



A4L_ACTIONS

Alliance for Life Sciences: From Strategies to Actions in Central and Eastern Europe

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PEER-EVALUATIONS DESCRIBED IN D1.3.....	4
Case study 1: ISAB Evaluation of Research Excellence at CEITEC MU in 2022.....	4
Case study 2: ISAB evaluation at ICRC FNUSA in 2021.....	5
Case study 3: Peer-review evaluation of the Biomedical Research Center SAS in 2022.....	6
MAPPING EVALUATION PROCESSES AND FUTURE PLANS FOR PEER-REVIEW ASSESSMENTS AT A4L_ACTIONS PARTNERS.....	9
CONCLUSION.....	13

INTRODUCTION

One of the key A4L_ACTIONS project objectives depicted in the WP1 was to promote an institutional culture that nurtures excellence in science through embedding international scientific evaluation as a strategic management tool. Our task was to deliver and pilot a full model of institutional peer evaluation ready for take-up by other CEE R&I organizations. We aimed to show that independent feedback is an important factor in decision making, can bring critical development impulses, and drive the evaluated individuals and institutions towards reflection on their goals, strategies and actions. We expect that improvement in the culture of evaluation has the potential to disrupt the static environment in CEE Health R&I institutions and become a driver of positive change.

To prepare the background information, we first designed detailed template and elaborated a comprehensive self-assessment report consisting of the SWOT analysis of both internal and external conditions, research culture, managerial practices, resources as well as responsible metrics evaluated in the context of a quantitative benchmarking study (see Deliverables D1.1 and D1.2). The report mapped the partners' external and internal environment as well as research-related facts and figures at the beginning of the project performance period. It has allowed on one hand to identify aspects to be improved and on the other hand to find inspiration for the implementation of progressive changes. The public version of the Self-assessment is available at <https://alliance4life.ceitec.cz/public-version-of-self-assessment-report/>.

As the next step, three A4L_ACTIONS partners, namely CEITEC MU, FNUSA ICRC and BMC SAS have summarised their experiences with peer evaluations by International scientific advisory boards (ISAB) at institutional and/or research group levels in the Deliverable D1.3. To share good practices with other institutes, the peer evaluation reports were provided to all A4L_ACTIONS partners as detailed case studies, describing objectives, timing, scope and organisation of the evaluations, ISAB rules and composition, evaluation procedures, grading, recommendations. At the end of the D1.3 document, each evaluation type was analysed with respect to their advantages and disadvantages.

In this deliverable D1.4, we inform how the assessment results have been reflected in the managerial actions and the institutional strategies. The first part of this document contains reports on implementation of recommendations from the peer-evaluations described in D1.3, whereas the second part describes diversity of external and/or internal evaluations executed at the A4L_ACTIONS partners, challenges of their mutual harmonisations and alignments with the CoARA principles.

REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PEER-EVALUATIONS DESCRIBED IN D1.3

Case study 1: ISAB Evaluation of Research Excellence at CEITEC MU in 2022



As part of the evaluation of the scientific excellence of CEITEC MU that was accomplished in the fall of 2022, 27 research groups were evaluated. The evaluation was conducted as an informed peer review. The evaluation was carried out by an international scientific advisory board (ISAB) of 12 prominent researchers. ISAB made an evaluation on the basis of a written report summarizing key aspects of each research group (RG) over the last 5 years of their existence.

During the onsite visit, the evaluators had the opportunity to see most (24) RGs present their scientific story in a 10-minute structured presentation. Subsequently, each research group leader (RGL) had a personal 45-minute interview with two evaluators. The ISAB then discussed the outcomes of the evaluation across all RGs, awarded final grades, and provided recommendations for individual RGs and for the institution as a whole to promote research quality and overall institutional development. The results of the evaluation were subsequently shared with the management of CEITEC MU and individual research group leaders. They could appeal the results of the evaluation to the Director of CEITEC MU according to defined rules. As part of the appeals process, 4 appeals were received and forwarded to the Head of ISAB, Dirk Inzé, for further consideration, who assessed the merits of the appeals submitted (see below).

Through the analysis of the results, consultations with the heads of research programmes, and subsequent consultations with the RGLs who either appealed against the result or were rated 1 (insufficient) or 2 (satisfactory), the CEITEC MU management proposed specific steps for the implementation of peer review evaluation:

1. During 2023, the research group leaders developed a plan for implementing the ISAB recommendations, assessing the relevance of the recommendations, and proposing the form of implementation, i.e., the specific activities to be implemented and their timeline. They provided this plan to the Director of CEITEC MU by October 2023. The implementation plan and the way of implementation will be monitored on yearly basis and be the part of the scientific evaluation in 2027.
2. Research groups that were rated 4 (very good) and 5 (outstanding) were endorsed to implement the ISAB recommendations as they see fit. If consultation with CEITEC MU management was required, a meeting with the Director of CEITEC MU could be requested.
3. Research groups rated 3 (good) had to present their implementation plan to the Director of CEITEC MU and his deputies in interviews.
4. For research groups rated 1 (insufficient) or 2 (satisfactory), negotiations were initiated immediately after the evaluation process was completed. These groups were addressed on a case-by-case basis. Certain groups have entered a specific phase designed for gradual discontinuation, with termination dates set for at least one year in the future or adjusted according to the group's specific requirements. This ensures a smooth transition without major disruptions to grant execution or the members' activities. For one particular group, an initial evaluation revealed inconsistencies. Upon reevaluation, the group was classified with a rating of 3 (good), aligning it with the corresponding procedural pathway.

5. The implementation plan of the recommendations for CEITEC MU as an institution was developed under the guarantee of the Scientific Secretary and presented to the management of the Masaryk university. ISAB recommendations were translated into concrete activities with a deadline for implementation and identification of KPIs. This basis was used by the university management to create a financial contract with CEITEC MU.

Case study 2: ISAB evaluation at ICRC FNUSA in 2021



Evaluation of the clinical and pre-clinical groups of the ICRC, concerning the years 2021/2022 took place between the 2nd and 24th November 2023. On the premises of the International Clinical Research Center (ICRC), an International Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB) of fifteen prominent world scientists gathered to evaluate the functioning of research teams and their position in comparison with the standard of European institutions. The task of the foreign experts of this year's evaluation at the ICRC was not only to analyse the scientific quality and the results and contributions of the teams for specific areas of research, but also to evaluate the quality of the management of each research team and its financial sustainability. In the resulting evaluation reports, the evaluators also reflected on the ICRC's ability to effectively respond to scientific challenges and its ability to contribute to scientific dialogue and innovation.

In general, the evaluation took place in five evaluation panels, with three foreign evaluators present in each panel and four research teams being assessed. The evaluators for each of the panels were selected based on their expertise and significant experience in a specific area of research. The clinical and pre-clinical panels were divided into their respective subpanels, which carried out the interviews and drafted their preliminary assessments based on the background materials provided in advance and the 20-minute presentations of research team leaders and following 60-minute discussions. In separate closed panel sessions, the evaluators then discussed their opinions and findings and arrived at a consensus, which then formed the basis of the respective evaluation reports. In a consecutive closed session of the reunited clinical and pre-clinical panels, the evaluation reports of the reviewed ICRC research teams were discussed in detail. The joints panels of evaluators then agreed on a consensus assessment of respective research teams due to the standard ICRC grading scale. The final results were presented to the ICRC Head, management and administrators. The research team leader could appeal the results of the evaluation to the Research Coordination Office for further consideration by ICRC Head.

For each of the research teams, the ISAB evaluators subsequently prepared a separate evaluation report in which they summarized the strengths and weaknesses, recommended further development of the team and gave an overall evaluation. Of the twenty teams evaluated by the ICRC, four were given an "*Outstanding*" rating, another six boasted an "*Excellent*" result, and eight teams were rated "*Very good*". None of the research teams were deemed "*Average*" and "*Below Average*". Overall, it can be stated that the evaluation of the ICRC research teams exceeded expectations and confirmed the strong position of the research teams in the respective fields.

Regarding the impact of the ISAB assessment, the adjustments to the evaluation process, individual research team results and recommendations were further discussed during individual follow-up meetings of each RTL with the ICRC Head and management.

The implementation of changes included:

- As of this date, out of the twenty evaluated research teams, three teams have entered a specific phase designed for gradual discontinuation. One of the teams with the lowest rating "Good", the second that was not rated and the third one due to the fact that it did not meet the criteria of group size and necessary co-financing in the last 3 years.
- The decision was made that the evaluation periods, to date biannual, would be extended to three years. The evaluators noted that even longer periods (similar to the length of grants) would be appropriate. These longer evaluation periods would allow the reviewers to gain a better overview of the team's achievements.
- Overall, the evaluators were impressed with the high quality of science at ICRC, but a lack of clear long-term strategy, coupled with some shortcomings in transparency, communication and management emerged not only within the institute, but also across different institutions. This has resulted in the loss of some talented scientists and could be damaging to the reputation of the ICRC in the long run. The institute urgently needs to reach lasting (four years minimum) agreements with its partners (Masaryk University, St. Anne's University Hospital) about sharing income, infrastructure and resources like tissue samples, biodata, etc. This is crucial to the sustainability of the ICRC and the future perspective of its staff. Short-term contracts generate insecurity and this may be one of the reasons why the evaluators noted among the research team leaders a certain lack of self-confidence, willingness to take risks in joining international networks, applying for competitive grants, or trying to publish in top journals. The ICRC's mentoring effort towards the principal investigators could help change this attitude.
- Moreover, the evaluators suggested that given the fact that the ICRC labs are dispersed across the city, the institute should consider organising common events (annual retreat, X'mas Party) to give the ICRC community a sense of belonging to a unified structure and to incite and strengthen social interactions and contacts.
- The evaluator's general recommendations will be considered in near future, monitored and will be refereed at the next ICRC evaluation planned for 2026.

Case study 3: Peer-review evaluation of the Biomedical Research Center SAS in 2022



In 2022, BMC SAS was subjected to two independent institutional peer-review evaluations by panels of international experts (details are provided in the Deliverable 1.3).

The first one was organised by the Ministry of education, science, research and sports of the Slovak Republic. It was a pilot national evaluation focused exclusively on the quality of publication outputs of the universities and institutions performing research in any of 27 defined research areas. The evaluation was accomplished as a remote peer-review of 25 publications selected proportionally from the larger pool of 5 unique publications listed for each eligible researcher of the institution included in the evaluation. Based on the assessment of the research area-related panels, the outputs of the publications were classified in 5 quality categories. The ultimate result of the institution's assessment in the given research area was provided as a quality profile consisting of % share of publications in

each classified category. On the basis of this profile, the ministry allocated PhD fellowships that can be covered at participating institutions from the Plan of recovery and resilience for excellent PhD students. In addition, starting from 2024, results of this assessment entered into annual performance evaluation of the institutions of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Nevertheless, the main drawback of this evaluation as perceived by the participating research institutions was the lack of informed feedback on panel decisions for classifying concrete outputs to certain quality categories. This missing information did not allow us to learn any lesson and derive any strategic decision from the assessment results. Noteworthy, similar evaluation is under preparation by the Ministry for 2025. In addition to publication outputs, it will include two other components, i.e. societal impact (in the form of case studies) and institutional culture and governance.

The second evaluation was conducted by the Slovak Academy of Sciences as an informed peer-review by panel of internationally recognised researchers. Panel members received completed and very detailed written questionnaire containing information on research outputs and activities, societal impact and research governance. In addition, they accomplished an on-site visit of the BMC SAS that consisted of the presentation by the director, discussions with research community, PhD students and young scientists and presentation of the facilities. The final evaluation report of the panel included final grade A/B and the main recommendations for the BMC SAS improvement. Noteworthy, the final grading has become a relevant component of the annual performance evaluation of the SAS institutions impacting on their financial contract with the SAS. The Evaluation panel concluded that the BMC SAS is an excellent testimony to successful merger of several original institutes, building of critical mass of researchers, an enthusiastic environment with a culture of sharing expertise and infrastructures, and providing equal opportunities. According to overall assessment, The Centre is doing well along its broad spectrum of activities, translational approaches are well integrated to the operation. The panel also provided recommendations for further improvement and development of the institute (see <http://www.biomedcentrum.sav.sk/veda/akreditacia-2016-2021/>).

To implement the recommendations, the BMC SAS managing board performed their thorough analysis and informed the academic community about intended strategic steps for further improvements as mentioned in the Deliverable D1.3:

1. Since the institutional assessment could not deliver insight into an internal BMC SAS structure and performance of the individual departments and/or research groups, the managing board in collaboration with the scientific board has prepared a concept of the internal BMC SAS evaluation by the International Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). We are currently in the process of engagement of the ISAB members. The rules for the assessment procedure by the ISAB were inspired by a good practice of the CEITEC MU as described in D1.3. It will include concise written reports, on-site presentations in the form of mini-conference and closed discussions of research leaders with members of the ISAB panels. The opinions of ISAB panel members will be of critical importance for updating both governance and research direction arms of the Strategic plan and to reconsider internal structure of the departments and/or research groups with respect to their size and research topics.
2. One of important instruments for improving research quality is represented by an internal system of evaluation and rewarding of individual researchers with emphasis on high-quality research outputs. To elaborate an effective and fair evaluation system recognizing broad spectrum of the contributions to research, we joined Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and in October 2023 become a signatory of The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (<https://coara.eu/coalition/membership/>). We fully comply with the principles and commitments for reforms and are currently preparing our Action plan for the assessment reform. As we want to make this process participatory, we designed an anonymous internal survey for the BMC SAS academic community seeking to get feedback on how our researchers and research managers perceive different aspects of research performance

evaluation and which data and activities they consider as most relevant for our future strategic development. In addition, we follow the CoARA activities to learn from best practices of other member research organizations.

3. We are also in the process of developing career plans for young researchers, based on the best practice examples from A4L_ACTIONS partners, in order to offer them different career paths, reflecting their skills and personal preferences.
4. The final evaluation report by the panel contained recommendation to open professionally run core facility services. However, at present, there are no available resources for full implementation of this recommendation (lack of investment funds specifically in Bratislava region due to exclusion from ESIF, lack of dedicated capacities, long-term absence of sustainability funds, unclear rules for use of internal invoices in project fundings etc.). Therefore, we introduce the rules for incorporation of selected core facility services into operations of the BMC SAS infrastructures step-by-step, using transfer of knowledge from the advanced A4L_ACTIONS partners CEITEC MU and ICRC FNUSA. Currently, the Slovak Academy of Sciences is preparing conditions for introduction of the core facility concept into the SAS practice, in which we aim to actively participate.
5. The implementation of the panel recommendations will be regularly monitored and will be refereed at the next SAS evaluation planned for 2026.

MAPPING EVALUATION PROCESSES AND FUTURE PLANS FOR PEER-REVIEW ASSESSMENTS AT A4L_ACTIONS PARTNERS

The purpose of sharing good practice of peer evaluation of research organizations was to offer general guidelines for planning and performing the evaluation process at other Alliance4Life consortium partners as well as other CEE institutions. However, in the D1.2 Self-assessment report, several A4L_ACTIONS partners indicated that their research performance is being regularly evaluated by different external authorities with different goals and outcomes. This diversity of evaluations generates administrative burden and confines own evaluation initiatives of the research organizations. Despite this fact, some partners develop the idea for their internal ISAB-accomplished evaluation and for introduction of research assessment reform in line with the principles of CoARA, which is a global initiative that involves more than 350 organisations from over 40 countries. CoARA vision is that the assessment of research, researchers and research organisations recognises the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. This requires basing assessment primarily on qualitative judgement, for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators. Among other purposes, this is fundamental for: deciding which researchers to recruit, promote or reward, and identifying which research units and organisations to support.

At this moment, CoARA membership includes the following A4L_ACTIONS partners:

1. Medical University Sofia, Bulgaria
2. Masaryk University (involving CEITEC MU), Brno, Czechia
3. Vilnius University, Lithuania
4. Medical University of Lodz, Poland
5. Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania
6. Biomedical Research Center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia
7. University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

In addition, majority of the countries of the A4L_ACTIONS partners are represented in the coalition by their national and/or regional authorities or agencies that are responsible for strategic direction and research funding. This creates a promise and prerequisite for introducing the CoARA principles of fair and complex evaluation into practice of national research evaluations, grant decisions and career promotions.

These include:

- Czech Science Foundation, Czechia
- Research, Development and Innovation Council, Czechia
- Estonian Research Council, Estonia
- Hungarian Accreditation Committee, Hungary
- Latvian Council of Sciences, Latvia
- Higher Education Council of Latvia, Latvia
- Research Council of Lithuania, Lithuania
- Foundation for Polish Science, Poland
- Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding, Romania
- Slovenia Research Agency, Slovenia

Moreover, two countries of the A4L_ACTIONS members, namely Hungary and Poland, elaborated so called National Chapters (NCs) that are dedicated to assisting CoARA members in implementing the commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment in the national/regional context, see <https://coara.eu/coalition/national-chapters/>. Their main mission is to harmonise evaluation

systems, assess the coherence of the solutions agreed within the Coalition with the current national regulations, and to balance common principles and institutional autonomy.

Harmonisation of the evaluation processes at national dimension and across the countries would bring benefit in eliminating inconsistencies, reducing administrative burden and focusing on goals of major importance for solution of critical health care and public health care. Current situation in research evaluation is rather complex and often exposes researchers and research institutions to very diverse and even incompatible evaluation challenges with various impacts on research practice.

To map status quo of the evaluations in the national contexts of the A4L_ACTION partners institutions, we performed a brief survey, asking about frequency, purposes and types of evaluations, involvement of the International Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB), parameters and data entering into the evaluations, feedbacks from the evaluations, their practical consequences and potential effects on future strategic decisions at an institutional level or for individual researchers.

The A4_ACTION partners responded to the following questions:

<p>1. Is your university / faculty / institute subjected to external evaluation? YES, regularly / YES, but not regularly / NO</p>
<p>2. In case of YES responses to question 1, provide brief information regarding: a) level (e.g. national, regional, etc.), organizing authority, frequency of each such event b) form (e.g. remote – based on written report, remote – based on publicly available information, on-site visit) c) criteria (metrics, research projects, societal impact etc.) d) feedback information from the evaluation panel e) consequences (e.g. on institutional funding, capacity building, re-structuring etc.) <i>In case of several types of external evaluations organized by different authorities, please, provide separate description for each evaluation. Do not include evaluations of project proposals submitted to grant funding agencies.</i></p>
<p>3. Do you perform evaluation of research departments and/or research groups within your university / faculty / institute YES / NO</p>
<p>4. In case of YES response to question 3, provide brief information regarding: expected impact (capacity building, support for infrastructure investment, update of institutional strategy etc.)</p>

The survey provided the following information:

- **All twelve A4L_ACTIONS partners are regularly subjected to external institutional evaluations, which are organised at national level** by different state authorities (Ministry of education, Research council, Agency for high education or R&I, etc.)
- National evaluations occur every 3-6 years, in all cases **in the form of peer review**, half of them with an on-site visit of the ISAB panel members using information from self-assessment reports and the other half with the remote ISAB assessment based on written report or registered outputs.
- Most partners reported that the evaluation uses complex criteria to assess research quality, which include metrics, selected publication outputs, projects, societal impact, strategies, research environment and/or governance. Evaluations of universities also focus on the quality of education.
- Feedbacks from the evaluations are provided mainly in the form of written ISAB reports with specific recommendations and their conclusions are used for grading, which either affects

institutional funding or authorization / accreditation / license for operations. These feedbacks have also strong impact on strategic decisions and update of the institutional action plans. In one case, the evaluation generates a quality profile, but provides no other specific feedback (as described in the D1.3).

- In addition, five partners are undergoing **annual performance-based institutional evaluation** organized by the state authorities or the superior bodies. This evaluation is based mainly on quantitative data (metrics, selected outputs, grants, contracted research). Resulting scores affect a part of the institutional fundings.
- The situation is more heterogeneous in case of **internally performed evaluations organised by the A4L_ACTIONS partners themselves**.
- These mostly focus on individual researchers / academic staff and are not based on peer review process. They take into account individual research outputs and different kinds of individual research / teaching activities and usually lead to decisions regarding rewards, promotions, contracts prolongations, tenure track decisions, or allocations of institutional funding.
- Only two A4L_ACTIONS partners regularly organize internal peer evaluation of the research groups and/or core facilities involving ISAB panels (described in D1.3 and in this document above). This evaluation provides recommendations to research groups as well as to management boards and represents an important tool for strategic decisions at both levels.
- Two other partners are in the process of implementation of the internally organised peer review evaluation of their research groups or research programs with the ISAB participation, inspired by a good practice of the experienced A4L_ACTIONS partners.
- One partner reported peer review by external/international experts related to recruitment process and individual excellence. The remaining A4L_ACTIONS partners have not introduced the internally organized ISAB-based peer evaluation of research groups so far.

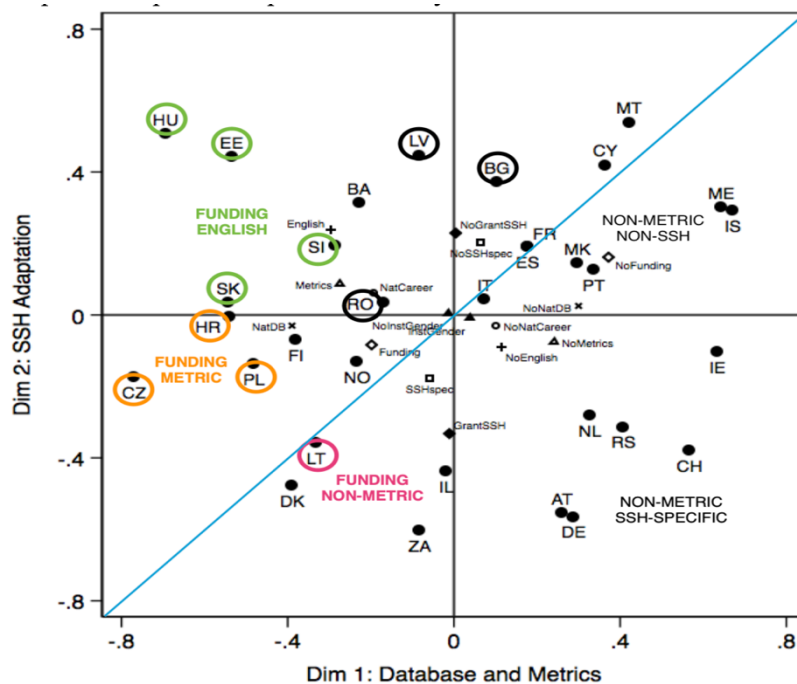
The information above was generalised to extract the basic pattern. However, there are many nuances characteristic for each partner depending on the context of the country, its national evaluation system, as well as the type of the institution and its mission (education, research, clinical care) that have to be taken into account. Since in all countries, significance of research evaluation increases in line with increasing demands for accountability to public funding, this topic has become very important. Research governing and funding organisations, different societies and bodies as well as specialists in research evaluations perform different types of detailed surveys and organise conferences dedicated to this topic in order to improve understanding of this timely issue and obtain an insight into the typology of national evaluation systems.

Very interesting analysis of **the diversity of European evaluation systems** is described in the paper from the Proceedings of the 23rd International conference on Science and Technology Indicators, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328108519_The_Diversity_of_European_Research_Evaluation_Systems. Among the participants in the detailed survey behind this analysis there were also countries of the A4L_ACTIONS partners.

In brief, the analysis mentioned above was performed in 2018 and was based on multiple variables. The results were presented in the form of the map (see below) with two main dimensions: the first dimension represents the metric component of the evaluation (including existence of national publication database and attachment of funding to evaluation) and the second one represents the adaptation to social sciences and humanities (SSH). Positions of countries is indicated by full circles, while additional variables are placed within the map and indicated by the symbols other than full circles. In agreement with our short survey, the map shows that in **the majority of CEE countries evaluation includes metrics (except LT) and is linked to funding**. More specifically, according to this analysis Lithuania (LT) belongs to countries with “funding, non-metric” type of evaluation, where the

primary method of evaluation is peer review, whereas Croatia (HR), Czech Republic (CZ) and Poland (PL) are of “funding, metric” type, using metrics as a primary method, linking evaluation results to funding and incentivising publications in English. Finally, Estonia (EE), Hungary (HU), Slovenia (SI) and Slovakia (SK) belong to “metric, English” cluster of countries that have a national database in place, use metrics as a primary method of evaluation, link funding to evaluation results and incentivise English publications.

Figure below, adopted from Ochsner et al, 2018, <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/65217>, shows the map of Multiple correspondence analysis of national research evaluation systems.



Full circles represent countries, all other symbols represent model variables of characteristics of research evaluation systems. English/NoEnglish: system incentivises (or not) English language publications; Funding/(No)Funding: evaluation results affect (or not) funding; GrantSSH/(No)GrantSSH: SSH-specific grant programmes (or not); InstGender/(No)InstGender: evaluation procedures reflect (or not) gender issues; Metrics/(No)Metrics: main method of evaluation are metrics (or not); NatCareer/ (No)NatCareer: national career promotion procedure (or not); NatDB/ (No)NatDB: national publication database existing (or not); SSH/(No)SSHspec: SSH-specific institutional evaluation procedures (or not).

Albeit the analysis is interesting, it has to be taken into account that it was accomplished more than 5 years ago and that situation rapidly evolves, so the current status quo might not be identical. Indeed, in many countries, we are recently witnessing shift to more holistic assessment approaches. Nevertheless, this analysis can give us an input for thoughts that within the framework of these largely metric-based CEE national systems, we need to find a space and capacities for our own institutional assessment activities leading to sustainability, reinforcement or introduction of internal ISAB-governed peer review processes focused on research groups or research programs and oriented on research quality and impact. For these institutional activities, we can find support not only through learning from our experienced A4L_ACTIONS partners but also through active participation and implementation of the CoARA principles stated in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment as mentioned above.

Worth considering are also additional valuable literature sources specifically dedicated to significance and methodologies of peer review process and the impact-oriented evaluation, such as The Future of

Research Evaluation (2023): <https://globalyoungacademy.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/The-Future-of-Research-Evaluation.pdf>, Science Europe Study on Research Assessment Practices (2020): <https://www.scienceeurope.org/media/fmdihogq/se-study-on-research-assessment-practices-report.pdf>, Point of impact: What is the true value of science to society (2021) <https://sciencebusiness.net/report/point-impact-what-true-value-science-society>, as well as many other documents that can provide arguments and instructions for research evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Good practice examples from the A4L_ACTIONS partners as well as current knowledge on research assessment principles, procedures and consequences clearly support the view that **specifically in the CEE countries with national evaluation systems that rely on metrics, internally organized ISAB-guided peer review evaluation of research quality and impact is of critical importance** for the institutes to strategically drive their future research.

Therefore, the mission of the Alliance4Life consortium is to motivate its partners to introduce internal peer review evaluation with a responsible use of metrics as a component of the complex assessment scheme into their institutional practices and serve as role models for other institutions in their countries. To this end, implementation and/or development of key research culture aspects including peer evaluation pilots at additional A4L partners are envisioned within the successor Horizon Europe project A4L_BRIDGE (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101136453/de>), which aims to lay the fundamentals for **sustainable institutional reforms** in CEE through promoting strategic changes of institutional and national research assessment systems in line with the **CoARA** commitments.