research.

Figure 27 S_29 - Scores



Overall score

This is a teaching unit that produces weak research with the exception of one professor. With a lack of funding and no clear vision or strategy it hard to see how this unit would be able to survive national competition.

Quality of the research

The unit reports 20 academic staff but only reports publications from 10 of them. In reality the vast majority of the publications are from one professor, writing on the history of higher education. It was impossible to judge the quality of this work as it was not translated but does seem well referenced and is probably of high quality. The other work submitted for assessment was of low quality, largely descriptive with limited research methodologies. A particular challenge they have is the sheer diversity of their research interests, a weakness they recognise in their SWOT analysis. The unit receives no core funding for research. It also has a relatively weak profile for attracting external funds.

Impact on the scientific discipline

While there may be one or at most two individuals who have impact in their field, the institution as a whole is not strong in this regard. The fact that they do not at present have any doctoral students also limits their impact.

Economic and social impact

The unit does not report any interaction with non-academic bodies in terms of its research.

Research environment and infrastructure

The unit can only be judged as only beginning to develop a stable research environment and infrastructure.

Development potential

Although the unit has produced an insightful SWOT analysis, overall it does not seem clear as to how to overcome the challenges it faces in terms of developing as a strong research centre. The fact that their staffs teaches across such a diverse range of courses means that it will probably continue to struggle to find its research focus.

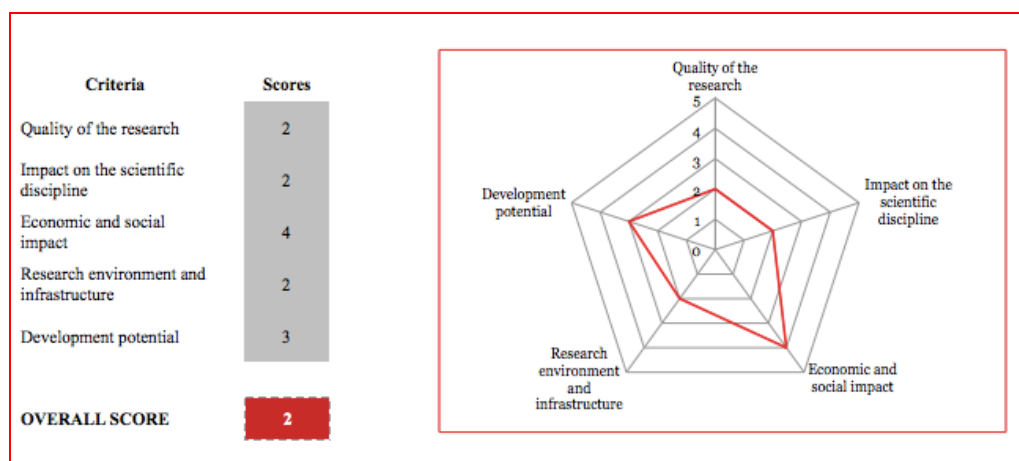
Conclusions and recommendations

At present there is not really any evidence of a research culture in this unit. Given that it is primarily focused on teaching, it would take considerable investment to develop its research potential beyond its current level.

31. S_30_DU Regional Departments

The Regional Departments (or Regional Studies, or Institute of Social Research) at Daugavpils University is an umbrella for research in economics, law, social psychology, and sociology. Since very recently (2012) it also includes Latgale Research Institute, which is truly regional and predominantly oriented towards the history of Latgale. In its total the Regional Departments is a fairly large unit with some 50 faculty, but the number of FTE of research positions is considerably lower (in fact there is some confusion about both the name of the unit and the staffing figures in the self-assessment). The actual research, which spans a wide range of topics, is primarily conducted in smaller research groups within the departments of Economics, Law, Psychology, Sociology, the Institute of Social Investigations, and the Latgale Research Institute. The university has a Dean of Social Science, but it appears that research in social science is managed directly under the Vice Rector for Research, who is also responsible for all research at the university, including a significant body of research in natural science. The unit offer doctoral programmes in economics, law, and social psychology, and has a dedicated and well-supported group of PhD students. The university, and the unit, strives to be vital actor in the Latgale region.

Figure 28 S_30 - Scores



Overall score

The unit seems to be undergoing substantial organisational change and at the present its structure is rather confusing. However, with a more determined strategic research management the social sciences at Daugavpils University have the potential to not only maintain a stable national position but to become a key player in the region and a “gatekeeper to the east”.

Quality of the research

The unit is engaged in many topical research projects across the core disciplines economics, law, sociology, and psychology. The volume of scientific output is quite good and predominantly in article format. There are an increasing number of publications in per-reviewed outlets, but very few in reasonably good journals. Still, a large number of publications are in either Russian or Latvian. The unit does both quantitative and qualitative work, but it appears that research methodology could be strengthened and even more strategically oriented towards interdisciplinary research. Among the publications made available to the panel it is noteworthy, and commendable, that the strongest papers were comparative, aiming at putting the Latvian case into context. The

Latgale Research Institute is to be praised for complementing regional history with engaging in more general debates on methodology.

Impact on the scientific discipline

The unit is a national player within Latvia and also has strong connections in the region, especially Russia and Poland, which could be potentially important. The unit publishes journals and organises and co-organises many conferences. However, with no publications and no presence in editorial boards of more visible international journals, the impact on the international disciplines is inexistent. In fact, very little of the research output reported appears in SCOPUS (international peer-reviewed literature), and most of it remains non-cited.

Economic and social impact

The unit has significant collaboration activity with other national academic units. Its international academic connections are with neighbouring countries and with focus on conference organisation and training activities. PhD students take up job in various places within and outside of academia. Its participation in journal and scientific boards is low and of basic national scope. Several invitations to present in international conference. The unit does have non-academic collaborations but could surely explore those further. The Latgale Research Institute works closely with national museums and archives to popularise results.

Research environment and infrastructure

The institution has limited funding, but compared to other units it is in relatively good shape. The physical and technical facilities are acceptable, and include access to external databases as well as management of a unique database on the Latgale region. The unit edits and publishes two journals. The research focus of the unit is interdisciplinary but covers too many areas, lacking a clear identification of target fields of contribution. However, the unit is relatively successful in attracting external funding, and overall the research funding is well diversified and with acceptable per capita level.

Development potential

This is a rather active interdisciplinary unit which focuses on Latvian economic, social and legal issues. It has a diversified funding strategy and struggles to have good international connections, mainly with neighbours. Interdisciplinarity has attractive potential, but its internationally recognised research output is negligible so far, and without clear research management and a strategic shift towards more visible international publication the unit may well remain a domestic player. The Latgale Research Institute has the potential to become a strong national player in the study of regional identity and history.

Conclusions and recommendations

This is a large unit with a confusing organisation and no sense of shared identity. The individual departments do not seem to work closely together, despite the interdisciplinary research ambitions. The Panel S is lead to question the merging of the Latgale Research Institute, which seems to be predominantly occupied with local history, and seems to have very little in common with the other social sciences. However, in contrast to several other Latvian units, social science at Daugavpils appears to hold a strong position within the university and the leadership seems to support research in social science. Thus, the infrastructure is in place and there is good potential to develop. The panel recommends that individual researchers get actively involved in professional associations at the European and international levels. The panel also recommends that research projects become explicitly comparative in order to raise the quality of research and increase its publication potential. At a structural level, the panel recommends that research management is brought down from the level of the Vice Rector for Research and closer to the social science research group so that it can be organized and managed as one cohesive research unit and truly develop into a trans-disciplinary Institute of Social Research.

32. Summary of the Institutional Assessments

32.1 The general level of quality of research in Latvia in the fields

The panel would assess the general level of quality of social science research in Latvia as satisfactory, with some units performing poorly even in national comparison, and a few units stand out as good. The panel notes significant differences between research units when it comes to research quality that cannot only be explained by differences in available resources, but which appears to boil down to issues of research evaluation and research management. Furthermore, social science is dominated by a few disciplines and in addition there are large quality differences between disciplines. A general problem is that very little research is published in good international journals, which significantly reduces the potential research impact of Latvian social science.

Latvian social scientists predominantly develop their research questions out of practical concerns for local society rather than being informed by debates in then international scholarly community. As a consequence, there are some practices and approaches to social science research that the panel does not recognize from its own experience of research and research management, and which in effect means that Latvian social science does not compare favourably to international social science. There is an overall lack of rigour in the research methodology, and the almost complete lack of comparative research is a particular weakness.

Perhaps because of the strong belief that social science should and can make a difference in the development of national society, the panel was struck by the research ethos and commitment to scholarly work that was voiced in almost all self-assessment reports and that also permeated every discussion during the site visits. Latvian social science also does not have a demographic problem – the age structure is fairly even and there appears to be quite some interest in taking up academic careers among PhD students. Moreover, the English proficiency is overall remarkably good. In this respect some key quality aspects are met and suggests that there is good potential overall.

The numerical domination of Management and Pedagogy has already been mentioned alongside the note that Economics, Political Science, and Sociology are minority disciplines. The panel was particularly struck by the absence of Economics: In most developed and emerging countries, Economics and Management tend to be strong disciplines within the pool of Social Sciences. This is not the case in Latvia, where these disciplines are in their infancy, especially economics. Of course, the first thing you need in order to have an operational discipline in place is a critical mass of academics that have mastered the mainstream paradigm of the discipline. Latvia does not have this critical mass in economics. Economists in Latvia are scarce and scattered across a fragmented landscape abundant in small and medium size scientific units. These economists do not contribute to the development of economics as a field, so their impact in the discipline is non-existent. What they tend to do is to apply economic methods to study almost exclusively Latvian economic problems. In doing that they talk among themselves and with some neighbouring countries' colleagues, and when they publish they tend to do it within the same limited geographical scope. Therefore, the quality of their work is largely unchecked, due to the lack of proper scrutiny based on truly international standards of the discipline.

Educational and Pedagogical research is unique amongst the social sciences in Latvia in that it has a long history – stretching back to the 1920s when the University of Latvia Faculty of Philology and Philosophy added a department of Pedagogy. Despite the challenges of the Nazi and then Soviet occupations, when pedagogical research was explicitly redefined in order to serve state ends, in the last twenty years, the field has successfully re-invented itself so that it is today one of the strongest areas of social science in Latvia. In that 're-invention' it is clear that international links and research networks with North American and especially European universities have been central. As a result of those links, the research agenda as well as the quality of work is now

broadly similar to that which one might find in many European university faculties of education. At its best there are some (though not enough) examples of excellent work some of which is on a par with the best in Europe. Another strength is that as in many other countries, the field is a strongly applied one; there is good evidence that the educational research has strong social and economic impact in Latvia. Given that the field is only 20 years old in its current formation, it has much to be proud of. However, that is not to say that there are a number of weaknesses that need addressing by the community in its next stage of development.

32.2 Key strengths, areas of particular interest

The key strength of Latvian social science is its research in Education and Pedagogy, which occasionally is on par with good international research. In contrast to many of the other social science disciplines Pedagogy has had the time to mature and there is critical mass with a couple of institutions that are well-managed and innovative. It is essential that this asset is being managed strategically and given the necessary support to fully reach its potential.

It is noticeable that many of the research units under assessment are interdisciplinary. However, in most cases one did not seem to take full advantage off the opportunity to carry out interdisciplinary research projects. This organizational aspect is an interesting characteristic of the Latvian social science research system that should be more fruitfully exploited in the future.

The doctoral programs are a key strength of the system. In most instances these seem to be well-organized and teaching intensive, with well-structured course programs and relevant training sessions. European structural funds have been important in supporting this development. In most PhD programs students are required to publish in parallel to their thesis work. The PhD students themselves are a highly committed community that make considerably sacrifices to complete their PhDs, often taking up full-time jobs to support themselves.

Lastly, there seem to be a (very recent) tendency towards more external, international, scrutiny of research. This is visible for instance in external PhD supervision, in editorial boards, in external advisory boards, and in international panels for science council grants. This is a very positive trend.

32.3 Main weaknesses, areas of particular concern

The panel repeatedly came across statements such as “social science must have local impact”. While it is easy to understand why such beliefs are strong and widely shared in a small transition economy with a troubled past, it is clear that this position is directly damaging the quality and potential of Latvian social science. In fact, the panel believes that strong local impact can only be assured if it aspires to a quality of research that is on par with the highest standards set by the international research community. Moreover, it is almost certainly the case that also local research face methodological issues that need to be discussed internationally.

A related concern is the relative lack of exposure of Latvian social scientists to international experiences. There are very few academics who are not themselves Latvian. In this sense Latvia compares badly with social sciences in many other European countries where there is now considerable mobility. And while many researchers are involved in international networks and conferences, in most cases these do not result in sustained exposure to international standards and ways of working. In addition, in many cases it seems that visitors to Latvian Universities only seem to stay for a short period of time (days) – probably too short for local researchers to develop real engagement with their work.

It is striking how conferences are regarded as an output in its own right instead of being complimentary means in the research process. A lot of effort seems to be going into the organization of conferences and the production of conference publications with negligible impact. Indeed, this seems to be something that many of the units are very

proud of. Arranging conferences is extremely time consuming work that could be more effectively put to use in actual research and serious publication. Especially in cases where the themes of the conferences are not even linked to the research focus of the unit. In the view of the panel, arranging conferences should be restricted to established international high quality conferences and conferences that add significant value to on-going research. It should be added, that in some places conferences are used creatively to engage PhD students, and sometimes the conference really fill the role of fruitful research exchange and collaboration. However, this is rather the exception than the rule.

The obsession with conference organizations is related to the problem of the lack of publication strategies. In general, even though an impressive number are in English, research publications are predominantly descriptive, nationally oriented, and published in local or fairly insignificant outlets. It seems far too easy to get published in Latvia, and there appears to be a lack of incentives for aiming at the more internationally visible scientific journals and publishers. The current situation is disturbing, since it is obvious that Latvian social scientists have sound interests, an urge to do serious research, and the capacity to communicate in English.

Latvian social scientists appear to be overburdened with teaching, and even though there are significant differences between the units, the general impression is that little if any time is given for research. The systematic underfunding of social science has led to a situation where much research is done outside of regular working hours, and obviously that affects the quality of research. The combination of an evaluation system that appears to be based on the quantity of publications rather than the quality of publications and shrinking research space is a real threat to a resilient social science research culture in Latvia.

Connected to the weaknesses mentioned above is the lack of strategic research management at the national and local levels. The Latvian social science research system lacks a transparent funding scheme that can explain and account for the differences between universities. It also lacks transparent systems and sound conditions for how researchers are nominated and contracted. The current system seems to offer unpredictable and unsecure working conditions for researchers, and seems to be based on an incentive structure in which quality criteria and excellence in research are hidden away.

32.4 The potential for consolidation of research institutions in order to reach critical mass in particular research fields

The panel believes that there is a need for consolidation of research units in order to build critical mass and resilience. It is not so obvious to recommend specific mergers apart from the ones that have already been suggested in this report (see specifically S17, S19, S22, S24, S27). However, the current number of research units seems to be too large to guarantee critical mass, and the imbalance between disciplines makes it difficult to compete for international research funds in some important areas.

In general, a concentration of disciplines into fewer and larger units would most likely serve the system well. However, because the contribution to local teaching is such an important aspect of their work, research units cannot simply be merged or taken out of their context. Thus, when addressing the issue of research concentration these aspects need to be taken into account.

Given the current Latvian research landscape, one can envisage a structure that combines a number of really strong disciplinary based research units, with a number of really strong interdisciplinary units. The system already has strong disciplinary units to build upon in some areas (Education, Law, and Psychology) whereas attention should be given to build a similar unit in Economics, see below, and stimulate units in Political Science and Sociology, where there are small numbers but good potential. The panel has also pointed to the lack of cutting-edge research in business/management studies and it seems that the state university sector in Latvia has opted out of this field altogether. Among students around the globe it is by far the most sought after subject and with this

follows also that research is serious and well developed in modern business schools. The panel think that it is too important a subject to leave entirely in the hands of international players (the Stockholm School of Economics) and private entities (RISEBA).

To strengthen Economics in Latvia, the panel recommends implementing a consolidation process that allows moving in the direction of reaching a critical mass. This would mean effectively putting in place a research unit in economics with the potential to implement a research strategy that eventually leads to achieve international recognition in the discipline. Building a true Department of Economics at the University of Latvia would be a significant achievement.

Research in Education and Pedagogy units needs special attention, since this is where Latvian social science is particularly strong and this is where the panel believes that even limited additional support could stimulate a distinctive step towards international recognition. Most if not all educational research units have examples of international links and networks with Latvian colleagues taking part in an impressive number of collaborative projects. However, at present and in most cases, Latvian researchers are not in the lead on these projects; too often they are the junior “Latvian Partner”. Research leaders need to develop clear plans to increase the number of projects in which Latvian colleagues take the lead.

32.5 General Comments on the Latvian Research System

From what the Panel has been able to evaluate, social science in Latvia face difficulties on several fronts. Fundamentally, the Latvian research System as a whole does not even appear to take social science seriously, which is evident from the reoccurring theme of under-funding of social science research and the lack of appreciation of potentials, insights, and contributions from social science. Thus, more than anything the future of Latvian social science hinges on a change of attitude and ambition at the very highest levels of political decision-making.

The Panel is struck by the fragmentation of the Latvian social science research system. In short, too much fragmentation, too little coordination, and too little benchmarking characterize the system. Very few units have the staffing and other resources needed to develop critical mass and secure strategic development in the long-term perspective. Almost all social science research units are burdened under enormous teaching loads and a significant share of the research that is nevertheless carried out is conducted outside of regular working hours.

Because most researchers are paid for doing teaching, much of social science research in Latvia is done on voluntary basis. This means that researchers do not have much time to think what, why and how they are doing research. There are very few incentives and almost no resources to do good research work. When the panel asked one researcher what would be on top of the list if there were no resource limits, the telling answer was “time to think”. The panel would like to stress once again that under such conditions it is remarkable and commendable that social science has been able to uphold its current level of quality.

32.6 Conclusions and recommendations

To summarize, the panel found that 1) Latvian social science in general is at a satisfactory level 2) there are research units of great potential, but that there are also particularly problematic units and research fields that need special attention, 3) that while Latvian social scientists are highly committed to research, the focus on achieving local impact distracts their attention away from high quality research, 4) the research system does not provide the support nor the incentives to stimulate high quality research, 5) social scientists are overburdened with teaching and get very little recognition for their research achievements.

Designing and implementing efficient research governance and funding is at the top of the agenda in most developed countries and what is best practice is very much open for

debate, not the least because each research system has its own unique history and future challenges. Nevertheless, the Panel would like to suggest that Latvian social science try to quickly implement a set of measurements and standards against which to measure research quality and impact.

In this report, the Panel has repeatedly emphasized the need to raise the game of international publications and the urgency in aligning scientific publishing to widely accepted international standards. Publishing traditions vary across disciplines and therefore the simple journal impact measures used in the natural sciences might not be adaptable straight off. The panel would suggest that Latvian social science considers for instance the Norwegian Scientific Index, which tries to account for such differences while imposing quality distinctions that can be used in incentivizing, evaluating, and rewarding high quality scientific publications.

The panel has also suggested in this report that core funding for research projects should not only be competitive but also defined bottom-up. In other words, the panel argues that Latvian social scientists should be trusted to define research areas and design research projects that are evaluated by peers according to strict quality standards only. Even with fairly small funding share, the panel believes that such a system has an important normative function in its sole focus on quality. As an example, approximately 50 percent of research social science and humanities in Sweden is funded through direct university allocations, while only some 10-15 percent is awarded in competition through the Research Council and similar agents. Still the overall spill-over impact on national research standards from such projects is significant. The panel is under the impression that the current situation is rather that social scientists answer to pre-defined top-down priorities for research. Thus, the panel suggest that some core funding is set aside for social research that is allocated in such a model. Obviously, this does not exclude particular politically defined priorities, nor does it impose restrictions on university leadership to develop research strategies and agendas.

The overall conclusion is that the potential in Latvian social sciences is there, but that it can be fully unleashed only with greater support. In addition to suggestions raised under section 32.4, the following recommendations are a possible means of channelling such support:

- Focus on increasing international mobility. Research leaders need to develop strategies to increase the mobility of their researchers and to develop longer term visits from overseas visitors. This might be affected if research units develop sustained links with research institutes internationally that also focus on similar issues. The research system would benefit from programmes both for bringing in visiting professors and for sending out people for longer stays and an explicit post-doc scheme to bring people home.
- Focus on establishing competitive funding for research in a bottom-up scheme, where any proposal can apply and where the competition for funding is highly competitive with the funding decision based primarily on the research quality potential of the proposal. Rewarding research success at national level should be considered, by concentrating research funding and making it conditional on a truly international strategic research plan for the research unit.
- Focus on career mechanisms for researchers supporting them along their career trajectory. The lack of research positions and the fact that university teachers have none or very limited time for research is seriously restricts the potential of Latvian social science. Young researchers need to know that a career in social science is a viable option and that such careers rewards high quality research.
- Focus on training in research methodology. As in many other European universities, there is an urgent need in Latvia to increase the expertise of social science methodology. Many of the papers reviewed demonstrated that authors have a clear sense of the literature and theory in their chosen area, but the expertise in actual research methodology is often weak. In Education for instance, too often studies have been based on small sample sizes, often with colleagues researching their own

university students. There is a particularly important challenge in increasing the expertise of the social science community in terms of quantitative research skills. At present only a very small number of researchers have advanced statistical skills.

- Focus on high quality international publication. At present there are too few publications in international refereed journals and too many in conference proceedings. Internationally, conference proceedings are seen as an important step on the way to effective dissemination, not as an end in themselves. Universities themselves should encourage greater international publication and explicitly recognise its significance in their internal promotion procedures.

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