



Slovak Academy of Sciences
Institute of Political Science

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TO: Presidium SAS
Štefánikova 49
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HA

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Bratislava, 7 Mar 2017

RE: Appeal against assessment

Dear Sirs:

Pursuant to Art. IV. §6 of the Research Assessment Guidelines for regular assessment of SAS institutes for the period of 2012-2015, the Institute of Political Science appeals against the decision of the Presidium of 9 February 2017, Resolution no. 1212C, to rate the institute as follows:

“The research is not solid or is repetitive, or is flawed in the scientific or technical approaches“.

Sincerely,

SLOVENSKÁ AKADEMIA VIED
Ústav politických vied
Dúbravská cesta č.9
841 04 BRATISLAVA

PhDr. Miroslav Pekník, CSc.,
Head of IPS SAS

Encl.: Appeal against Assessment Report

APPEAL

against

META-PANEL ASSESSMENT REPORT OF SAS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Period January 1,2012 - December 31,2015

According to §1, section 15 and 16 of Principles of periodic assessment of SAS researchinstitutes adopted underthe regulation of §10, section 5, letterd) Act No. 13312002Coll.on Slovak Academy of Sciences and approved by the SAS Assembly on 22. 3.2016, themember of Panel of evaluators/ Invited external remote expert issues the report with followingevaluation and proposal for Institute rating.

Name of the Institute: Institute of Political Science

October 13, 2016

Scientific quality and productivity

Rating: D

Comments, including strengths and weaknesses:

Assessment panel:

The position of the Institute has been influenced by specific conditions that are taken into account in the assessment:

- This is a relatively new institute and inevitably coping with the difficulties of establishing profile and finding its place domestically as well as internationally.*
 - The Institute has been expected to disseminate knowledge on the political past of Slovakia and Slovaks in general and on Slovak politicians in particular.*
- The Institute as a scientific institution, therefore, has tasks to carry out in order to contribute to the domestic politic culture and education.*

Institute's position:

The Institute of Political Science began its existence on February 1, 1990 under the name ofthe Cabinet of Political Science, which, until the end of 1992, shared its premises with "The Government Commission for theAnalysis of Historical Events of 1967-1970". Its activities, specifically geared to the needs of Slovak and Czechoslovak science, were funded by the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. Since early 1993, its activities have been funded from the budget of SAS, the staffing level of the workplace has beendradastically reduced and the Institute itself has ranked among the smallest institutes inthe Academy's Third Department (Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts, and Culture). Despite long-term efforts of the management of IPS SAS directed at the Presidium of SAS with the aim of gradually restoring the former to its original state from the years 1990-1992, the staffing level at

the Institute could not be improved. The consequence was that although as many as 25 doctoral students have successfully completed a degree, only three of them could receive full-time employment, replacing the founding members of the Institute. Others, however, have successfully filled vacancies at various departments of political science (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Comenius University in Bratislava, Cyril and Methodius University, Trnava, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra), as well as in practical politics (Government OFFICE SR, National Council of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS) SR or NATO Headquarters in Brussels). We pointed out these facts to the Assessment Panel for the Third Department of SAS.

In order to be able to cope with research tasks stated in its Foundation Charter and to comply with it, IPS SAS was *via facti* forced "to operate as a management and coordination office." In practice, this implied that the Institute's research workers doubled as project managers or deputy managers while research teams were completed by workers from other research institutes and universities. What is more, researchers of IPS SAS had to address, due to the Institute's understaffing, a number of diverse topics dealt with in different projects. IPS SAS demonstrated such capabilities during the work on state research projects, and also as a collaborating institution in the completion of the government's project "Vision and Strategy of Slovak society". Since 2005, the Institute has organized "The Milan Hodža Days - Personalities of Slovak Politics" – a project held under the auspices of the Prime Minister, which involves the Government Office SR, MESRS SR and the Ministry of Culture SR. The Institute's ability to coordinate large projects has been confirmed by such achievements as a two-volume synthesising book "Views of Slovak politics after 1989" (VEDA 2016, 1214 p.) which, while not mentioned in the questionnaire, was referred to during the meeting of the Assessment Panel with the academic community.

It can be stated that with an appropriate number of researchers, the Institute would be able, in keeping with the Foundation Charter, to address the research topics in a greater scope and to put them on international footing, which was also one of the foci of interest of the Assessment Panel.

Let us note that although the range of tasks stipulated by the *Foundation Charter* (the Institute's mission statement) does not explicitly mention '*dissemination of knowledge on the political past of Slovakia and Slovaks in general and on Slovak politicians in particular*', as stated by the Assessment Panel, these activities are only a by-product of the research activities of IPS SAS, the integral part of which is systematic investigation into the leading figures of Slovak politics as part of the research into political elites.

The Institute's research results include book publications such as *Dr. Vavro Šrobár - politician, journalist and national educationalist* (Dr. Vavro Šrobár – politik, publicista a národnosvetový pracovník) (826 p.), or *Milan Hodža - an actor in international relations* (Milan Hodža ako aktér medzinárodných vzťahov) (457 p.). It was only upon completion of scientific projects that dissemination activities of IPS SAS took place in

various spheres of society, including popularisation of science. These are often accomplished in collaboration with the decision-making institutions (NC SR, Slovakia's Government Office, MES and Ministry of Culture), as is the case with the permanent exhibition in the building of the Slovak National Council "Slovak National Councils and the Road to Parliamentarism" in Slovak and in English, or a travelling exhibition on the Czech-Slovak Legion and M.R. Štefánik "Years of Struggle, Sacrifices and Hopes (1914-1920)" (under the auspices of the Prime Minister).

Strengths:

Assessment Panel:

The Institute is also a centre that organizes broad cooperation with several further institutions within and outside SAS in Slovakia and not only from political science but from other disciplines. Otherwise it would gravely fail to meet the requirements stipulated in the official mission statement.

The researchers attended (to) conferences in remarkable number and of considerable breadth thematically abroad and in Slovakia.

One of the projects was to rethink the legacy of Marx and historical materialism, which can be a timely endeavour under the circumstances of the past financial crisis and the growing inequalities.

Institute's position:

We believe that the strengths in IPS SAS assessment may also include the fact that the Institute was given an award by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports for the project "Leading personalities in Slovak politics" and was awarded the "Grand Medal of Samuel Mikovíni for outstanding contribution in the field of science and technology" for other research projects.

IPS SAS was also awarded for one of the most remarkable results achieved in international collaboration of SAS organizations. Such was the case with the project coordinated by IPS SAS in 2013 - Visegrad Cooperation and the Future of Central Europe (grant funded by IVF 31110009 and VEGA 2/0188/11 - see the SAS annual report for 2013). Also recognized were the following publications: Marušiak, Juraj et al. : Is Visegrad still a Central European "Trade Mark"? Bratislava, Veda 2013, ISBN 978-80-224-1319-0. Marušiak, Juraj et al: Internal Cohesion of the Visegrad Group. Bratislava, Veda 2013, ISBN 978-224-1329-9. Consortium members: Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Corvinus University of Budapest, Faculty of Public Administration, Centre of International Studies, Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics.

The results of international collaboration of IPS SAS were also acknowledged in 2014 (see Annual Report of SAS for 2014). Namely, the publication by Dinuš, Peter - Hohoš, Ladislav - Hrubec, Marek et al.: *Revolution or transformation? (Revoluce nebo transformace? Revolúcia alebo transformácia?)* Bratislava - Prague: VEDA, SAS Publishing House - Filosofia, Publishing House of the Institute of Philosophy 2014. ISBN: 978-80-224-1371-8 (VEDA) - 978-80-7007-413-8 (Filosofia).

Weaknesses:**Assessment Panel:**

The mission statement defines not less than five extremely broad areas for the institute: international relations, political systems, history of political thought, research methods and political history. One or two would be more than enough for an institute of this size. The institute reduced them to four dropping methodology but that is still too much.

The areas are not specific enough. The political history part covered Cyril and Methodius as well as Dubček and Husák.

It is certainly important to give portraits of the outstanding Slovak politicians to the public. It would be good to know what scientific approach has been used in the work on them. Neither the Questionnaire nor the site visit clarified that issue.

Institute's position:

Both in the questionnaire and during the meeting with the Assessment Panel, we stated that, in keeping with the *Founding Charter*, IPS SAS focuses primarily on three research areas: political systems, international relations and the history of political thought. This framework includes research into the latest and contemporary political history, both of which represent an important and legitimate part of political science. It is in the context of the history of political thought that we primarily focus on political figures and major historical events such as the foundation of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak National Uprising, the February of 1948, the reform year of 1968, the November of 1989, establishment of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993, whereby this research always focuses on the investigation of evolution of a particular phenomenon or specific field of events significant for politics and takes place against the background of developments in the neighbouring and other European countries.

Let us emphasize that research areas in IPS SAS are not isolated but are rather interrelated; for instance, personalities such as M. Hodža and Alexander Dubček are examined not only in terms of political thought but also in terms of the political system or international relations. Thus, scientific results achieved using an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach based on the collaboration among a whole array of scientific disciplines such as political science, history, philosophy, sociology and jurisprudence are in accordance with the Founding Charter of IPS SAS. Book publications, as well as other material, were at the disposal of the Assessment Panel during its meeting with the academic community of IPSSAS, yet; at that time, the Panel expressed no reservations regarding scientific methods.

It turns out that the Assessment Panel showed little to no familiarity with the content of our work, which also transpired when the Assessment Report lumped together "Cyril and Methodius, Alexander Dubček and Husák" as examples of excessively broad historical scope while the paper in question merely quoted utilisation of the symbolism of Cyril and Methodius by the post-1948 political regime, and this certainly cannot be considered problematic. In this regard it is necessary to point out that IPS

SAS does not focus on the authorship of biographical works but on the research into politically active figures in Slovakia in the political coordinates of a particular era.

Assessment Panel:

The fellows of the Institute participated in more than 80 international conferences, 76 of them abroad from Beijing to Utrecht, and, still, both the international projects and the publications abroad are below the level expected. As if the conferences and workshops had not been used for networking and consortium building.

Only two smallish international projects, both funded by Visegrad Fund, and nothing else but a single participation in a Polish led Visegrad cooperation for the last two years.

No European Union funding opportunities were applied for.

One has the impression that mostly individual projects are carried out in the institute.

If that is true, the staff misses the opportunity open uniquely for an institute vis-a-vis a university department to run large projects.

Non research staff seems to be too big: 5 for an institute of 22.

If Tables 2.8.1.1 - 2.8.1.2 are correct, the age distribution in the research staff is very uneven: 5 from the total 12 are above 65 while no one is below 35.

Under 2.8.4 the report states that all the recommendations by the previous assessment have been fulfilled but there is hardly any publications in important foreign periodicals according to the list of publications and also to Table 2.1.8.

No IPSA, APSA or ECPR workshops or conferences have been attended by the fellows, although the institute is member to IPSA.

Institute's position:

With regard to the participation of the Institute's researchers in international conferences abroad and contributions published in foreign periodicals, it seems adequate to ask what criteria were used for the overall assessment of all contributions and articles of Institute's researchers to be negative. Have they been read personally by the Panel's rapporteur, or has the assessment resulted from the reviews relating to individual books and papers or has the evaluation been prepared in accordance with an implicit rule not applicable to social sciences and humanities, viz., if the work in question is not published in "certain" journals, or issued by "certain" publishers, the contributions are said to be "below the level expected"? That view voiced by the Assessment Panel cannot be accepted.

As regards the number of international projects, the questionnaire was not given enough attention. In addition to the aforementioned projects supported by the Visegrad Fund, IPSA SAS also participated in other international projects (p. 5). Examples include:

1 "Disintegration and Integration in East Central Europe (DIECE)" – a long-term research project of an international working group (F, D, GB, I, E, DK, NL, AT, PL, RO, HU, UA, CR, Moldova), existing under the same title since 2011; the project, being part of Erasmus +, is currently specified until 2018. The DIECE Group operates under the "European Union Liaison Committee of Historians" (official body of the

European Commission for European Integration, founded in 1982). The institutional base of DIECE is Université de Strasbourg, Institut des Sciences Politiques; Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj, Faculty of European Studies; Babes-Bolyai University, Campus Berlin. (At the institute, Vladimir Gonč has continued with the activities performed as part of EU's Jean Monnet Project of 1998.)

2 Another international research project, "Good and Bad Neighbourhoods", was launched in 2014. The duration of the project has been set to 2018. Institutional support: Institute of International Relations and History, Casimir the Great University in Bydgoszcz. It has been underway in European network of universities from the Rhine Universities (Freiburg, Cologne/R, Bonn), to Moscow and Sofia. V. Gonč is a member of the Project's Scientific Committee and of the work team.

3 Collaboration in the form of international consortia is long-term in nature; such is the case with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences within the network of Chinese and Central European offices (China - Central Europe Forum) with the institute's involvement since 2014.

4 The project entitled Recovering Forgotten History has equally been underway since 2014. Partners in the consortium, co-ordinated by the Lazarski University in Warsaw, are stable; along with Polish researches, regular project participants include the Masaryk University in Brno as well as the publishing houses of prestigious international universities from UK and US (such as Oxford University Press, Harvard University Press, Yale University Press, Cambridge University Press, Pittsburgh University Press, Toronto University Press and others). The aim of the project is review of the publications focusing on the history and current political development prior to their issue. Although the project has been in progress for several years, the consortium has to apply for the funds on an annual basis.

The Panel's assertion that "*No European Union funding opportunities were applied for.*" is wrong. IPS SAS applied for EU funds under Horizon 2020. The Institute was a member of the consortium of the project proposal *The European Union and Russia*, H2020 - INT - INCO - 2014 Project number 645,841. This project was not approved (Questionnaire, p. 42).

IPS SAS was a member of the consortium of the project proposal Translating Protest and Cultural Opposition in Socialist Central and Eastern Europe; Call: 2020-REFLECTIVE SOCIETY 2015; Funding scheme: Research and Innovation Action; Proposal number: 692723. This project was not approved either (Questionnaire, p. 41).

The institute's collaboration with university departments has been detailed in the questionnaire. IPS SAS succeeded in projects that involved not only scientific institutes but also departments from several universities (Comenius University in Bratislava, UCMT Trnava, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, UPJS Kosice, UMB Banská Bystrica), including abroad (Charles University in Prague, TU Liberec, ARC-VŠPSV Kutná Hora, University of Economics, Prague).

The number of employees as cited in the questionnaire was misread, too. IPS SAS does not have 22 full-time workers. The approved limit for both scientific and non-scientific staff decreased steadily in the years 2012 - 2015 (staffing for 2012 was 14; staffing for 2013-2015 was 13). In the following period, this downward trend still continued with the total figure for 2016 and 2017 - 12 employees. The age distribution of the research staff changed favourably in 2016, and this trend will continue with the retirement of senior researchers, even though the latter have produced high-quality scientific work. The alternative option - hiring more PhD graduates - is not feasible at

the moment. All research institutes need professional, administrative and technical staff, who are not directly involved in the research. Most of them work parttime. Otherwise, these activities would have to be carried out by the researchers, which, however, would be at the expense of their research work.

In relation to the development potential of the institute, the meeting of the Assessment Panel with the Institute's community was followed by a discussion session with PhD students. Its outcome is not mentioned in the Assessment Report. We concur with the argument of the Assessment Panel that the Institute's researchers did not participate in IPSA events. Even though one of our researchers, J. Marušiak, actively participated in IPSA's Congress, this was only after the period under consideration, i.e., in 2016. His conference paper will be published in the form of a study in June / July 2017 in the Czech Journal of Political Science / Political Science Journal (it has been approved for publication and is currently in the proofreading stage).

Societal, cultural, or economic impact

Rating: B

Comments, including strengths and weaknesses

Assessment Panel:

The amount of outreach activities seems to be acceptable.

Institute's position:

We are confident that the societal impact of the Institute is greater than stated in the Assessment Report. IPS SAS has long been recognized by the decision-making authorities. This is confirmed by the existing collaboration between the Institute and the Office of the President, the National Council, the Government Office, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, the Ministry of Culture and other institutions. Scientific conferences and other events organised and supervised by IPS SAS have repeatedly been held under the auspices of the highest officials – the Slovak President, the Speaker of Parliament, the Prime Minister or other ministers.

Future prospects (development potential)

Rating: D

Comments

Assessment Panel:

The strategic part of the report is too short: less than the recommended 3 pages. Unfortunately, it is also vague: does not tell the specific plans the institute wants to implement, nor the methods to be used, nor the time line to follow.

That suggests the lack of strategic thinking, which is unfavourable regarding the future prospects.

The Institute seems to spread too thin to come up with internationally remarkable achievements.

Institute's position:

The strategy of any workplace should be based in reality. Yet, over the recent years, the Institute's freedom of strategic planning has been severely limited due to gradual reduction of staff resources (limit on workers) by the SAS Presidium. This has been repeatedly pointed out (see the Activity Report of IPS SAS). The Institute's future prospects are associated with the existing projects and research areas listed in the questionnaire. However, the expected passing of the law on public research institutions, which will be followed by the transformation of SAS, renders the entire idea of strategic planning pointless.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Comments on the past performance

The past performance of the Institute of Political Science is rather poor. It is not clear what kind of political science the institute has been cultivating. The topics are more or less current, but it is impossible to really assess them because they are very general and coming from a too broad realm. The report does not clarify, however, the approaches used in the research.

Comments and recommendations for further improvement of the institute

The portfolio may be reduced considerably. One or two flagship projects would concentrate forces particularly because they would indicate the directions of networking, advancement in method, long-term interinstitutional collaborations, even library development.

Political tendencies in Slovakia and in Central Europe in general, as well as Visegrad cooperation, would certainly be of interest for the wider international audience especially now, along and in the aftermath of the migration/refugee crisis and because of the remarkable role Slovakia and the region have played within the European Union.

One would suggest that the Institute might turn towards comparative political science, which seems to be the mainstream in the international landscape. Comparing Slovakian developments with parallel tendencies abroad would be useful anyway.

The institute may want to join ECPR; that would make international networking easier.

Particularly the ECPR workshops held every spring would be very useful opportunities for the young and the senior scholars to connect to the international political science and get substantial advice on their work.

It is favourable that the Institute has published works in English; it is advisable to target international journals with much broader visibility than the one owned by the Institute.

Since writing in English seems to be an issue, the Institute may want to think over what help it may provide the researchers with. Some funding for proof reading, even translation, academic writing courses may alleviate difficulties. Writing together with more experienced authors is also a help but that needs funding too.

The age composition of the institute is worrying and to be taken care of.

Institute's position:

The recommendation for the Institute to reduce its portfolio defined by the *Founding Charter* seems problematic to say the least. IPS SAS would thus be forced to resign to its long-standing efforts to embrace the research areas in their full scope and depth, which, however, would require, as already mentioned, return to the staffing levels of the beginning of the Institute's operation in 1990-1992. The recommendation goes against the *Founding Charter* and the Institute's mission statement, instead of it being formulated to create adequate conditions for successful completion of all the tasks undertaken by IPS SAS.

As regards the recommendation of the Assessment Panel, "*Political tendencies in Slovakia and in Central Europe in general, as well as Visegrad cooperation would certainly be of interest for the wider international audience especially now, along and in the aftermath of the migration/refugee crisis and because of the remarkable role Slovakia and the region have played within the European Union.*", we must state that the Assessment Panel failed to notice that the scientific research focused on the V4 and central Europe has already been in progress for several years, as evidenced by the questionnaire, including the already issued book publications (pp. 7-8; 39).

We agree with the recommendations of the Assessment Panel regarding the Institute's involvement in international projects and publication of works written in English in international journals. So far we have given preference to publishing books written in, or translated into, English, to offer the reader broader and deeper knowledge of the topics under consideration than that provided by articles in journals. Our books in English can be found in libraries in America and Western Europe as well as in China and Japan.

The recommendation to improve (academic) writing in English has already been addressed through the recruitment of a qualified and skilled translator, who also edits and proofreads articles and studies, preparing them for publication to meet the required criteria. Furthermore, with regard to publishing in other languages than English, our authors may consult our fellow worker from Germany, who, as mentioned in the questionnaire (p. 47), has joined IPS SAS SASPRO project for a period of three years.

We are fully aware that Slovak as a means of communication could have posed a barrier for the Assessment Panel, which was then unable to grasp fully the range and depth of work accomplished by the Institute; this may doubtless have distorted the assessment results, however, as correctly stated by the Panel, to enable the Institute's researchers to publish their contributions in good English, the Institute will need funds allocated for this purpose.

The area of political history, as well as the history of political thought and political ideas in Slovakia, provide a space whose thorough understanding in its continuity is vital for the political, social and national-state development. At the same time, it cannot be regarded as exclusively a Slovak domain of interest, but - as shown by the past experience and practice - also the area of ever-increasing interest not only to the Central European region and closest neighbours of Slovakia, which share a common political history with our country, but also to German and even Japanese and Chinese science.

Given that SAS and its social sciences and humanities institutes play a specific role in building Slovak national identity, it is natural that the mission of IPSSAS is to

1 act as some sort of umbrella institution and a bridge between political science institutes and departments in Slovakia

2. act as a basic platform for political research within the still-young and emerging discipline, but also to remove the blank spaces in the research areas dealt with by the other, either political science or related scientific institutions, especially to explore more recent political history of Slovakia and the history of political thought, particularly the history of Slovak political thinking. In this regard, a major theme of leading figures in Slovak politics as part of research into political elites – i.e., their origins, institutionalization, formation of political representation in Slovakia and the professionalisation of political activity in Slovakia, ultimately creates a continuous basis for research into all areas of development of Slovak politics.

As part of this assignment, IPS SAS should continue to operate in full, not least because it represents an interdisciplinary system of sciences.

Proposal of overall institute rating: D

The research is not solid or is repetitive, or it is flawed in the scientific or technical approaches.

Final statement of IPS SAS:

The Institute of Political Science SAS disagrees with its overall assessment marked D, as well as with the verbal evaluation. Following the analysis of the Assessment Report, we pointed out that a number of arguments were to the detriment of IPS SAS and were actually in conflict with the data stated in the questionnaire. Furthermore, we have encountered some inconsistencies such as when the Assessment Panel recommends that IPS SAS should focus on more general themes of Central Europe and V4, only to criticize this same approach later. What is also surprising is criticism of the scientific methods used, as this issue was already addressed during the meeting with the academic community, which equally holds for future plans and ambitions of IPS SAS under real conditions in SAS and in the Slovak Republic.

We had expected that the overall assessment would include factual criticism of the work and scientific achievements of IPS SAS. However, this was not to be. Hence, we view the assessment as negativistic and contrary to what had been declared, i.e., that the conclusions and recommendations would be motivating.

As a result, we appeal against the Report's rating of the Institute, which placed it in category (D), described as "the research is not solid or is repetitive or flawed in the scientific or technical approaches", and demand its revision.