

March 2026

International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions Activity



Panel Report: Humanities and Arts

Professor Stephan Berger (chair), Professor Anna Backman Rogers, Professor Pieter Beullens, Professor Maren Harnack, Professor Paula Hohti, Professor Erkki Huovinen, Professor Svend Erik Larsen, and Professor Henriette de Swart (desk-based review for unit H3)



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List of abbreviations

COST	European Cooperation in Science and Technology
DARIAH	Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities
DH	Digital Humanities
DHN / DHNB	Digital Humanities in the Nordic and Baltic Countries
DU	Daugavpils University
ECR(s)	Early-career researcher(s)
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
FH	Faculty of Humanities (University of Latvia)
FoTS	Faculty/Field of Translation Studies (Ventspils University of Applied Sciences)
Horizon Europe/ EU Framework Programme	
Horizon 2020	
ILFA	Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art (University of Latvia)
JVLAM	Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music
LAC	Latvian Academy of Culture
LAL	Luther Academy
LLM	Large Language Model
NLL	National Library of Latvia
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
Q1	Top quartile of journals
RIS3	Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy
RTU	Riga Technical University
SME(s)	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
VUAS	Ventspils University of Applied Sciences

1 Introduction

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

The Humanities and Arts panel evaluated ten units:

- Art Academy of Latvia
- Daugavpils University Research programme “Humanities and the Arts”
- Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia
- Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music
- Latvian Academy of Culture
- Luther Academy
- National Library of Latvia
- Riga Technical University Institute of Architecture and Design
- University of Latvia Faculty of Humanities
- Ventspils University of Applied Sciences/ Field of Humanities

The Expert Group evaluated the units using the following criteria:

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

The evaluation of each unit involved a documentary review and the Expert Group's visit to the units. The final evaluation of each unit is a collective view of the Expert Group.

The analysis of each unit by the Expert Group is presented in the following sections.

Feedback on the Expert Group assessment received from the units is published in Appendix A.

2 Institution reports

H_1 University of Latvia - Faculty of Humanities

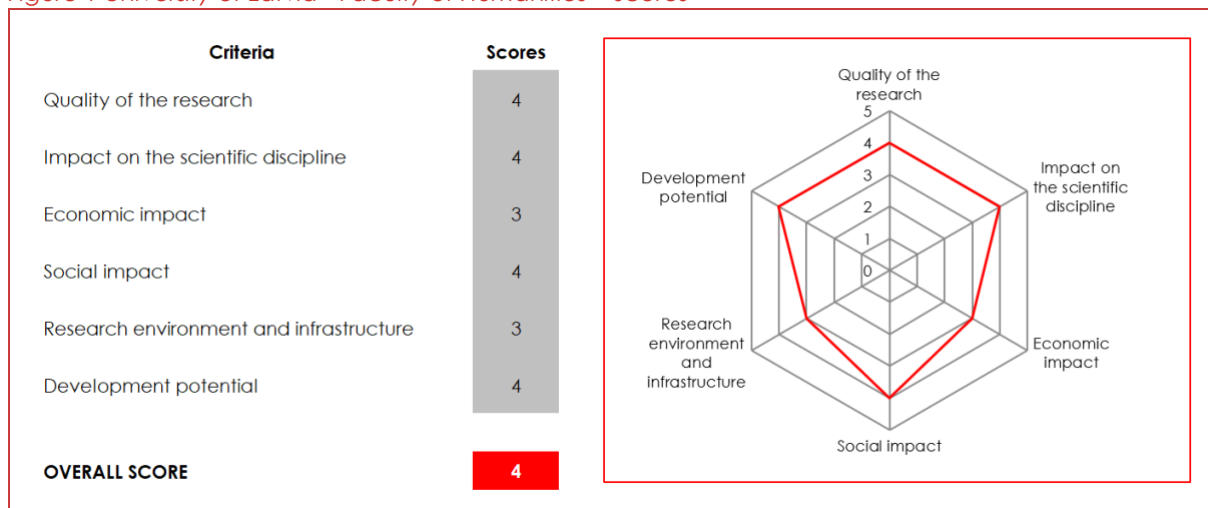
2.2.1 The unit

The Faculty of Humanities (FH) at the University of Latvia conducts research around several core fields—Digital Humanities, history and archaeology, linguistics, translation studies, classical philology, literature, traditional culture and intangible heritage, philosophy, theology, and religious studies, as well as endangered languages and cultures. The faculty is recognised for its contributions to Letonics (systematic study of Latvian language, history, culture), Livonian studies, and Baltic studies. The unit promotes Digital Humanities as a strategic priority, with the establishment of the Digital Humanities Centre playing a pivotal role. The unit was established through the consolidation of eight educational and research units. The FH's mission is to generate value for diverse stakeholders by leveraging the disciplinary expertise of its academic community, with a vision aligned with national and university development policies.

2.2.2 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 1 University of Latvia - Faculty of Humanities – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: *Very good level of research*

The quality of the research is very good; there is ample evidence that the research is well-networked and has an international impact. The unit is a national hub in several relevant disciplines in the humanities, including history, archaeology, folklore studies, linguistics, and literature. The Expert Group rated the publications (86 monographs, 601 indexed publications) produced in these disciplines highly. The unit has a good performance also in bibliometric analysis (e.g., a high number of total citations and international collaboration rate).

Researchers employed by the institution have an international impact. The researchers collaborate in international research projects, are part of editorial committees, organise and participate in international conferences and establish strategic alliances (e.g., FORTHEM network). The societal impact of the unit is significant, with considerable engagement with society (e.g., 3179 science communication activities) and informing the policies and strategies

of various institutions in Latvia. In the educational landscape, the unit is a central contributor to the development of modern competence-based education, with more than 1,200 textbooks and other research publications. Its economic impact is less significant, which is understandable in the humanities. The research environment and infrastructure are good, and the Expert Group is convinced that moving to the House of Letters soon will further and significantly improve the research environment and infrastructure, bringing research excellence clusters within the institution closer together. It could be argued that the House of Letters is only bricks and mortar, but this would be short-sighted. If the new building is used to implement smart management techniques that form research clusters around regular meeting points in the House of Letters, it would have a major impact on the institution's research culture. The development potential of the institution is very good, and the Expert Group assumes that it will significantly stabilise and expand its already strong international orientation over the next 5-year period. It is clearly already a national leader, and it has demonstrated its ability to be internationally excellent in the institution's research areas.

Quality of Research

Score 4: Very good

The Expert Group found the quality of the research produced by the unit to be very good, with ample evidence of its international impact. During the evaluation period the unit published 86 monographs and 601 indexed publications, with a good compound annual growth ratio, and a good number of total citations. Also, the international collaboration rate and disciplinary diversity of authors are high. Much of the research produced in the various disciplines that comprise the unit is linked to European research networks (e.g., Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies; Association of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies; European Association of Archaeologists; International Council of Museums, ICOMOS, the Federation of European National Language Institutions). Researchers benefit from the exchange with researchers from different parts of the world. The unit is part of the FORTHEM alliance between European universities and has established cooperation agreements with international universities (e.g., University of Alberta). Researchers participate in international projects (e.g., EQualCare, LIFT, RCL:ICH, Zoom2Choose-EUROPE, TREL).

Much of the research is highly original and makes a significant contribution to international research agendas across diverse fields of expertise. In history, for example, the research carried out on national identity is cutting-edge and fully compatible with the leading theoretical and empirical approaches in this particular field of study. The research on literary studies, for example, is very successfully incorporating Baltic literature into the field of comparative literature.

The Expert Group found that there is scope for more trans- and interdisciplinary cooperation, for example between history, literature, and folklore studies, but this is expected to increase at the new location in the House of Letters, which will soon be ready for occupation. If it will be used to organise inter- and transdisciplinary research seminars and host inter- and transdisciplinary research team meetings, it will significantly push the research culture at the institution. The self-assessment includes good examples of research with international impact in folklore studies, history, linguistics, and literature. The unit has made Digital Humanities a strategic priority, but as far as the Expert Group could determine, there are to date very few publications in this burgeoning field of study. Given that there are already a range of major international players in this field, the unit should consider strategies of cooperation with these.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 4: *Very good*

The Expert Group found the unit's impact on the disciplines mentioned above to be very good. In addition to the examples given above for history and literature, there is evidence of the successful adoption of a range of international theoretical approaches in the fields of folklore studies and translation studies. FH spearheaded a number of projects within the "Letonics" funding framework as a leading partner studying the "Diversity of Latvian in Time and Space", "The Archaeology of Independence", "Multifunctional dictionary of Livonian", "Research on Modern Latvian Language and Development", "Research on Modern Latvian Language and Development of Language Technology".

The self-assessment report provided numerous examples of productive international connections, leading to the involvement of researchers from the unit in transnational research projects. In many fields of study, e.g. history, linguistics, and literature, researchers from the unit are sought-after collaborators in other European countries, as evidenced by the collaborative research projects and networks presented (see section above). The unit has a considerable international presence and a very good impact on the disciplines mentioned above. The unit organises four major international conferences and exhibitions in the humanities each year and presents its work at international conferences and workshops.

There is considerable evidence of publishing in languages other than Latvian, particularly in English and German (e.g., Kalnača A., Lokmane I "Latvian Grammar" (2021) a monograph of great national importance being published in English). Many of the publications are made in internationally recognised journals and journals with international publishers. Researchers from the unit further function as members in editorial boards of indexed scientific journals (e.g., Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe, Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis: Studia Russologica, Proceedings of the national Library of Latvia, Letonica, Frontiers, Logos) and have been awarded prizes for their research by scientific institutions nationally and internationally (in Finland, Poland, Estonia, India).

Economic impact

Score 3: *Good*

The Expert Group evaluates the economic impact of the unit as good. Humanities research will not be as directly relevant to industry as research in medical or engineering fields. At a national level, in the cultural industries such as publishing and cultural and artistic institutions, there is evidence that the unit has a satisfactory level of interaction with non-academics, e.g. the Tornkalns Foundation, the media platform Satori, the UNESCO Latvian National Commission, the Latvian Language Agency, the Ministry of Culture, and Tilde, the largest Latvian language technology company. The relevance of the unit is clearly more pronounced in the world of arts, culture, and, not least, in education and the Latvian educational system, rather than in industry. In the future, the unit might consider exploring joint ventures with market-oriented enterprises that may be interested in utilising the research produced by the unit. These companies could then also make an economic contribution to the research produced at the unit. Such public-private partnerships have been able to facilitate important research projects at a range of different universities worldwide, and it might be worthwhile exploring this also in the Latvian context.

Social impact

Score 4: *Very good*

The Expert Group considered the relevance of the institution's research for social and cultural development to be very good. The various outreach activities detailed in the self-assessment report all point in that direction. The unit engaged in 3179 science communication activities targeting key societal audiences of NGOs, cultural producers, heritage institutions, educators and pupils, representatives of media and the general public. The research produced by the unit directly informs cultural, educational, and social policies in Latvia. The officials from the Ministry of Culture present during the meeting with the Expert Group confirmed the importance of the unit. The unit also has a major impact on the educational landscape in Latvia, with more than 1200 textbooks and other research-related publications being produced to support the modern competence-based education in Latvia ("School 2030").

Overall, the research clearly has a social impact in Latvia in terms of the development of Latvian civil society, exploring and interpreting national identity and culture, the development of NGOs in Latvia (e.g. through research supporting the work, or also functioning as board members such as the DOTS Foundation for an Open Society), and the formulation of policies at the ministerial level in Latvia. The Expert Group sees strong potential in systematising these contacts, making public outreach activities a regular feature of the annual calendar of the university, and having academics of the unit represented in liaison committees with NGOs, social movements, ministries and other important institutions in Latvian society, so that there is a more integrated and systematic social impact on Latvian society.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 3: *Good*

The Expert Group judged the research environment and infrastructure to be good. The unit has attempted to implement the recommendations of the Expert Group from the institution's last assessment. This led, above all, to a streamlining of research into certain fields, and the institution, in the view of the Expert Group, should continue to pursue this approach. Management structures are now leaner and better suited to harnessing the institution's research strengths. The strategic and financial resource planning is very clear and commendable. The House of Letters will hopefully provide a fruitful environment for more research cooperation among the existing units, as detailed above. The Expert Group gained the impression that the institution's strong research groups, measured in terms of quality of publications and international research networks, can draw on good support services, e.g. library services, services helping with research grant proposal writing and services for graduate students, and that the level of staff teaching and overall workload does not hinder the production of high-quality research. In future, the diverse disciplines that are research-active in the unit could make a greater effort to develop strategies for increased OA publishing, especially in non-Latvian languages.

Development potential

Score 4: *Very good*

The Expert Group sees the development potential of the unit as very good, allowing it to continue its journey to become a world-leading player with a strong international influence in its specific excellence clusters – history, folklore studies, linguistics and literature. In all of these areas, there is evidence of researchers connecting with international research agendas across diverse fields and contributing to the empirical and theoretical development of research clusters. The much-anticipated House of Letters should be able to play a significant role in the

development of integrated, inter- and transdisciplinary structures among groups of researchers who share many commonalities but are often structurally separated into different units. The House of Letters should create a space in which groups of researchers can meet physically in the same space.

At the same time, the Expert Group also recognises that a considerable amount of time will be needed to foster trans- and interdisciplinary perspectives, especially in the many areas with a Baltic focus across different research fields, and to develop transnational research projects around these yet-to-emerge interdisciplinary clusters. Hence, the Expert Group expects that the unit will use the next 5 to 10 years to solidify and stabilise its existing international presence, and step by step to build on this by increasing its presence in international research networks, and in high-profile international publications in English. There is also considerable potential in bringing the PhD students closer together and in providing joint supervision for all students, offering more joint research seminars, and providing a code of conduct both for supervisors and students. The Expert Group encourages the unit's members more often to seek leading positions in transnational projects, e.g. at the EU level (Horizon Europe), and to explore bilateral funding opportunities with the Americas and Asian countries, in particular India, Japan, China and South Korea.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

There is already a strong pool of 122 PhD students enrolled at the unit during the evaluation period (2019-2024). The Expert Group was particularly pleased to hear from the PhD students during the visit to the institution that they felt very well looked after by their supervisors and by the institution. They have access to regular research colloquia, and there is a sense of a PhD community at the unit. It was also good to hear that some students already have two supervisors and that there is national legislation in preparation for making this the standard procedure – something that the institution would welcome and is prepared to implement. And there were also concerns about PhD students having too many other obligations, so that it appeared that many of them find it difficult to complete within a three-to-four-year period of PhD studies. In the first two years of the evaluation period, 100% of PhD students were exceeding the normative time to degree, which has decreased but remains at a high level of 86,7%. Inadequate funding and the need to engage in other work were often cited by the students interviewed as reasons why they were unable to finish on time. But overall, the infrastructure to support students, including the possibility to ask for funds to attend international conferences, is good.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The smart specialisation strategy is not addressing the core concerns of the humanities. The unit is performing a very important role in making Latvia a more self-reflective, democratic, and resilient society. It supports the transformation of the national economy by developing human capital, disseminating research results, and identifying societal challenges, playing a crucial role in areas of cultural heritage, which are essential for sustainable development and economic resilience. Its research is informing a whole host of initiatives in public outreach, including the media (e.g., articles, interviews, expert discussion in Public Broadcasting of Latvia), public festivals (e.g., European Festival of Languages) and work with various ministries over a wide range of topics. The cultural and creative industries would be poorer were it not for the excellent work of this unit. Especially in Latvia's migration policies, in social policies, educational policies and cultural policies, the research carried out by the unit is crucial. Finally, the identification of digital humanities as a core research area can be seen as a response to the RIS3 strategic priority of 'information and communication technologies'.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The main value of the unit lies in its importance for debates about Latvian cultural identity and Latvians' place in wider European identity debates. The research that is being carried out here is making important contributions to these societal debates, which are of great importance to the self-understanding of Latvians today. The unit also produces research that informs other state policies, e.g. in the areas of health (e.g., studying issues of vaccine hesitancy, telemedicine and the preparedness of the health system for future pandemics during Covid-19) and the legal system (e.g., Introduction of the Livonian language and culture acquisition for school children). There is also evidence of collaborations with NGOs (e.g., National Encyclopaedia) and social movements active in wider societal debates in Latvia (e.g., Road signs installed in Latgalian and Livonian Languages), where the research produced within the unit provides important background information. The presence of the institution in wider societal debates in Latvia also makes it an attractive place for researchers to work. The unit should aim to increase the number of international researchers from outside of Latvia, in order to cross-fertilise these debates within Latvia. This is already happening to a certain extent but could be improved in the years to come.

Recommendations

The Expert Group recommends the unit:

- To seek more leadership in major transnational research networks on a global level.
- To seek more high-ranking journals and publishers for the valuable research produced by the unit in foreign-language publications, including English, but also other languages. This can build on the substantial progress already achieved during the last years.
- To seek closer ties to the cultural industries in heritage, history, and culture in order to align those industries more with the scientific research results produced by the unit. Thus, the unit should seek closer relations with the heritage industry, and it should seek to build on the contacts it already has in the cultural industries. It has excellent relations with state cultural institutions but not with those operating in the market.
- Once the new national legislation is in place, the unit should follow through quickly with implementing a system where all PhD students have two supervisors. This is particularly helpful for students who work on interdisciplinary projects, where ideally, they would have one supervisor coming from each discipline. The supervisors and students should meet regularly. It has been shown that it is generally beneficial for PhD students to have two supervisors, especially where supervisor-PhD student relations, for whatever reason, break down.
- To increase the number of researchers from outside of Latvia
- To devise a guideline for a good code of conduct for supervisors and PhD students alike.
- To implement mechanisms to ensure that PhD students can complete their PhDs in a timelier manner.
- To build on their considerable track record in having a social impact on Latvian society to seek even closer alignment with institutions in the public realm, for whom the research results produced by the unit are relevant. This could be ministries, NGOs, or cultural institutions in the field of literature festivals, cinema, theatre, and music. Ideally, these links would be institutionalised through liaison committees that meet regularly to discuss ways to interlink research with diverse forms of cultural activities in the broader society.
- To redesign its website, which at present does not link to the individual staff members, their specialities, publications, or projects. Also, the concrete research of the sub-units should be highlighted more within the general information on the Faculty of Humanities. This redesign may help to increase international visibility.

H_2 National Library of Latvia

2.2.3 The unit

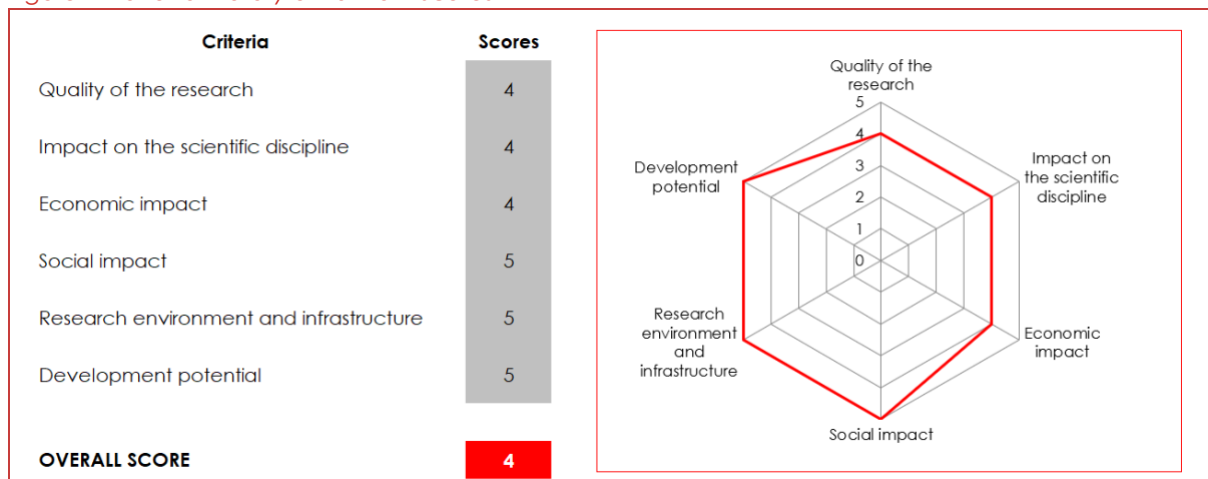
The National Library of Latvia (NLL) is a public universal research library under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, focusing on interdisciplinary and innovative research in the social sciences, humanities, and arts. It is registered as a scientific institution and an accredited educational institution. The mission of the NLL is to strengthen societal growth, foster inquiry and learning, and support democratic processes through its research activities. The library plays a significant role in creating national bibliographic resources and developing the state library system. It has a substantial collection of over 4.4 million items and aims with its research to support the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage and knowledge in Latvia and beyond.

The research at the NLL is organised around several main themes, including library science, bibliography, book studies, and Digital Humanities. The library conducts both fundamental and applied research, ensuring a balance between data analysis and theoretical research. It fosters interdisciplinary research groups and emphasises the synergy between scientific work and public outreach. The NLL's research strategy includes a dissemination plan that balances international and national publications, aiming to reach both academic audiences and the general public. The library's research activities are coordinated by the NLL Research Council. The NLL also focuses on developing digital tools and resources, contributing to the Digital Humanities field, and supporting open science initiatives.

2.2.4 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 2 National Library of Latvia – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: *Very good level of research*

In the view of the Expert Group, the NLL is very good and stands out as a key research institution and knowledge base in Latvia across the sciences. This position rests not only on its holdings of books, non-textual objects and archival material, but also on its own research in several strands of library science across history, media and textual genres and its sustained efforts in research-based, innovative outreach to society at large, including educational institutions, researchers, policy makers, professionals and the general public. Apart from traditional activities such as

exhibitions, lectures, summer schools and media appearances the NLL has developed multiple open access online resources for various stakeholders and wider audiences, and the unit is a strong national and international player in the Latvian engagement in Digital Humanities which opens new research fields, such as contemporary transformations of reading culture with a potential for further development, and a growing public interaction. Stronger focus on fundamental research in this field beyond a tool-oriented development of Digital Humanities shows potential for a strong future development. With an increase in staff and in competitive funding as well as in research output, NLL's activities in both fundamental and applied science open for further expansion of international relations beyond the region.

Quality of Research

Score 4: Very good

The research of the NLL is very good and gives it a unique position in the country as a national knowledge base across research disciplines, also beyond the humanities, serving the academic community, professionals in business, politics and public institutions, the educational institutions in particular, and the civic society at large. NLL's wide range of cultural functions is based on research activities within a broad scope of areas in library science, subdivided in seven research areas rooted in the holdings and in a clear understanding of the demands of its users: book history, library history, early writing culture, Latvian books in exile, non-textual sources, gender studies and, as a transversal dimension, Digital Humanities with an emerging focus on today's transformation of reading culture. All areas have produced research output and outreach activities, mainly in Latvian but also with international publishers. NLL combines fundamental and applied research with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together historians, literary scholars, philologists, art historians, and information scientists. The standard of research quality is very good – unit's research strategy builds on decades of tradition in book history, while it innovates and produces original and important research in areas such as data-driven bibliographic analysis, digital tools, and applied studies of knowledge management in cultural heritage institutions.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 4: Very good

The NLL's impact on science is very good. Being the only research library in Latvia, NLL has a significant cultural and scholarly impact through its over 4.4million—item collection, open access to research results, and leadership in digitisation. Its researchers have led nationally funded projects and strengthened their presence in European programmes (Erasmus+, Interreg, Nordplus, Nordic Council), demonstrating international recognition and role as partners in international research projects and networks. NLL has built strong partnerships and networks, including collaborations beyond Europe with partners in Israel, the USA, and Asia, which have helped raise its international profile. The NLL has expanded its international visibility and reputation mainly by co-organising major international conferences and exhibitions, joining trans-regional research networks, and hosting visiting fellows. At the same time, it balances international competitiveness with a commitment to Latvian-language scholarship, national heritage studies, and the development of professional terminology. With its balance between a national and an international perspective, NLL clearly takes on a responsibility for supporting national self-understanding and the positioning of Latvia in the international, mainly European, cultural, and political context.

Economic impact

Score 4: Very good

Given its status as a public service institution, much of NLL's economic impact is realised indirectly, with admittedly few opportunities to commercialise its work, but its economic impact (e.g., through collaborations with publishing and printing industries) is nonetheless very good. However, it is difficult to underestimate the importance of NLL's updated data and other documentation on Latvian heritage and political and economic development for the priorities made in Latvian political and business-related decision-making concerning national development and international relations in culture, politics, and economy. NLL supports this development by contributing to the publishing and printing sectors not only by running its own publishing house but also through collaboration with stakeholders in the publishing industry and by providing access to research outputs, making it a sought-after partner. Partnerships with publishers, printers, and local historians further strengthen these industries. At the same time, NLL research informs cultural tourism, for example, through the creation of thematic tourist routes and bilingual exhibitions that connect historical scholarship with the visitor economy in Riga and beyond.

Social impact

Score 5: Outstanding

The social impact of NLL is outstanding, reflecting its role as a core research and cultural institution in Latvia. NLL is of crucial importance for the formation of a national self-consciousness supported by the unit's broad research on national heritage and its dissemination of its results through teaching and public outreach, helped by the continuously updated implementation of digital tools that expand the public interaction with cultural heritage. While its research directly serves the national and international academic community, it also forms the basis of NLL's outreach to a wide range of stakeholders in the cultural and educational sectors, including libraries, museums, archives, teachers, policy makers, and government advisory panels. Wider public engagement is supported through exhibitions, guided tours, educational programmes, video essays, podcasts, and media outreach. Every year, more than 40 science communication activities have been conducted. Collaborations with publishers, museums, and cultural NGOs help translate research into practical contributions for Latvia's cultural industries and heritage sector. International collaboration with other research libraries strengthens cultural exchange between Latvia and the rest of Europe. Moreover, researchers function as members of non-academic advisory boards (e.g., National Cultural Heritage Board, DHNB Board, Monuments Council of Riga City Council).

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 5: Outstanding

NLL's collections are outstanding, covering more than 4.4 million items, including rare books, manuscripts, non-textual material and 6,000+ e-books and 40 electronic databases. This excellent infrastructure supports both NLL researchers and external academic and non-academic users. In recent years, NLL has increased the number of staff engaged in research-related tasks by 174% and aimed to strengthen its research capacity by expanding the scientific workload of bibliographic staff and recruiting through project-based positions. The library building, with frequently updated facilities and access to technology necessary for a research library, is excellent. The policies of staff development and internal organisation of research collaboration across the research strands contribute to a productive and motivating

research culture, while the more recent expansion of staff and the location of the institute for Literature, Folklore and Arts at the NLL strengthen the research environment.

Development potential

Score 5: Outstanding

NLL has an outstanding potential for further development and to become a global leader in its discipline, with a strategy that emphasises interdisciplinary and innovative research contributing to society, education, and democratic processes. Its development focus includes several measures, such as strengthening horizontal collaboration across departments, maintaining a balance between national and international publications, encouraging researchers to publish in high-profile journals and indexed databases, and supporting research mobility abroad and staff exchanges. Also, strengthening emerging fields like the transformation of reading cultures shows a potential to further develop NLL's investment in Digital Humanities. One notable resource is its archival collections, which are under-explored and provide valuable opportunities for new research based on primary sources and for involving researchers from other research institutions. NLL formulates sound strategic goals that go beyond the present activities but are clearly within reach during the evaluation period. The SWOT analysis points to a lack of sufficient research time, which may hamper the otherwise realistic ambitions.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

With no formal accreditation to issue doctoral degrees, NLL plays, nonetheless, an important role in doctoral training in Latvia. The staff of NLL is engaged in doctoral and post-doctoral training, both in the use of the library for research across all disciplines and in mentoring doctoral students with projects in the humanities within the research areas of NLL. Furthermore, NLL offers doctoral students part-time jobs in its own research areas. Through being in a research institution such as NLL, doctoral students and post-doctoral students acquire important experience not only in research but also in research-based ways to disseminate of research to a wider public.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

It is the institutional remit of NLL to combine research with outreach on the basis of its rich collections, for the benefit of both the academic and non-academic public. Hence, NLL is indispensable for implementing the Latvian RIS3 strategy, and it clearly stands up to this responsibility. First, NLL is instrumental for the development of Digital Humanities in Latvia. The creation and curation of multiple online platforms open the collections to professionals, politicians and the ordinary citizens of Latvia, and contribute to the formation of Latvia as a knowledge society. Second, NLL also engages in other forms of research-based dissemination like exhibitions, courses and support to stakeholders in research, business, public and political institutions, offering access to knowledge of national and international relevance.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

NLL is at the forefront of the use and further development of information technology in Latvia in science and the wider society. This ensures the accessibility of the collections to all societal groups and makes the cultural heritage at large an asset in civic society, policymaking, and business. At the same time, the research and public outreach of NLL make the heritage a living memory of contemporary importance. Its international engagement with other research institutions and its collaboration with Latvian institutions in education, research and administration make the knowledge of the cultural heritage instrumental for cultural and national self-understanding, thus promoting national and international visibility of Latvia. NLL supports the integration of modern technology in society and culture on the basis of research

and makes it a tool for social and cultural resilience.

Recommendations

With the increase in research staff, NLL has the potential to take on new research areas and functions and to further build on its achievements. The Expert Group recommends:

- In the self-assessment report, Digital Humanities occupies a prominent place. NLL should expand its research engagement in the field from being concerned mostly with the collection as an object and new ways of accessing it (databases, online platforms, smart cataloguing, courses in library use for various stakeholders etc.) to include research with the collection as an inspiration, leading to new aspects of Digital Humanities. The field of transformations of reading cultures across media is a promising emerging activity which could include work with LLMs and generative AI exploiting NLL's contact with educational institutions and the publishing industry. However, this is not yet high on research agendas in Latvia. In this field, NLL may open new international relations to research institutions involving libraries in countries with small languages. This could also strengthen relations to research units focusing on linguistics, media and communication across Latvia, exploiting the country's multilingual cultural fabric.
- With the new doctoral school system, NLL is recommended to work with other institutions to expand the possibility of co-supervision from professional doctoral projects to also include academic projects, with the option of engaging international co-supervisors.
- As a recognition of the quality of NLL's research, base funding should be made available for NLL. This is a political decision, and NLL has the clout to work to achieve this goal.
- NLL is recommended to continue its efforts to serve as the host of international projects funded externally, together with other Latvian research institutions.
- NLL is recommended to further strengthen its recently established relations with relevant partners outside Europe in the USA and Asia (conferences, co-publications, visits).
- Although open access to the collections is important, NLL may consider exploring the possibility of turning some of its activities into a source of income.

H_3 Ventspils University of Applied Sciences - Field of Humanities

2.2.5 The unit

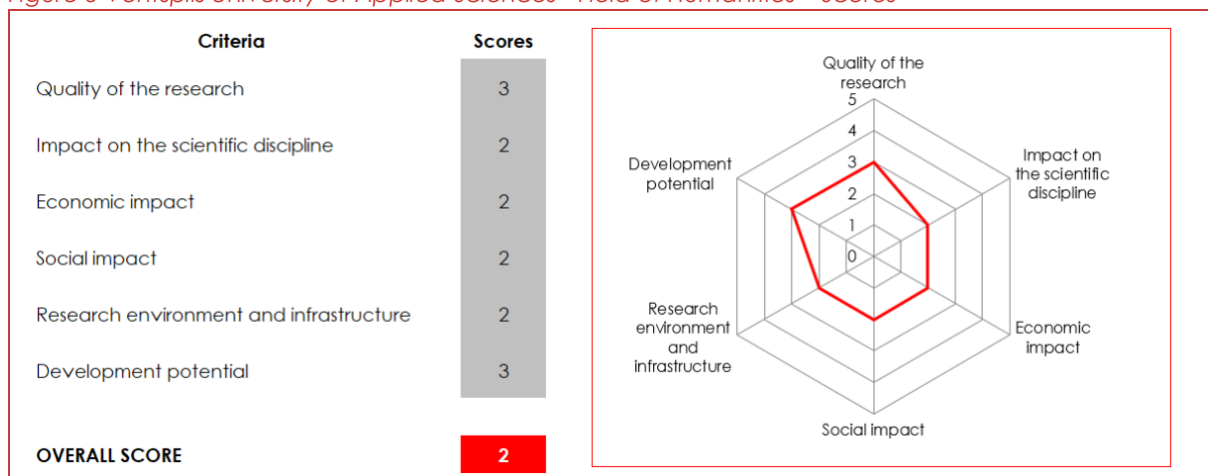
The Faculty of Translation Studies (FoTS) at the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) conducts research in the field of applied, comparative, and contrastive linguistics. The unit's objective is to conduct research relevant to society, integrate research results into the study process, and transfer knowledge to the national economy. The university's research activities are supported by a collaboration network, including national and international partners, to further the unit's strategic goals.

In the field of the Humanities, the university's research activities are organised around strategic areas of applied linguistics, contrastive linguistics, and translation studies. VUAS emphasises the integration of research results into study programmes, ensuring the dissemination of competencies and inclusion of research outcomes in study courses. VUAS is committed to fostering the development of scientific personnel, attracting students and researchers, and ensuring the sustainability of its doctoral programmes. The university's research strategy focuses on ensuring the full educational cycle, engaging researchers in scientific work, and developing national and international cooperation.

2.2.6 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 3 Ventspils University of Applied Sciences - Field of Humanities – Scores



Overall score

Score 2: Adequate level of research

The Expert Group assesses the unit's research as adequate. FoTS is a research unit with an emphasis on applied science, mainly in translation studies and Latvian language studies in a historical and contemporary perspective. FoTS has very limited international exposure and focus. Its studies on translation make growing use of Digital Humanities tools (e.g., machine translation or post-editing research) and disseminate studies of terminology across various areas and translation in general, mainly in German, English, and Russian via online platforms, engagement with the educational system and with staff members in advisory roles for stakeholders. However, its contributions to theoretical development are limited, and its research cites only a few major international trends in the field. Although FoTS's economic resources have diminished and the unit is in a transition phase between retirements and new hires, there has been a gradual increase in international publications and connections, a

development that FoTS plans to intensify. Formal collaboration has been established within the new doctoral school system between Latvia's three regional universities in Ventspils, Liepaja and Daugavpils, which is likely to improve doctoral education. With strong support from the Ventspils community, FoTS plays a role in the cultural and social life of the region. Broadening the theoretical and applied perspectives of translation studies in alignment with the general international development may raise its research level to being a strong national player.

Quality of Research

Score 3: Good

The quality of the research is good, but it needs to be strengthened by further international exposure and focus. The Faculty of Translation Studies (FoTS) at Ventspils University of Applied Science focuses primarily on applied research in translation studies, mainly related to applied linguistics, but also includes literature and broader issues within Digital Humanities. These priorities were confirmed by the site visit, although the Expert Group noted that the self-assessment report places a shifting weight on which areas constitute the primary research fields. Although FoTS has expanded its research field into machine translation/post-editing as a core activity within the preoccupation with Digital Humanities, the self-assessment does not refer to independently-produced research outputs in these areas.

The research is applied and focuses almost exclusively on Latvia. Although translation is an important theoretical and applied field internationally, the Latvian focus limits its international potential. Besides a limited number of academic publications (e.g., only 26 articles in indexed venues, and 5 monographs over the evaluation period), the output is mainly realized in the form of organising some research events (e.g., co-organization of conference - Linguistic Diversity, Terminology and Statistics), textbooks (for educational purposes), mobile apps (e.g., mobile application of English and Latvian medical terms, phrases, and questions) and digital databases (for industry and specialized scientific domains), monographs, contributions to edited volumes and journal articles, mostly in Latvian. Since the previous evaluation, the number of publications in international high-impact journals has started to increase, yet it remains at a low level of 13,6% published in Q1 journals. A well-researched single-authored monograph in English on poetic translation by Peter Lang was published by an international publisher in 2024. Overall, the bibliometric analysis shows that the publications are cited below the world average in the discipline, and the rate of international collaboration is low.

Staff members participate in various European events and boards. Yet, the Expert Group perceives these as based on individual initiatives rather than as parts of a concerted effort by the unit to create more permanent international partnerships with partners in countries beyond the Baltic and Nordic region with 'small' languages. Ventspils University's recent participation in the European COLOURS alliance for regional universities in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Macedonia, and Sweden has the potential to strengthen inter-institutional, rather than merely interpersonal, research relationships in the future.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 2: Adequate

The unit's impact on the scientific discipline is adequate. It is the only unit in Latvia devoted exclusively to translation and related fields from an applied perspective using a linguistic background, so FoTS is locally important. However, its contributions to theoretical development are limited, and its research makes few references to major international trends in the field. FoTS has produced a stable output of specialised terminological tools and databases (e.g., developing terminology tools in the fields of medicine, botany, dictionaries, and an academic

language database), and its research on terminology across scientific areas and social dimensions, which traditionally has been the backbone of the unit's research, continues as a core activity, together with studies of the Latvian language and its history, supplemented with the history of translation in Latvia (e.g., the project "Diversity of Latvian Language in Time and Space). FoTS has a good relationship with the Latvian education system (e.g., teacher education project *Mācītspēks*, or supporting digitalisation initiatives), and its participation in the European Masters of Translation provides it with some but limited European visibility in applied translation studies. A promising collaboration with the Polytechnic Institute of Porto, aimed at further developing Digital Humanities (LLMs and generative AI), is highlighted in the self-assessment report, but only with reference to a joint event in 2018, which has resulted in one collaborative research proposal to the Digital Europe Programme.

Economic impact

Score 2: Adequate

The direct economic impact of research at FoTS in the evaluation period is adequate. As the only unit among the evaluated units focusing on the applied aspects of translation, FoTS has significant potential to enhance the position of Latvian among European (especially EU) languages, but has yet to explore this. Its ongoing work on developing digital translation tools could be a way to achieve a stronger economic impact.

The self-assessment rightly highlights FoTS' indirect contribution to the regional economy through education. By providing educational programmes in several EU languages and training students in translation and second language education, the FoTS enhances the region's linguistic capabilities (e.g., 18 completed master's degrees in 2024). This is particularly relevant for the sector of information and communication technology. Ventspils University's membership of the COLOURS alliance of regional universities with a focus on regional development also has the potential to increase FoTS's economic impact.

Social impact

Score 2: Adequate

The unit's social impact is adequate. The importance of translation for society is visible, for instance, in FoTS' contract with the city of Ventspils for the translation of information/guidelines related to COVID-19. Furthermore, staff members are consultants in translation for EU institutions, government agencies, and private companies, and FoTS maintains good relations with the education system (e.g., teacher education project *Mācītspēks*, or supporting digitalization initiatives). There is an effort to popularise scientific activities, with researchers appearing in the media, producing podcasts, participating in the European Language Festival, European Researchers' Night or organising the "Young Translators' School" for pupils and teachers. However, FoTS does little citizen science (e.g., through involving students), where the general public actively contributes to research, so this dialogical perspective should be further developed. Joining the COLOURS alliance, which has a strong emphasis on citizen science, may provide FoTS with inspirational examples of best practice in this context.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 2: Adequate

FoTS benefits from Ventspils University's updating of its digital infrastructure, which has been supported by EU regional funding (e.g., the ERDF project: Strengthening the Excellence and Capacity of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences as a Scientific Institution), enabling FoTS to conduct more digitised linguistics research. This modernisation of the infrastructure creates

room for FoTS to strengthen its international position and creates conditions in which it could realise the strategy set out in the self-assessment report.

In the humanities, libraries function as core research infrastructures: they provide access to primary sources, extensive scholarly collections, reference works, specialist monographs, and journals that underpin sustained academic inquiry. In this context, the library available to FoTS was small - that is, it held a limited physical collection and lacked breadth across subfields. Such limitations can significantly constrain humanities scholarship, where progress often depends on the ability to consult wide-ranging historical, linguistic, and theoretical sources, to compare editions, and to access niche or rare materials. This reduces the unit's ability to support in-depth research, limits opportunities for students and staff to engage with the latest international scholarship, and restricts FoTS's potential to participate fully in global academic debates.

The unit is recovering from a funding deficit and staff losses resulting from a transition between generations following a number of retirements, and now needs to recruit new people.

FoTS is in a difficult position as a small regional unit and needs to ensure that a new generation of successors can take over from retiring colleagues. The site visit revealed that its internal organisation and the degree of collaboration among staff of subdisciplines are weak. They need strengthening through institutional measures such as regular informal staff seminars, retreats, internal peer review, annual self-assessments, and training in writing for international journals. The doctoral students mainly work online with their supervisors, apparently satisfied with these individualised working conditions, but their more frequent presence at the university would create a better, more collaborative, cross-generational environment. Overall, such measures should foster a collegial environment and help recruit new staff.

Development potential

Score 3: Good

FoTS' development potential is good. Its recent participation in the European COLOURS Alliance, the European Master's in Translation, and other international collaborations in the region provides a good starting point for the FoTS leadership to realise its goals of digital innovation in the research agenda and internationalisation. However, the unit is still primarily operating at the local level. Although FoTS participates in international networks, these engagements remain limited in scope, short-term, and do not yet translate into sustained research collaborations, joint publications, or leadership roles in larger European projects.

Continuing to work with CLARIN for storage of resources will help align the digital tools and infrastructure FoTS develops with European standards and build a solid international network. Inviting international experts as keynote speakers at conferences will further the exchange of ideas and train the younger generation, as exposure to diverse expertise and methods, building international research networks, and improved academic communication skills are essential for advancing research. However, the unit focuses more on one-off co-organisation of events with others, rather than establishing long-term cooperations in larger projects that are necessary for developing an interdisciplinary perspective in the unit's research and fostering internal cooperation within the staff.

The group's limited financial resources present a challenge despite increased base funding; the funding from competitive research projects has been decreasing. Notably, the unit does not acquire any private funding and was not part of any EU Framework Programme projects. The updated infrastructure offers a basis to strengthen collaboration with industry and international researchers – potentially in an enlarged collaboration with the University of Liepaja

(now part of Riga Technological University) and Daugavpils University, which at the moment functions as the centre for doctoral education.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

FoTS began formalised doctoral education in 2009 in a joint venture with Liepaja University, which has now been established as an independent branch of Riga Technological University, as part of an effort to improve higher education provision in the Kurzeme region. This led to two conferences, *Via Scientiarium*, in 2019 and 2021, involving both doctoral students and research faculty. Under the new Latvian doctoral school system, this collaboration has also been widened to include Daugavpils University. Each university has been allocated a specialisation, which in the case of FoTS is translation studies and terminology, which are less represented areas in other doctoral study programmes. Such a formal collaboration among regional universities is a good way to strengthen higher education and research outside Riga, within and beyond doctoral education. However, the online interview with doctoral students showed that their hybrid (predominantly online) presence in Ventspils prevents the creation of a truly cross-generational collegial environment in FoTS. Over the evaluation period, nine PhD students enrolled in doctoral studies, and one doctoral dissertation was defended.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The growing importance of Digital Humanities in FoTS's primary research areas – translation studies and applied linguistics with an emphasis on Latvian – clearly aligns the unit with RIS3, especially with area 3 Smart materials and technologies, and engineering systems and area 5 Information and communication technologies. This is evidenced, for instance, by the development of the database *Zinatnesvaloda.lv* and the data storage and management system *Bioleksipēdija*. Further, the recent upgrading of the university's digital infrastructure represents an important step towards developing a 'smart' strategy in the framework of translation studies (machine translation and post-editing). On the one hand, it will improve open access to information and research results in the region and support opportunities for internationalisation; on the other hand, creating a hybrid or purely online engagement at FoTS would make it difficult to create a viable environment. The Expert Group considers it essential to maintain a physical presence and improve onsite collegial interaction in tandem with the development of digitalisation of research environments.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

With its focus on the Latvian language in both contemporary and historical perspectives, FoTS clearly aligns with state policy for scientific and technological development. Translation studies, providing open access terminology resources disseminated online, also help support Latvia's role in an international (mainly European) context. FoTS contributes to the development of human resources with applied skills to support the interconnection of research, education, and open access expertise by using digital technology.

Recommendations

The Expert Group recommends the following:

- Internationalisation:
 - Realise the ambitions set out in the self-assessment by creating ties with the Polytechnic Institute of Porto beyond the event carried out in 2018. This institution has created a network of 8 universities, Athena, which FoTS should seek to join, perhaps seeking advice from a member such as Vilnius University. Strengthening this connection would provide FoTS with access to a wider international research community, structured mobility opportunities, and collaborative project development mechanisms that are difficult to build independently.

- Strengthen the relationship with the COLOURS Alliance of regional universities, aiming to establish more permanent partnerships with members.
- Sustain the current increase in international publications and contacts beyond single events and individual publications.
- Regional and national relations:
 - Extend collaboration in the newly established doctoral school with the universities in Liepaja and Daugavpils to include more aspects of education and research on regional topics, share experience of working with interactive citizen science, jointly apply for international and national project funding, and together to suggest relevant policies to policy makers. The regional universities have a shared interest in enhancing the role of regional universities, and it is a national interest to see regional universities excel in their special research areas.
- Internal environment:
 - Use new recruitments after the recent retirements to develop new and expanded research directions and explore the possibility of joint hiring between regional and other universities, between faculties in relevant areas (like Digital Humanities), and between FoTS and other regional stakeholders.
 - Translate the ambition of promoting interdisciplinarity into internal collaboration and training for all staff members through measures such as internal peer review of manuscripts, joint training in writing for international publication, retreats with a social and scholarly dimension, regular small internal lectures to present new ideas, annual reports from individual staff on research progress, and mutual advice in research in and beyond doctoral training.
 - Put measures in place to create a welcoming and cooperative physical environment at the university to support recruitment and a high quality of working life that is not attainable for a regional university in a hybrid or online-only environment.
 - Explore opportunities for long-term exchanges with other universities in the region, in Latvia, and abroad. Consider whether performance-based remuneration might be used to support such exchanges.

H_4 Daugavpils University - Research programme "Humanities and the Arts"

2.2.7 The unit

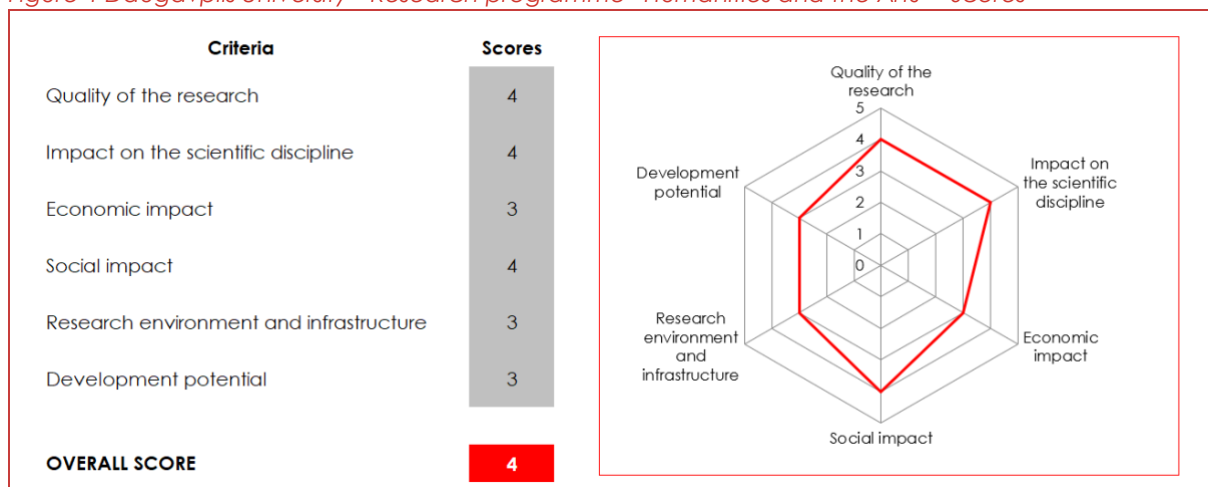
Daugavpils University (DU) is one of the largest regional universities, located on the country's eastern border. The Research Programme Humanities and the Arts (RPHA) is a key strategic component of the university's Development Strategy for 2022-2028. This programme focuses on fostering a sustainable society through research and academic programmes in the humanities and arts. It is implemented by three research centres within the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences and two departments of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. RPHA aims to produce high-quality research in regional studies, literature, and the arts, while promoting international collaboration.

The research at RPHA is organised around several interconnected research fields: regional studies, oral history, cultural studies, and comparative literature and culture. These themes are explored through interdisciplinary approaches and comparative analysis, supported by mobile research clusters and participation in national and international projects such as the Horizon Europe programme project "Cultural Literacies' Value in Europe," or the longitudinal GUIDE project on children's well-being.

2.2.8 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 4 Daugavpils University - Research programme "Humanities and the Arts"- Scores



Overall score

Score 4: Very good level of research

RPHA's overall performance is very good. As in the previous evaluation period, RPHA remains a strong academic player in the region of Latgale in spite of the difficult local situation on both the human and the political level. It sees its role as promoter of democratic values and intercultural dialogue in the area and realises its goals through tight collaboration with the local cultural sector and enterprises. At the national level, the joint doctoral programmes with other universities in the country (Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, Liepāja University, University of Latvia) have established a stable environment that secures a broad array of competences to guide PhD students to the completion of their doctoral research.

In addition to its contributions at the regional and national levels, RPHA has built a strong network of international partnerships through long-term research projects, exemplified by five Horizon projects. It is crucial to secure follow-up funding for these projects to maintain RPHA's financial health. A prolonged involvement in the projects will safeguard its international status, which is higher than the state's base funding can enable.

Quality of Research

Score 4: *Very good*

The quality of the Research Programme Humanities and the Arts (RPHA) is very good. It has a clear vision for its research, guided by an interdisciplinary approach and comparative analysis methods. The research strategy for the institution focuses on pursuing international research, advancing scientific excellence, connecting research to teaching and industry, and enhancing the institution's role as a regional research centre. The institution has been developed in a goal-oriented fashion. For instance, the self-assessment report includes a long list of strategic directions for the development of scientific personnel, which have been implemented during the evaluation period.

Challenges include the relatively small number of researchers (out of an academic research personnel of 19.4 FTE, only 6.9 are researchers or senior researchers) and difficulties in attracting and retaining researchers. Another challenge is the insufficient state funding, which necessitates securing funding from international sources such as the EU. During the evaluation period, the unit has nevertheless been able to steadily increase its government base funding from €1.3m (2019) to €2.1m (in 2024). Yearly funding from competitive research projects has been around €700k to €800k (apart from the first year, with €1.5m). Most of this has come through project applications from EU Structural funds. Excluding RPHA's own research programmes, the unit lists 40 externally funded projects of international competitiveness, including 14 EU projects, as well as grants from foreign funding instruments (e.g., UK Research and Innovation Grant) and national research programmes (e.g., the Latvian Council of Science). The sustainability of these funding sources poses a serious, permanent challenge; in view of the limited structural state budget and expected government cuts, staying competitive and securing international funding is of paramount importance.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 4: *Very good*

RPHA has a very good impact on the scientific discipline. It has a stable position in the Baltic scientific community. RPHA's four research themes have distinct profiles that particularly address the Baltic area: (1) regional studies focuses on the historical heritage of Eastern Latvia, with emphasis on the social realities of the post-Soviet situation, (2) oral history addresses the multicultural life-worlds of Eastern Latvia, working with a large collection of audio-recorded life stories, (3) cultural studies targets current socio-political processes in the area, boasting a longitudinal project on children's well-being until 2053, and (4) contemporary literature and culture targets comparative aspects of the Baltic languages. Given these foci, it is understandable that the institution sees its primary competitors to be universities in the other Baltic states (Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy, University of Tartu), but the research transcends regional boundaries by adopting more general theoretical frameworks. During the evaluation period, RPHA has produced a yearly mean of 20.7 publications indexed in Scopus or the Web of Science (out of which 6.8 are in Q1 and Q2 journals), a yearly mean of 20.2 publications not included in these databases, as well as 3.1 monographs and 1.3 doctoral theses per year, on average. The research profile is international: the list of 15 most important publications includes eight articles published in peer-reviewed journals outside the Baltic states (e.g., *Frontiers in*

Sociology, Journal of International Women's Studies), three articles in Baltic journals (e.g., *Lithuanian Historical Studies*), and four book chapters in international anthologies. Over 300 researchers annually participate in international conferences organised at RPHA. Researchers at the unit are members of the editorial boards of scientific journals, but not outside the Baltic states. The researchers have received prizes and awards, but not outside of Latvia.

Economic impact

Score 3: *Good*

RPHA accounts for the economic impact of its research by mentioning three projects: (1) the large-scale longitudinal study GUIDE that is expected to provide policymakers with comparable data to be used in funding to enhance the well-being of young people; (2) a cultural literacy project (CLiViE) that calculates the value of cultural education activities; and (3) the development of practical instruments in collaboration with non-academic partners to stimulate regional economic growth. In addition, under "commercialisation of the research," the unit reports language and culture projects, including seven Latvian Language and Culture Summer Schools (total funding 55 550 EUR).

In order to adapt the research program of cultural and identity studies to the reality of the geopolitical situation, which is particularly strongly felt in this region, the unit has redirected its focus to identity building and cross-cultural studies. In this context, the unit has collaborated with organisations working with refugee and immigrant issues. Here, the focus has been on questions of integration, which in the long term can indirectly strengthen the economy by increasing employment and tax revenues while reducing social welfare costs.

While RPHA's economic impact is good, it is not very tangible, and there is scope to increase the level of interaction with economic actors, in particular, language teaching for foreigners and tourism.

Social impact

Score 4: *Very good*

RPHA has a very good social impact. RPHA is a key strategic specialisation of DU and is guided by a vision to foster the development of a sustainable society through research in the humanities and arts. The idea of regional development is written into the primary objective of the unit and is explicitly motivated by strengthening democracy and fighting against disinformation through scientifically-grounded interpretations of history. Many empirical research projects at RPHA have direct relevance to policymaking. For instance, the longitudinal GUIDE project is expected to support policymaking for young people's well-being, and the project Cultural Literacies' Value in Europe seems similarly relevant for educational policy development. Social impact of research at RPHA is also realised through cultural initiatives in partnership with schools. In addition, cultural impact is channelled through ties with the tourism and museum sectors. The self-assessment report lists a large number of non-academic long-term collaborations with cultural institutions in Latvia (and in two cases, in the UK and Germany), including cultural associations devoted to Belarusian, Jewish, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Tatar, and Ukrainian culture. Research concerning ethnic minority rights has spawned cooperation with organisations addressing refugee and immigration issues. The unit is also invested in the public understanding of scientific activity: during the evaluation period, there were 517 science communication activities, including popular science articles and media appearances such as the documentary "Some Kind of Liberating Effect" on the freedom of religious research that features interviews with RPHA researchers.

In conversations during the site visit, staff showed awareness that research communication functions on different levels, including both scholarly output in research journals and public engagement on websites, social media, and local events. They are open to collaboration with colleagues from other faculties, universities abroad, and external partners. In particular, the unit trains foreign language teachers, who are in great demand in the region, in collaboration with NGOs and external commercial partners. Based on the interview with stakeholders, the unit assumes a key role for the cultural development and the enhancement of mutual understanding of the citizens in the multicultural region.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 3: Good

The research environment at RHPS is good. RPHA comprises the Department of Language and Literature and the Department of Arts (at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) as well as three research centres of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences (Centre of Regional Studies, Centre of Oral History, Centre of Cultural Research). The leadership structure is headed by the Faculty Dean and the Director of the Institute. The self-assessment report sets out a detailed human resources development strategy.

The research appears to be strategically goal-oriented around the various disciplinary foci: regional studies, oral history, cultural studies, and comparative literature and culture. There is an incentive system to enhance performance, an annual dissemination plan for guiding the dissemination of research findings, and an annual quality monitoring system. The institution gives funding support to publications indexed in open-access journals. The SWOT analysis mentions a “heavy workload” for scholars. Although research and teaching are perceived as closely connected activities, the low number of FTE research staff and heavy teaching duties create pressure to continue producing high-quality research output in journals with high impact factors.

The institution has access to good library resources, including 233 868 books and 368 titles of periodicals. As explained in detail in the self-assessment report, there are also good digital resources, teaching facilities, as well as a good collection of musical instruments. Several long-term partnerships with cultural institutions enhance the research environment.

Development potential

Score 3: Good

RHPA has good development potential. Based on the list of selected publications, the researchers have a good ability to participate in international competition, and the scientific environment manages to support research in the chosen focus areas. Some of these initiatives are especially topical, with implications for social policymaking. RPHA's capability for long-term planning is admirably demonstrated by the longitudinal project GUIDE on children's well-being, designed to be active until 2053. The institution also has an impressive track record of obtaining competitive funding. Since the last evaluation, publication activities have been refocused by focusing on field-specific journals with international editorial boards.

It appears that attracting researchers is among the main challenges that RPHA faces. The institution recognises that more attention needs to be devoted to attracting both early-career and more experienced scholars, as well as foreign scholars, as researchers and professors. Suggested future activities support these goals. Likewise, the current incentive system is suggested to be complemented by a performance-based reward system.

Based on the data provided, the institution's analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats appears realistic and justifiable. In the SWOT analysis, the emphasised opportunities focus on internationalisation, collaboration, strengthening partnerships, and attracting talent — a vision that realistically acknowledges the regional emphasis of the research profile and the remaining distance to top institutional competitors in the field.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

Since the last evaluation, RPHA has developed new doctoral programmes with other universities. These are strategically targeted to integrate regional research into broader scientific discourses and are designed to ensure the continuity of methodological schools. These aspects of regional focus and methodological continuity can be a strength, but they might also be seen as potential weaknesses stifling a more international outlook and methodological renewal. It is therefore appropriate that the institution sees growth potential in supporting doctoral students more actively to engage in international projects and in expanding scientific collaboration with other regions.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The main research focus of RPHA does not fall within the five RIS3 smart specialisation domains. However, the self-assessment report argues that research at RPHA aligns with the RIS3 goal to enhance innovation capacity, owing to the involvement of Digital Humanities and language technologies, and with the strategic priority of strengthening human capital (although it should be stated that not all research referred to as “Digital Humanities” goes methodologically beyond the by now conventional use of digital tools in humanities research).

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

RPHA also pursues the objectives in the national policy document “The Guidelines for Science, Technology Development, and Innovation 2021–2027”, e.g., by fostering internationally recognised research and by addressing knowledge transfer and internationalisation.

Due to its research focus on the Eastern Latvian region, and the goal to anchor regionally oriented research in internationally recognised research paradigms, RPHA seems well placed to pursue scholarly development in a way that is beneficial to the Latvian state. The goal of technological development is not always self-evident for researchers in the humanities and social sciences, but RPHA has been able to incorporate digital and computational technology in its research, thus presenting interdisciplinary innovation potential in this regard. The institution also aspires to integrate its research with the education sector, e.g., through projects assessing the value and addressing the impact of cultural education. Many of the institution's research projects have a clear potential to yield recommendations for education.

Recommendations

The Expert Group's recommendations are as follows:

- Support for individual research activities has been provided through small-scale project grants. The unit has also introduced a new performance-based reward system for its academic staff. It would be useful to make these systems flexible enough so that they could accommodate the needs of the individual researchers, including the need for more paid research time.
- It would be advisable to improve collaboration further in the doctoral network with the other regional institutions in Latvia, combining available expertise throughout the country and outside of the capital. Collaboration with institutions at a considerable

distance may be a way to attract doctoral students who are not always able to attend physical meetings due to professional activities or living abroad.

- It would be useful to explore further opportunities for networking with institutions in other European regions struggling with the consequences of the geopolitical situation, and to exchange experiences and expertise on community creation and raising awareness for democratic procedures.
- The unit's journals should be encouraged to seek greater international recognition.

H_5 University of Latvia - Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art

2.2.9 The unit

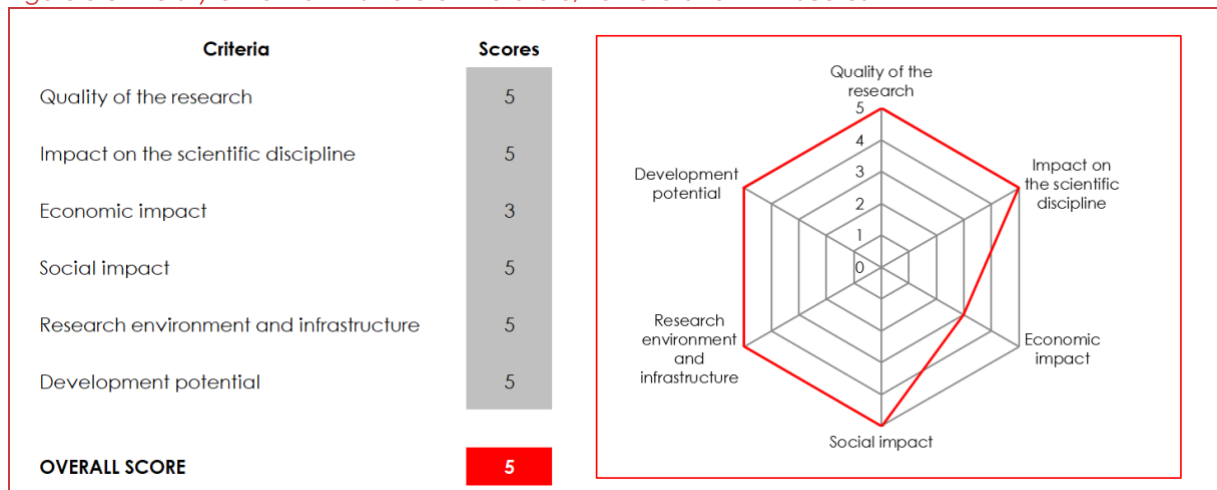
The Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art (ILFA) is a research institute affiliated with the University of Latvia, focusing on literature, folklore, arts, cultural and gender studies, digital and environmental humanities. ILFA is committed to fostering innovative research grounded in national heritage while engaging in global academic dialogue. The institute aims to advance high-level research, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, support open knowledge, and strengthen the role of the humanities in public life and policymaking. ILFA contributes to cultural and comparative studies in the Baltic area and maintains active international partnerships.

ILFA's research is organised into four specialised departments: 1) Literary Studies, 2) Folklore Studies/Archives of Latvian Folklore, 3) Arts, and 4) Culture, Society, and Environment, along with a cross-departmental Digital Humanities Group. The research strategy emphasises a holistic and interdisciplinary view of culture, focusing on comparative and regional literary studies, folklore, and cultural heritage research, performing arts, environmental humanities, gender and queer studies, and Digital Humanities innovation.

2.2.10 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 5 University of Latvia - Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art – Scores



Overall score

Score 5: Outstanding level of research

The Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art is an outstanding performer and a global leader in its field. Based on the Archives of Folklore (1924), the present Institute for Folklore, Literature and Art (ILFA) is now affiliated with the University of Latvia as one of its independent research institutes. ILFA is still dedicated to the study of Latvian heritage with a permanent, innovative, and interdisciplinary approach made possible by the integration of broader core disciplines of the humanities, most notably literature and art. This has shaped an outstanding research unit with a vibrant collaborative atmosphere, motivated by a clear mission and strategy, and an expanding international participation in projects, publications, conferences, and bilingual online platforms. The research balances Latvian and international perspectives in a cross-fertilising research dynamic that involves collaboration across disciplines and generations and takes its inspiration from recent international theoretical developments in environmental humanities, gender studies and Digital Humanities, the latter as a horizontal preoccupation

across the departments. Although it plays no formal role in doctoral education, ILFA's researchers act as mentors for doctoral students, and the unit offers an inspiring collegial environment for ECRs. Being located in the National Library of Latvia is ideal for ILFA's strong dependence on archival studies and the joint efforts with NLL to spearhead the development of Digital Humanities as both applied and potentially also fundamental research in Latvia. ILFA's succinct self-assessment report shows a productive self-reflection on its limits and potential, which is matched by a clear and realistic strategy for research, outreach and staff cooperation and development within a sustained network of important international partners and collaborations. The site visit's interviews with staff, stakeholders and doctoral students fully confirmed the report. Combining tradition and innovation, local commitment and international engagement, fundamental and applied science, academic ambitions and citizen interaction, ILFA is outstanding also in the international research landscape.

Quality of Research

Score 5: Outstanding

ILFA is an outstanding research unit conducting fundamental and applied research in literature, folklore, performing arts, heritage, digital and environmental humanities, and gender studies, with special expertise in Latvian, Baltic, and post-Soviet cultural history. Its core strengths lie in interdisciplinary humanities research, digital infrastructure, and cultural heritage, supported by four departments and a cross-departmental Digital Humanities Group. The institute demonstrates high research excellence, particularly in literary history, folkloristics, Digital Humanities, and environmental humanities, with internationally recognised outputs including folklore editions, annotated archives, and monographs on Soviet cultural practices and cultural memory, musicology, narratology, folklore, feminist theory, as well as literature theory. ILFA shows a sustained effort across all activities to ensure an innovative approach to Latvian heritage and in relation to present-day cultural issues (environment, gender, etc.) in collaboration with international partners across the region, Scandinavian Europe, and beyond. It is well aligned with recent international theoretical developments, such as postcolonial and trauma studies, posthumanism, ecocriticism, and gender theory. Its strategy is clear and productive, balancing basic and applied research. ILFA fosters a culture of creative research that bridges academic and artistic practice, advances socially relevant themes, and situates Latvian humanities within multiple international research networks.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 5: Outstanding

ILFA's efforts to combine strong conceptual research with applied outputs such as digital platforms (e.g., *garamantas.lv* (digital folklore archive), *literatura.lv* (Latvian literature database), *humma.lv* (digital humanities portal), *womage.lv* (women's cultural history), *iesasties.lv* (citizen science platform)), annotated editions (e.g., of exile literature), and exhibitions (e.g. in collaboration with the National Museum of Literature and Music), are exemplary for achieving an outstanding impact both in academia and in the public sphere. The efforts are supported by a comprehensive bilingual dissemination strategy (mainly Latvian and English) to ensure that projects reach international and national peers, policymakers, and wider audiences through monographs, critical editions, digital tools, exhibitions, podcasts, and educational resources. Its award-winning publishing house and the open-access journal *Letonica* significantly enhance international visibility, while the series *Theoria* makes a string of translations of contemporary theories available for Latvian scholars. This two-way traffic is exemplary, not only in Latvian studies but also in general for national and regional studies in small or underrepresented languages and cultures. The increase in international publications (~30%) and contacts since the last evaluation testifies to the sustainability of international

collaborations with parallel research units in the region, including Scandinavia and Germany, fostering mutual inspiration for the unit's partners as well as for the unit itself. The Digital Humanities group positions ILFA at the forefront of Latvia's cultural infrastructure, with growing participation in Horizon Europe, COST, Erasmus+, and Nordic-Baltic networks. However, encouraging long-term foreign researcher presence in the Institute and taking on the coordination of large-scale EU projects remain future strategic challenges.

Economic impact

Score 3: Good

ILFA's economic impact is good. Its research generates cultural, educational, and socio-economic benefits, strengthening Latvia's national development, regional identity, and international visibility of importance for the positioning of Latvian business and policy making in the European political, economic, and cultural landscape. Economically, the unit provides reusable digital resources for exhibitions, tourism, and publishing, and supports regional museums, SMEs, and NGOs in developing heritage-based innovations and educational products. Flagship projects such as *Green Heritage* and *Living Next to the Port* link cultural research to ecological transition and climate resilience, demonstrating the relevance of humanities research to broader sustainability goals. ILFA also delivers expert services such as lectures, consultations, strategy development, and evaluation for municipalities, ministries, and civil society. However, engagement with the business sector and the innovation ecosystem remains modest, limiting the transfer of applied research, cross-sectoral collaboration, and the commercialisation potential of digital tools and methodologies.

Social impact

Score 5: Outstanding

ILFA has an outstanding social impact, resting on a dialogical and interactive engagement in citizen science, contributing to national identity formation, cultural sustainability, education, and social inclusion. It preserves and reinterprets Latvian cultural memory, most notably through the Archives of Latvian Folklore, which is one of Europe's most advanced open-access folklore collections. It also ensures broad societal access via digital platforms, created and curated by ILFA, such as *garamantas.lv* and citizen science initiatives like *iesaisties.lv*. The Institute engages diverse publics through exhibitions, festivals, educational resources, crowdsourcing campaigns, and collaborations with schools, libraries, museums, and NGOs. The unit plays a leading role in shaping cultural policy, advising ministries, municipalities, and heritage institutions, while initiatives such as the Latvian Literature Award, oral history projects, and participatory research further strengthen civic participation and cultural dialogue. ILFA's integration of research excellence, open science, digital innovation, and community partnerships positions it both as a cultural memory institution and as a socially engaged research hub, making its societal contribution exemplary at national and international levels, not least documented by the first Baltic *Honorary Mention* in the *European Union Citizen Science Award* for *iesaisties.lv*.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 5: Outstanding

ILFA's location in the National Library with office space, technological resources, archival and other materials, and possibilities for collaboration outside ILFA is outstanding and provides a major asset for the unit. The plan to hire technological expertise (information from the site visit) is a commendable strategic decision that will further strengthen cooperation with the National

Library, its staff and resources. ILFA maintains a supportive and participatory research environment that encourages collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the development of early-career researchers, including doctoral students integrated into funded projects. Its strength lies in a well-developed research infrastructure and cross-departmental collaboration, combining physical resources, archives, and advanced digital platforms. The Archives of Latvian Folklore, one of Europe's most extensive and technologically advanced folklore collections, together with open-access digital tools and daily access to the National Library of Latvia's extensive collections, enables high-quality interdisciplinary research and public engagement. These resources support a dynamic, collaborative research culture across all departments, innovative scholarships, and international connectivity.

Development potential

Score 5: Outstanding

Combined with its resources and track record, ILFA's clear strategic thinking provides it with outstanding potential for further development, particularly in strengthening the expanding scope of its research capacity and international engagement. Commendably, attracting and developing national and international research talent is outlined as a key priority, and the unit offers a supportive environment for early-career researchers through mentoring, project integration, and internal training. Its development plan for 2025–2030 focuses on consolidating core strengths, interdisciplinary humanities research, digital infrastructure, and cultural heritage expertise. Particularly promising is the integration in European networks of Digital Humanities (e.g., DHN) which will enable ILFA to be at the forefront of new developments. In this larger European context, an opening to the development of LLMs for small languages could be made possible, maybe in collaboration with the National Library and national departments of linguistics and communication studies. With its clear strategic vision, balanced integration of basic and applied research, social engagement, active support for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, and emphasis on internationalisation, ILFA is well placed to strengthen its national leadership and grow as an internationally competitive humanities research unit.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

Interviews with highly motivated and well-integrated doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers during the site visit showed ILFA's capacity to support doctoral student training at a high level. Doctoral students and other ECRs are integrated in research projects within a both national and international horizon, in an inclusive research environment, in close contact with mentors, internal seminars across ILFA's departments, international conference participation, internal peer review processes for planned publications and project applications as well as a good physical infrastructure. With ILFA's active and wide-ranging public engagements, the unit also offers students the experience of broader research dissemination and public interaction, supported by the location at the NLL.

ILFA does not issue doctoral degrees; yet, many senior researchers are involved in supervision and doctoral education at other institutions, first of all University of Latvia and the Latvian Academy of Culture, but also at a number of other Latvian universities and the University of Tartu. The establishment of doctoral schools in Latvia and, for ILFA in particular, the unit's planned formalised participation in the doctoral school of University of Latvia, will be an important step forward for the education of doctoral students and ECRs in Latvia.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

ILFAs satisfies the RIS3 strategy by intersecting knowledge dissemination across many sectors of society with digital technology development. The unit carries out interdisciplinary research in Latvian literature and culture, intangible heritage, environmental humanities and various art forms in research and public outreach. This work is channelled via a number of digital platforms, created and curated by the unit, advisory functions and other forms of public engagement as well as promoted in open summer schools. This work contributes to RIS3 priorities like environmental economics and sustainability, open society, education, and public engagement in crowdfunding. The broad international engagement in EU-funded projects and networks (Horizon, COST, Erasmus+, DARIAH) provides Latvia with a visibility of importance for policymaking and business.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

ILFA aligns clearly with the national objectives of scientific and technology development by its contributions to national democratic cohesion in its research areas and its interdisciplinary research practice as well as in its public outreach. The unit plays an important role in digital development within the humanities both on a national and international level, shows a competitive international research profile enhancing the international visibility of Latvia, and fosters an innovative intersection of research and broader dissemination with its interactive engagement in open citizen science.

Recommendations

The Expert Group's recommendations are as follows:

- ILFA is encouraged to follow its strategy and continue to build on its interdisciplinary and inter-generational organisation of research and its international collaborations in projects, publications, and conferences. The unit has a level and a cohesiveness that make it internationally attractive. It would be a worthwhile ambition to host a major international project, probably in the EU context and probably as a joint effort of several research institutions in Latvia.
- ILFA is recommended to strengthen its relationship with the creative industries via joint projects. Experience with crowdfunding and creation/curating of digital platforms has the potential to further develop economic impact.
- ILFA's engagement in the Digital Humanities is strong and diversified. The topics of the regional summer schools 2019-2024 show the range of dimensions taken up by ILFA. However, the latest developments in large language models (LLM) and generative AI are not much taken up in Latvian humanities research. In collaboration with other research units, ILFA could take the lead and use its international connections to explore these new areas through international partnerships.
- ILFA is recommended to take on a more formal role within the doctoral school of the University of Latvia. This would be an asset to doctoral education and to ILFA as well. It is also recommended to push for an increase in the number of supervisors that can be allocated to academic doctoral students. Academic doctoral projects should involve two supervisors to align them with professional projects, and to make use of international co-supervisors (whom ILFA would be well-positioned to identify).
- ILFA is recommended to continue its efforts to attract international staff, long-term guest professors, and exchange agreements. This is difficult given the present structure of academic positions in Latvia. However, ILFA may be in a position to convincingly lobby for increasing such opportunities, which would strengthen the Latvian research sector.
- ILFA is recommended to rethink its use of performance incentives and to allow beneficiaries to choose among extra sabbaticals, bonuses, international research visits, or other benefits important to their work.

H_6 Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music

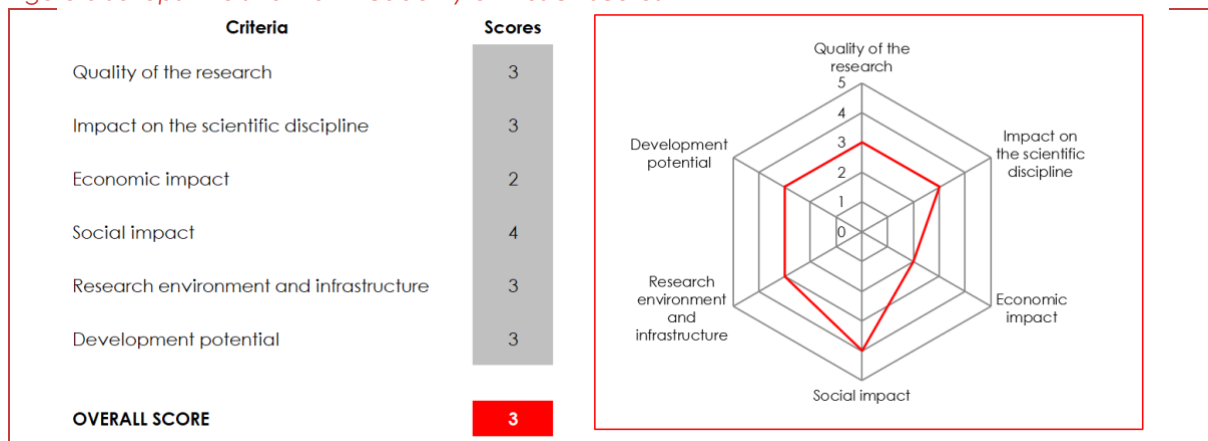
2.2.11 The unit

The Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music (JVLMA) is a state-run higher education institution in Latvia, specialising in music education and research. Since 2018, JVLMA has held the status of a scientific institution, positioning itself as a central music research centre in Latvia. The academy's mission is to educate internationally competitive specialists and researchers, contributing to the cultural and educational landscape of Latvia. The unit has been actively collaborating with academic and non-academic stakeholders in Latvia and internationally. JVLMA's main research fields in musicology cover systematic musicology, ethnomusicology, historical musicology, as well as research of performing arts and practice or art research and pedagogy. The academy emphasises interdisciplinary research, particularly in music psychology and neuroscience.

2.2.12 The unit Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 6 Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music– Scores



Overall score

Score 3: Good level of research

The Scientific Research Centre (SRC) at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music (JVLMA) is the only dedicated research centre for music in Latvia. It was granted scientific institution status in 2018 and offers doctoral programmes in music, musicology, and the arts. The unit is a good, strong national player, with some international recognition. The research profile of the unit could be described as a balance between systematic musicology (with a focus on music and neuroscience), on the one hand, and research centred on Latvian music, on the other – the latter involving approaches mainly from ethnomusicology and historical musicology. Artistic research in music and music education are represented to a smaller extent. The unit has an appropriate research infrastructure for its needs, and the researchers have demonstrated their ability to acquire external research funding and engage in international collaborations and networks. The quantity of publications is appropriate, but the research outputs have not yet been published in international peer-reviewed journals in music research. Nationally, JVLMA's research has a notable social impact, and the unit is viewed as having an indispensable role in strengthening Latvian society and culture. The unit has good developmental potential, given that it can find ways of increasing the international impact of its research while remaining committed to its key role in developing the national musical heritage.

Quality of Research

Score 3: Good

The quality of the research is good. The publications submitted together with the self-assessment report testify to the broad range of research interests conducted at JVLMA, both in the established fields of musicology and ethnomusicology, as well as to the unit's developmental potential in the field of music and neuroscience in systematic musicology. Overall, the submitted publications reflect an openness to interdisciplinary collaboration. For instance, they include examples of collaboration with Baltic theatre scholars, dance researchers in Austria, as well as neuroscientific researchers at Vilnius University and in Taiwan. At the same time, the submitted publications suggest that high-profile, original research leadership may still largely be lacking and that the focus in interdisciplinary work may often easily shift from music research to the collaborators' fields (e.g., neurology, theatre studies, education). For example, two of the submitted publications are neurological studies published in an applied science and engineering journal, mainly discussing their results on the neurological level, and one of them is an article on child rearing in Latvia, in which music is not mentioned at all.

In the self-assessment report, the prioritisation of scientific activity is discussed in terms of several broad disciplinary labels, each with its more specific research directions. In particular, research carried out in systematic musicology has a neuroscientific emphasis, while both historical musicology and ethnomusicology are oriented toward research on national musical traditions. In addition, there is some music education research and artistic research in music. The working groups in these various areas are relatively small, but they are complemented by international collaboration, and the number of different research themes seems justified, given the key role of the unit in upholding competence in music research on a national level.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 3: Good

In the Latvian context, JVLMA constitutes a key national research centre for music. Its scientific impact is good, and it can be considered a strong national player with some international recognition. Given the small number of full-time equivalent researchers, the quantity of research output seems appropriate. During the evaluation period, the average yearly numbers of publications include 6.7 peer-reviewed articles included in the Web of Science or SCOPUS, 8.8 peer-reviewed articles outside these databases, 2.3 monographs or edited volumes, and 0.8 doctoral theses. There have been some articles in international peer-reviewed journals in the fields of technology and education, and some internationally published edited volumes, especially in the field of ethnomusicology. International collaborations are centred in Europe. For the evaluation period, the self-assessment report lists collaborations with 14 higher-education institutions and other partners in other European countries (including an early music project involving six institutions), and with four in Asia, mostly in the fields of music and neuroscience, ethnomusicology, and early music research, supplemented with contacts to more than 25 international institutions in systematic musicology. However, detailed information is missing on the level and duration of collaborations. Researchers from the unit have taken part in international conferences, and JVLMA has also hosted some international conferences (e.g., in artistic research in music). Otherwise, the researchers at JVLMA still seem to be lacking in notable international leadership roles in research in larger projects or as editors/co-editors/board members of scientific journals beyond the Baltic States.

Economic impact

Score 2: Adequate

The research activities of the institution are adequate, characterised by a low level of interaction with economic actors, particularly in creative industries. The self-assessment report lists one practical innovation (software Neurosynth) and one case of industry development (in the project Co-create Music with Brainwaves). The latter project is also the only one mentioned under “Commercialisation of the research,” but no details about commercialisation are available. The collaboration with the Latvian Music Information Centre on the worldwide distribution of Latvian music has the potential to generate economic impact: as the leading educational and research institution in Latvian musical life, JVLMA is also the central source of expertise for any commercial projects involving Latvian music.

Social impact

Score 4: Very good

Researchers at JVLMA are vocal about the potential social impact of many of their research foci, which appears very good. JVLMA has been involved in some larger research projects with potential social relevance, such as “Cultural capital as a resource for Latvia’s sustainable development” (2021–2023), and “Latvian cultural ecosystem as a resource for state resilience and sustainability” (2023–2026). However, the self-assessment report and the site visit did not provide a very clear view of the potential social impact of these projects. Socially impactful research directions mentioned in the interview include musical giftedness and evidence-based music therapy approaches in psychiatry, although it seems that major publications on these topics are still lacking. It appears that JVLMA is in many ways engaged in achieving social impact for its research, even though a more developed strategic view remains to be developed.

Public understanding of the significance of scientific activity has been promoted by hosting a lecture series emphasising the creative side of research and a series of open meetings and radio broadcasts. According to the stakeholders invited to the site visit, JVLMA stands out as a central resource for educating musicians both in classical music and jazz, but also as highly important for strengthening the resilience of the Latvian society. JVLMA has been active in crafting cultural policy recommendations for the government, and its influence in providing expertise for the music school system is central.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 3: Good

The research environment is good overall. In terms of research orientation, JVLMA’s research environment is divided into relatively small disciplinary sub-groups within which the researchers and professors appear to have a relative freedom to manage their own research projects. The institution provides two types of researcher careers: doing only research and being also involved in academic work (e.g., as a professor). According to the interview, most professors’ research workload is 30%, and the professors need to devote much of their free time to research. Financial resources for specific research projects are largely dependent on externally secured funding. JVLMA has a highly appropriate research infrastructure, including excellent computer resources for its specific research needs (e.g., EEG data collection, audio processing, quantitative analysis), an extensive digital archive of traditional music, and appropriate databases and other library facilities. Projects financed by the EU Structural Funds have played a major role in helping develop research infrastructure. JVLMA produces a yearly overview of its research activities, including plans for the dissemination of research, the recruitment of

research personnel, and the management of scientific activities. The unit has also developed guidelines to ensure open access to research publications, including Latvia's only regularly published online musicology journal. JVLMA's long-term strategic planning involves strengthening the status of JVLMA as being the leading musicology research centre in the country.

Development potential

Score 3: *Good*

JVLMA's potential for development is good. In the self-assessment report, attracting young researchers and students to a small research unit is indicated as a weakness, but attracting researchers is also seen as an opportunity, owing to JVLMA's unique status in the country. The unit is planning to involve early-stage researchers more actively in research projects, which could well increase its ability to initiate new research directions. JVLMA has shown its ability to secure competitive funding. The staff appears to be active in networking, and there are good routines in place for supporting funding applications through internal reviews and seminars, as well as projects such as "Development of International Cooperation Projects of Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music in Research and Innovations." Future plans include cooperation with other Latvian institutions and collaboration within EU programmes. In relation to international competitors, JVLMA's strength is its focus on Latvian and Baltic music culture, and in terms of expertise and level of digitisation the unit is well equipped to develop this line of work further, not least by working on the large but still unresearched parts of Latvian musical heritage and establishing a research centre for music psychology and music therapy, promoting Digital Humanities, and developing a traditional music archive. These measures are well in line with the current research strengths of the unit and with the material resources available. However, such a regional focus may potentially limit the ability of researchers to participate in international competition and to impact the international scientific community. For all the research strands represented at JVLMA, international success would require stronger efforts to publish in leading international journals of music research.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

One of the potential weaknesses of the doctoral study environment is its relatively small size, accompanied by the fragmentation of the environment into very different strands of music research, such as musical neuroscience, ethnomusicology, early music research, music education research, etc. The institution has nevertheless managed to strengthen the doctoral programme by using external (also international) supervisors. The doctoral students with a professional project in artistic research have separate artistic and theoretical supervisors, who meet the doctoral students separately. The artistic supervisors are typically practitioners without a research background, which suggests that the promising development of artistic research (and thus this part of the doctoral programme) is still underway.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The unit's self-assessment, its activities are aligned with RIS3 priorities. Such activities include organising science-related events, creating international networks and collaborations, engaging in interdisciplinary research, creating new study programmes, and aspiring to attract new specialists to the unit. Across the activities the intensified use of digitalisation and the increasing priority of open access for resources and results confirms the RIS3 alignment.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

In the self-assessment report, JVLMA indicates that it aligns with the objectives of the "Guidelines for Science, Technology Development, and Innovation 2021–2027" by taking measures to develop research excellence, by carrying out a digital transformation of the

research, and by financially supporting research publication and attendance at science-related events. Due to the focus on Latvian musical heritage, JVLMA seems capable of pursuing scholarly development in a way that is beneficial to the Latvian state and the cultural life of Latvia, not least in musical education. The unit's research in projects concerning with Latvia's national resilience and sustainable development can be seen as conducive to the broader development objectives.

Recommendations

The Expert Group recommends that:

- To become a strong international player in music research, the unit needs to prioritise publishing in leading international peer-reviewed journals within the subfields central to its strategy (systematic musicology, historical musicology, ethnomusicology, music education).
- It would be advisable to develop the existing research directions in such a way that they, despite interdisciplinary collaborations, retain their relevance for the study programmes at the music academy.
- It would be useful to have a more coordinated strategy to achieve stronger internationalisation for research on the Latvian musical heritage. This could involve pursuing the national musical heritage from new methodological perspectives, such as ones offered by systematic musicology or by other scientific disciplines.
- In doctoral supervision for artistic research in music, JVLMA should strive to improve the integration of the artistic and theoretical supervision processes with one another.
- The self-assessment report refers to one edited volume on jazz. Otherwise, research related to the study programme in jazz is not mentioned. The unit should explore the possibilities of research in this area to further develop JVLMA's central role in music research in Latvia and in the musical life of the country.

H_7 Latvian Academy of Culture

2.2.13 The unit

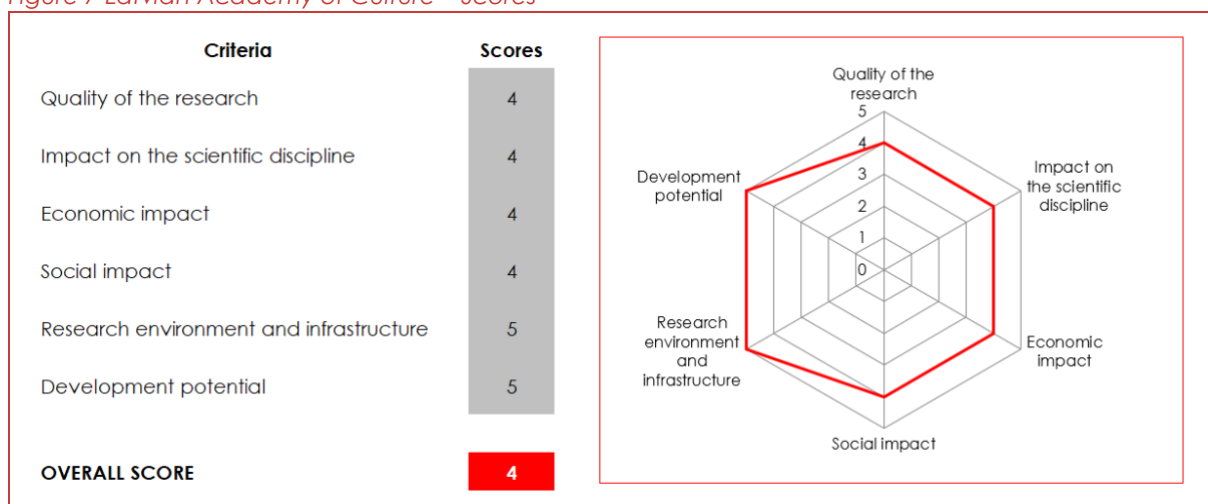
The Latvian Academy of Culture (LAC) is a university of arts and culture, which has been registered as a scientific institution since 2018. The structural unit responsible for LAC's scientific activities is the Institute of Arts and Cultural Studies (IACS), which was known as the Centre for Scientific Research until 2022. LAC's vision is rooted in humanist values, aiming for excellence through an interdisciplinary approach to studies, research, and artistic creativity. The mission of LAC is to ensure internationally and nationally recognised research performance in the humanities and arts, as well as interdisciplinary studies connected with the social sciences.

LAC's research is organised around several key themes, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, audio-visual art and performing arts, and citizen science. The research environment is characterised by an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

2.2.14 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 7 Latvian Academy of Culture – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: *Very good level of research*

The LAC is a strong international player. The quality of the research is very good, and it is innovative and internationally recognised. Its investment in infrastructure and staff, and its determination to work more internationally, will increase its resilience in a future that, though certainly bright, also contains geopolitical and budgetary uncertainties. The LAC intends to bid more for European funding, such as Horizon and Marie Curie, and to publish more in English, improving its reputation, attracting more funding, and benefiting from greater competitive pressure to raise performance. The completion of the TabFab building, which will include a cinema and museum, should help the LAC attract more prestigious speakers and researchers, enhancing its current performance as an institution. Further internationalisation will enable the LAC to be an even stronger player in cultural education and dissemination, as well as on the European and global scenes.

Quality of Research

Score 4: *Very good*

The quality of the LAC's research is very good; it is significant both locally and internationally. The LAC has a bold, innovative approach to research beyond the local and regional, setting it apart in the Latvian research environment. The LAC has participated in 101 research projects during the evaluation period. These demonstrate its interdisciplinary approach and its desire to incorporate further artistic research into its remit. The range and quality of the LAC's output are very good, including its own journal, which is indexed in Scopus. The LAC takes on issues and themes that are not necessarily recognised or tackled in Latvia's other institutions, such as specifically political issues, placing it amongst Latvia's artistic vanguard. LAC collaborates with European partners on funding grants such as Horizon. Its emphasis on interdisciplinarity gives it the flexibility to think and collaborate across culture, arts and social science disciplines. The Expert Group strongly recommends that the LAC make an effort to publish further in internationally recognised, A-rated, high-impact-factor journals, especially within the Anglo-American sphere of cultural studies (for instance, in *Screen*, *Cinema Journal*, *Camera Obscura*, etc., where leaders in the global field publish).

Impact on the scientific discipline

Score 4: *Very good*

Between 2019 and 2024, the LAC has had a significant research output with very good impact on its disciplines, comprising five state research programmes, seven fundamental and applied research projects, 33 research internal research grants, three post-doctoral research projects, 39 applied studies, and – most crucially as it pertains to impact – 14 international research projects. The latter can be broken down into four Horizon Europe projects, three Nordplus projects, four Erasmus projects, and three which were funded through miscellaneous sources. This is a very good performance, which indicates that the LAC has already begun the process of internationalisation through scholarly collaboration. The LAC intends to publish in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, creating connections as a basis for collaboration on funding applications, especially for Horizon Europe. Eight project applications with partners have been prepared for the 2021-2027 period, and six of those have proceeded to the next round. The LAC is also developing research specialisations in technologies, digital transformation and the use of AI in Humanities, and Arts-based research in response to the challenges to study and research within its field posed by developments in technology, and to establish itself as a vital partner in research and dissemination. The comparatively high percentage of researchers and PhD students with international backgrounds underscores the unit's importance for the internationalisation of Latvia's academic and cultural sectors. The efforts to increase internationalisation will help put the LAC on the map in Europe and, in time, further afield. The LAC should leverage the advisory board it has established for this purpose.

Economic impact

Score 4: *Very good*

The economic impact of the LAC is firmly evident and very good. In particular, the Academy, via the Institute of Art and Culture, has had a direct impact on national and municipal policy and funding decisions. This has resulted in increased funding for cultural infrastructure in Latvia and is a tangible and impressive influence on the sector. In addition, the LAC has implemented earlier recommendations to increase private sector partnerships and investments from the cultural and creative industries. It is thus quite clear that the LAC is making a direct impression on economic policy regarding cultural investment. A further marker of impact is collaboration

with the Liepaja 2027 Foundation, the Latvian Designers' Association, and the Latvian Association of Cultural Centres, which has generated internships and placements, as well as the exchange of ideas between professional doctoral students and the performing arts and film sectors. Such relationships lead to employment, thereby indirectly impacting the economy. The LAC is evidently training the future employees of many of these cultural institutions and NGOs.

For a top score, the Expert Group would expect more longitudinal, independently verifiable evidence showing that the LAC's research has shaped economic, cultural policy, or other decision-making or sectoral transformation. Evidence should be provided of this happening over the long term (5 years plus). Furthermore, more international impact is expected beyond the national level. Given the current scale of activities, the LAC is very close to such a profile, but the evidence does not yet reach the threshold of "outstanding". The Expert Group recommends, for instance, reaching out to collaborate with European art institutions and festivals, setting up vibrant cultural and student exchanges which benefit the local industry and the cultural sector and collaborating on more internationally funded research projects. The LAC has made progress in this endeavour, but should continue on this trajectory. The Expert Group also recommend fostering a start-up culture for cultural entrepreneurs evolving out of the LAC student body.

The top score definition in the evaluation methodology requires not only relevance and demand for the research of the evaluated unit from non-academic stakeholders, but also a demonstration of how the research drives societal development. LAC demonstrates excellent engagement, with significant numbers of commissioned studies, collaborative projects, and a wide partner network; however, evidence of influence and of systemic impact management and tracking of impact pathways is scarce.

Social impact

Score 4: Very good

The LAC has a very good social impact and is a sought-after partner among academics and non-academics alike. It has centred key aspects of its research output on a) societal need for culture and how it makes societies flourish, b) how to attract audiences to sites of cultural interest and cultural festivals and, by extension, audience participation, and c) precarious employment within the arts and cultural sectors, especially in a post-pandemic economy. Of primary interest in terms of social impact is the LAC's role as an advisor to cultural stakeholders who wish to tailor experiences to audience and community needs and to understand how to foster inclusion of marginalised and excluded communities. LAC studies that have been useful here have focused on disability and accessibility, social cohesion through artistic experience, widespread cultural participation, and the impact of culture on mental health. Moreover, the LAC's UNESCO chair provides valuable expertise on cultural rights, diversity and heritage. Further internationalisation will deepen the social impact of the LAC's work, especially at the European level, where the LAC could become an outstanding resource.

Despite this strong performance, the Expert Group concluded that certain elements of social impact remain insufficient for the highest score. The definition of a score 5 emphasises expertise in demand across the private and public sectors. While the LAC is clearly valued in Latvia, the evidence does not yet demonstrate that its research outputs consistently drive societal development at a scale or intensity commensurate with the top score. For a '5', the Expert Group would expect systematic evidence that the unit's research underpins major developments in the social and cultural spheres and that its staff are in sustained, not occasional, demand as experts across sectors. This includes the ability to demonstrate

influence at scale, continuity of impact over time, and the embedding of impact mechanisms across the unit rather than through isolated projects or individuals. In short, the Expert Group reiterates that sustained and consistent international collaboration outside of Latvia with prestigious cultural institutions, festivals and artists, as well as international universities will help the LAC to raise its profile to an influential and important level within Europe.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 5: Outstanding

The LAC's research environment is outstanding, and it clearly intends to strengthen its infrastructure further. Plans to develop the TabFab promise to help make a wonderful environment in which to work and study, and will put the LAC on the map for international students. The LAC has raised €3.3 million for infrastructure and institutional development and is digitising many of the library's resources, partially supported by an EU grant of approximately €544k. As of 2024, the LAC's library had 38,191 resources and has been updated with a reading room and computers. Access to the catalogue is available in the reading room via ALEPH, UNION and the Latvian National Library. Open access and EBSCO databases are also available, even remotely. While there has been an increase in staff, uncertainties remain about future funding, to which the LAC should continue to respond by increasing international engagement to seek research funding, student exchange programmes, and teaching programmes such as Marie Curie, Erasmus, and Fulbright.

Development potential

Score 5: Outstanding

The LAC has significant development potential, and the Expert Group is confident that the unit's future is bright. The LAC is very close to becoming a major player in Europe and has the capacity to grow its global reputation. With the completion of TabFab in 2027, the LAC will be able to offer an outstanding environment for studying and research. If handled well, this will attract an international community of scholars and practitioners. By extension, the LAC's impact will spread from the local and national to the European and – in many respects – global levels. In order to achieve this, the LAC must remain sensitive to political change through planning well in advance, risk management, and focusing on international partnerships. LAC has a modern approach to culture that respects both its specificity and its relation to the wider human condition. The Expert Group is confident that the LAC has the potential to further improve the national and international quality and impact of its work, even beyond the current high level. Examples of this would be major collaborations with internationally ranked universities, which have been marked as outstanding by publications such as the Times Higher Education Supplement. Securing international funding with these partners and initiating active student and teaching exchange programmes can support further development. A major interdisciplinary programme taught in English would also attract many international students and collaboration opportunities. Extensive publication with academic presses such as Oxford, Bloomsbury, Duke, California – to name a few – would also raise the profile considerably.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The LAC offers an exceptional environment for pursuing doctoral studies. The Expert Group was struck not only by the enthusiasm of the current PhD students but also by their loyalty to the LAC, to which many have moved after graduating elsewhere. Doctoral students work closely with their supervisors and fellow colleagues on research papers and applications. The new

doctoral programme provides funded places to study via either the academic or professional PhD strands. The interdisciplinary emphasis in doctoral study at the LAC also lends itself to collaboration with other institutions, including the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music and the Art Academy of Latvia, which are especially relevant in this regard. The Expert Group strongly suggests that the LAC open up the PhD supervision system to a) taking on a second supervisor within the process, where appropriate, and b) collaborating with international universities and scholars on doctoral supervision. This will not only offer wider horizons but also help the LAC grow internationally.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

In the self-assessment report, the LAC offers the following as primary and tangible examples of its engagement with RIS3:

1. Analysis of trends in cultural consumption
2. Development of creative labour and creative skills
3. Contributing to developments in the audio-visual, performing arts and public galleries and museums sectors.
4. Addressing topical societal issues such as the impact of culture on mental wellbeing and youth participation.
5. Leading two highly impactful State Research Projects.
6. Conducting targeted studies on creative entrepreneurship and innovation in small cities and non-urban areas.
7. Collaborating and helping with the work of the Latvian Investment and Development Agency.

These contributions seem sound and in line with the RIS3. In the view of the Expert Group, the LAC is successfully aligned with the Smart Specialisation Strategy and works with this in mind.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The LAC is a powerful resource within Latvia's higher education environment and demonstrates deep engagement with Latvia's strategic objectives for scientific, educational, and innovation development – as outlined in the National Development Plan 2021-2027. Its outreach and impact on cultural policy were outlined by the stakeholders, and convinced the Expert Group that the LAC is an indispensable collaborator in this regard. Its research is publicly oriented and interdisciplinary, making it useful to multiple stakeholders and public institutions, and representing Latvia at both the national and international levels.

Recommendations

Given the outstanding potential of the LAC to become a major global player in cultural research and education, the Expert Group advise the following to help the LAC achieve its goals:

- Continued publication in A-rated, high-impact-factor journals, recognised within the Anglo-American and global contexts
- Persistent collaboration with outstanding European universities beyond the Baltic region – especially via funding applications to Horizon, ERC, and Marie Curie. The Expert Group recognises that the LAC has already taken meaningful steps in this direction and has established several promising partnerships. However, sustained collaboration with top-tier European universities is a long-term and iterative process that requires ongoing cultivation, repeated joint initiatives, and strategic positioning within competitive research networks. Continuing to strengthen these ties in the long term will help the LAC consolidate its international reputation, secure more ambitious projects, and ensure its growth trajectory remains resilient amid geopolitical and funding uncertainties

- Extending doctoral supervision to collaboration within Europe and generally increasing its level of student exchange within Europe, and setting up collaborative teaching programmes
- Prepare forward-looking crisis strategies for changes in the research, funding and overall socio-political environment. LAC should also develop a long-term plan for targeting different funding sources, including industry and non-governmental sectors, to diversify income streams and manage risks. The Expert Group acknowledges that the LAC has already made notable progress in diversifying its funding portfolio and has embedded this objective in its strategic planning. However, diversification is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing resilience-building process, particularly for a rapidly growing institution whose ambitions require sustained and predictable funding
- Reaching out to the newly set-up advisory board as a vital resource for internationalisation
- To strengthen the case for the top score for the social and economic impact, the LAC should develop clear and systematic institutional impact management and tracking mechanisms that help to identify and document how its research, commissioned studies and collaborations lead to identifiable changes in policy, practice or societal outcomes over time. This includes evidencing the causal pathways from research outputs to decision-making and demonstrating that such influence is embedded across the institution rather than emerging from individual projects.
- To improve impact management and tracking, LAC could introduce an impact tracking system - a structured process used to document non-academic stakeholders' needs, research activity of LAC, activities for impact, short and long-term effects (use of findings immediately and long-term changes) and evidence sources. LAC already generates relevant applied research; however, the evidence of downstream effects is not systematically demonstrated. A tracking system would enable LAC to demonstrate the continuity of its influence. LAC should also track impact over time. LAC's research topics, such as cultural participation and creative industries labour markets, are long-term societal issues. Tracking influence over time will demonstrate continuity and depth beyond individual commissioned studies. This approach is widely used in high-performing research institutions. For example, the University of Glasgow's approach to impact planning and documenting is detailed [here](#) (open link) and specifically for the humanities [here](#). University of Oulu's approach to impact management, including impact planning and measuring, is documented [here](#), including templates, examples and well-developed impact stories. Various online resources and international good practice examples are available to help with the development of comprehensive impact management. LAC must develop a detailed approach that considers its strategy, priorities, resources, research areas, and other contextual factors.
- In terms of activities, the LAC could consider introducing regular activities, not linked to specific projects. For example, at the University of Cambridge, researchers run a series of high-impact talks during term time which feature both eminent scholars and practitioners as well as cultural entrepreneurs. A similar effort could be made at the LAC to strengthen its social and cultural impact nationally and internationally. In Sweden, the Universities of Stockholm and Gothenburg both collaborate consistently with the Swedish Film Institute and Folkets Bio on curation and programming to produce a series of films that can be screened primarily for educational purposes outside a university setting. Again, specific activities depend on the specific LAC impact strategy and resources
- Internationally, reaching out to collaborate with European art institutions, museums, and festivals could provide opportunities for the findings of LAC research to inform, for example, the audience development and accessibility issues that these institutions have to address. Specifically, this might include co-designed studies, pilot research in real-world settings, accessibility audits or similar activities informed by LAC's research expertise.

H_8 Art Academy of Latvia

2.2.15 The unit

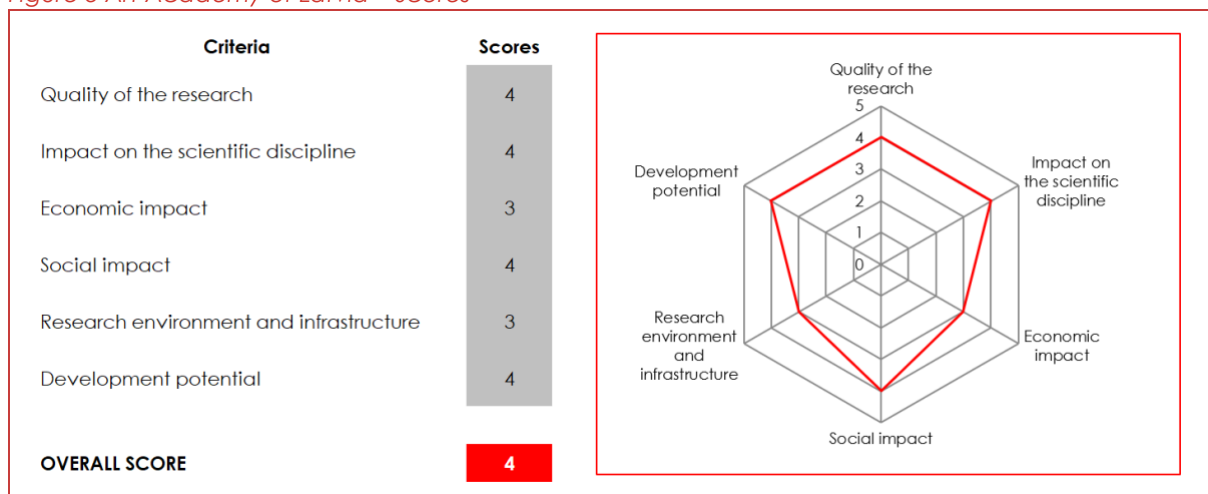
The Art Academy of Latvia (AAL) is an Art University in Latvia, focusing on arts, design, and art history. The unit became a scientific institution in 2018 and was designated as a University of Arts and Culture in 2021. AAL's vision is to transform creative energy, traditions, and technological development into excellence, contributing to a well-educated, creative, skilled, and sustainable society. The academy aims to provide competitive higher education, foster a high research culture through ongoing fundamental research in visual arts, architecture, design, restoration, and art history and theory, and implement research-based art and design studies. AAL aligns its activities with national strategies, contributing to the development of Latvia's creative industries and cultural policies.

AAL's research is organised around three main academic research institutes: the Institute of Art History, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture, and the Institute of Restoration and Material Science. These institutes focus on fundamental and applied research in visual arts, architecture, design, and restoration, as well as the interaction of art with broader cultural, political, societal, and economic frameworks.

2.2.16 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 8 Art Academy of Latvia – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: Very good level of research

The Art Academy of Latvia (AAL) is a strong international player and Latvia's leading institution for fundamental and applied research in the fields of visual art, design, and architecture, playing a vital role in preserving and internationalising national and regional cultural heritage. Its three specialised institutes conduct research on a wide range of topics, from the history of folk art, architecture, and historical painting to practice-based research in contemporary art and design. This work is disseminated through monographs and academic journals, including its own academic journal, *History and Theory*, and AAL also publishes in international fora. Its flagship publication is the award-winning series of volumes, *Art History of Latvia*, which the Latvian Academy of Sciences listed among the most important research achievements of 2019 and 2024, and which is published in both English and Latvian. The institution offers both scientific

and doctoral programs that support advanced research and academic excellence in visual art, design, and architecture, encouraging both theoretical inquiry and practice-based exploration. It maintains strong international research connections. AAL is involved in several major EU-funded international research projects, such as the Horizon 2020 project "EU4ART-Differences" (2021–2023) and the Creative Europe project "FashionTEX" (2023-26, and it regularly organises scientific events that contribute to global academic discourse, including the international scientific conference organised by the AAL every year. With deep expertise in local culture and history and strong ties to cultural institutions, AAL has an important social impact on Latvian society. This is especially evident in its active organisation of exhibitions, educational events, and participation in cultural policymaking. It also collaborates with industry partners, with growing potential to expand its applied research for broader economic benefit. The institution's self-assessment report demonstrates thoughtful, productive reflection on its strengths and limitations, accompanied by a clear, forward-looking strategy for advancing research. To strengthen international visibility and academic excellence, it might be essential to create a greater balance between fundamental and applied research outputs, and to develop an infrastructure that better supports applied research activities, along with a comprehensive HR strategy to attract and retain top international scholars, particularly senior researchers capable of mentoring and leading large-scale initiatives.

Quality of Research

Score 4: *Very good*

AAL conducts very good fundamental and applied research in art, design, and architecture. Its key strength lies in the well-established Institute of Art History. As the only institution dedicated to foundational studies of Latvian visual art and architecture, it plays a vital role in preserving and internationalising regional cultural heritage, exemplified by its award-winning *Art History of Latvia* volumes, published in both English and Latvian, now totalling four. AAL's publications, including monographs and contributions to international journals, reflect a broad thematic and chronological scope. Peer-reviewed research outputs are concentrated in national art history and cultural heritage, with growing engagement in practice-based and interdisciplinary research. Approximately half of the publications submitted for review focus on Latvian architecture, folk art, and historical painting, while around a third engage with practice-based research in contemporary art, design, and interdisciplinary methods. A smaller portion addresses transnational themes and theoretical discourse, often through edited volumes and international collaborations. AAL also publishes its own journal, *Art History and Theory*. It is indexed in SCOPUS and includes 60 research articles published between 2018 and 2024. The increase in the number of leading researchers from 7 to 17 compared to the previous evaluation signals strengthened capacity and academic engagement. The majority of publications, including their own journal, are in Latvian. Given the high quality of scholarship, expanding publication efforts to include more English-language articles could significantly enhance international visibility and engagement.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 4: *Very good*

AAL demonstrates strong expertise in national art history with increasing international recognition, particularly through its flagship publication *Art History of Latvia*, exercising a very good influence in its field. While its internationalisation is also growing in areas of artistic and practice-based research and restoration, these specific fields still require development, evidenced by the limited number of publications submitted for review in artistic research and material sciences. AAL enhances visibility also through international symposia and exhibitions, including the Venice Biennales of Art and Architecture and its annual international scientific

conference, organised since 2021, contributing to international research dissemination. It is very well-networked across European universities, art academies, and museums. With over 140 partner institutions, it maintains strong collaborative ties with art universities across Europe and beyond, demonstrating its reputation as a highly valued partner in collaborative international research initiatives. During the reporting period, AAL was involved with 18 research projects, including participation in EU-funded international projects such as the Horizon 2020 project *EU4ART_Differences* on artistic research methodologies and the ongoing *FashionTEX* project on digital fashion design involving 13 partners from 11 European countries. These collaborations position AAL as a respected contributor to European research networks.

Economic impact

Score 3: Good

AAL's research plays a good and valuable role in supporting the Latvian economy, particularly within the creative and cultural industries, heritage preservation, and tourism, contributing to national development through international collaborations, educational initiatives, and guidebook-style publications. The unit maintains active partnerships across Latvia's fashion, architecture, design, and visual arts sectors, with meaningful engagement in initiatives like the ESI-Incubator program, reflecting its growing ambition to equip students with the skills to translate innovative ideas into real-world solutions and create stronger connections with industry. While AAL demonstrates impact in heritage and tourism and shows potential for applied innovation, its ambition to advance in the STI sector, especially in large-scale commercial innovation, remains a developing area, as noted in the unit's own SWOT analysis. The establishment of the professional doctoral framework and the development of the two new institutes, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture and the Institute of Restoration and Material Sciences, is a promising step toward becoming a recognised research and design partner beyond the cultural domain, but success will depend on strengthening the infrastructure and securing resources to support experimental research, including the full development of facilities like the Riga Makerspace.

Social impact

Score 4: Very good

AAL's research has significant societal value and very good social impact, particularly in the cultural, educational, and civic spheres. It plays a central role in shaping cultural identity through artistic research, public exhibitions, and heritage preservation, while regularly engaging in discourse around Latvian cultural identity, public memory, and post-Soviet transformation. The unit's active participation in exhibitions in museums, galleries, and cultural events (92 exhibitions reported between 2019 and 2024, including 31 hosted in their main building) has a key role in raising public awareness of Latvian art and art-related research. AAL conducts regular outreach not only within the immediate community through ongoing exhibitions and public education initiatives, but it also represents Latvia in major international expositions, such as the Venice Biennale of Art and of Architecture (2024-25). AAL is active within several national policy-making bodies such as National Council of Culture, Council of Development of Latvian Historical Lands and Cultural spaces, Council for Visual Arts, in which they offer their expertise. Expanding collaboration beyond the cultural sector, such as with public health or national security through, for example, service design, and increasing international outreach and community-based research initiatives could further enhance their social impact.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 3: Good

AAL enjoys a good research environment and infrastructure. During the reporting period, it established two new research institutes to strengthen applied and fundamental research: the Institute of Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture (2021, with 6 researchers) and the Institute of Restoration and Material Science (2024, with two researchers), complementing the existing Institute of Art History (with 9 researchers). This represents a promising opportunity to create a stronger framework that supports more balanced research across all the academy's diverse fields, including contemporary art, design, architecture, and material science-based approaches that benefit restorers, artists, and professionals working with tangible cultural heritage. The recent acquisition of a second building, which is now home to all three research institutes, is a positive development and a major potential that supports long-term growth. However, the site visit revealed that challenges remain in reaching the infrastructure standards of comparable European institutions, particularly in the area of applied (or industrial) and experimental research, where both AAL's number of research staff as well as access to large-scale facilities are limited. In terms of facilities, the key milestone will be making the Riga Makerspace fully operational as a centre for experimental research, innovation, and technology development, and with appropriate technical support staff. With its plan to offer specialised workshops supported by dedicated rooms for focused learning and practice, the space has the potential to significantly enhance hands-on education, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and strengthen the research environment across fields such as contemporary art, design, architecture, and material sciences.

Development potential

Score 4: Very good

AAL has very good development potential. Its development plan for 2025–2030 focuses on generating new knowledge to raise the global competitiveness of Latvian art, culture, science, and technology. It aims to further advance fundamental, applied, and experimental research across a wide range of topics related to art, design, and architecture. AAL makes a strong contribution to national art and cultural research, with significant public outreach in education and accessibility, particularly in its established fields such as the history of Latvian art and culture. This provides AAL with a notable potential for further development, and its bilingual volumes *Art History in Latvia* continue to enhance the academy's global visibility effectively. However, to realise its strategic vision and increase its impact on the international scientific community, and the economy and society at large, the academy needs to establish a more balanced integration of fundamental, applied, experimental, and practice-based artistic research. While still developing, the establishment of the two new institutes marks a promising trajectory toward building a more aligned research framework and strengthening the academy's capacity to initiate new research directions.

AAL presents a clear vision for the future of science and research, with a focus on internationalisation, collaboration between researchers and industry, and strengthening research capacity through investments in human resources, infrastructure, and support for early career researchers. Yet, future progress will depend on AAL's ability to translate its strategic vision into concrete actions and sustained development. Its human resource strategy is evolving but not yet comprehensive. While AAL supports international mobility and training by inviting international visiting scholars to their projects and participating in international projects themselves, it lacks a comprehensive HR strategy for recruiting and retaining renowned global experts, particularly senior international scholars who could mentor and lead large-scale research initiatives, especially in newly established areas. This gap is especially evident in the

recently founded institutes where staffing and facilities are still under development. Cross-institutional collaboration, as well as engagement with the creative industry, while promising, lacks visible outcomes.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

Since the last review, AAL has established a doctoral school and adopted a new doctoral education model. As part of the renewal, the AAL has offered a professional doctoral programme in arts based on practice-led research since 2021, and in 2024, it launched a renewed doctoral model with dedicated funding, to be fully implemented by 2027. The professional doctoral program, which integrates theoretical and artistic creative work, remains a developing area. The site visit revealed that student supervision is currently divided between two separate advisors, one for theory and one for practice, without dedicated guidance and expertise from AAL on how to define, structure, and advance practice-based artistic research. To strengthen the professional doctoral program, it might be necessary to involve supervisors with direct expertise in practice-based artistic research who can provide integrated mentorship and help shape the academic framework for this evolving field. The site visit suggested that doctoral students work quite independently and sometimes in isolation; the interviews with students indicated that there are only a few structured collaborative courses or shared activities with peers. Nevertheless, AAL is making a positive contribution by actively integrating students into broader research environments. This includes a conscious effort to enhance their academic development and professional experience through participation in its annual international scientific conference and by showcasing their work in scientific journals, conference materials, and architectural and art exhibitions. The Conference Proceedings of the Doctoral Study Programme, published by AAL, feature contributions from international scholars and cover themes like cultural hybridity and interdisciplinary synergies, demonstrating AAL's commitment to integrating student research into broader global academic discourse.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

According to the self-assessment report, AAL's focus on interdisciplinary and horizontal research in cultural heritage, Latvian studies, media literacy, and critical thinking provides a significant step to meeting the Smart Specialisation Strategy. AAL is currently working on two research projects funded by Latvian Council of Science, "Ethnographer, Society, Art: The Symbiosis of Ethnology and Art and the Discourse of Soviet Colonialism in Latvia" (2024–2026), and "Soviet-Era Poster – a Testimony of Art, Society and Politics in the Art Academy of Latvia Poster Collection" (2025–2027) which will help it further reach its goals with regard to complying with RIS3.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

AAL shows clear engagement and meaningful alignment with Latvia's strategic objectives for scientific and technology development. Its efforts to increase public awareness of art and culture-related research in Latvia through exhibitions, international expositions, and cultural partnerships contribute directly to national goals of strengthening research visibility and societal engagement. AAL also supports internationalisation and mobility by collaborating with global universities and networks and involving students in joint publications and conferences. AAL's establishment of three research institutes and its growing focus on applied and experimental research reflect a commitment to bridging the gap between academia and industry, particularly in creative and technological fields. While infrastructure gaps and limited access to large-scale research environments remain challenges, initiatives like the Riga Makerspace signal efforts to enhance technology transfer and interdisciplinary innovation.

Recommendations

The Expert Group's recommendations to AAL are as follows:

- While AAL presents a clear and forward-looking vision for research development, the specific actions and research directions remain unclear, especially regarding distinct pathways across its three institutes that integrate artistic, theoretical, and scientific work. AAL is recommended to define clear thematic priorities and core strengths for each institute, and to develop a practical research strategy that includes concrete implementation steps, measurable goals, resource alignment, and support for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- The newly launched Institute of Architecture and Design currently lacks a clearly defined profile and strategic positioning, especially in relation to national institutions such as Riga Technical University. To avoid duplication and inefficiency, the Institute is recommended to articulate a distinct academic and research identity for its architecture and design programs and build strategic collaborations with institutions such as Riga Technical University. Highlighting its interdisciplinary strengths, such as integration with contemporary art, design thinking, and service design, will help enhance its relevance and distinctiveness.
- AAL is encouraged to develop a more comprehensive HR Strategy to advance internationalisation. It is recommended that AAL develop a clear plan to recruit and retain leading international researchers, especially senior scholars who can mentor and lead large-scale research initiatives, and to invite key international scholars for lectures and networking to build global visibility and partnerships.
- To broaden its publication impact and visibility, it is recommended that AAL develop internal guidelines and incentives for interdisciplinary publishing and support researchers in targeting diverse journals and funding calls (including in design, technology, and innovation). It is further recommended that AAL establish an international advisory board with leading scholars to guide publishing efforts in leading globally recognised journals.
- With several major research projects coming to an end, a forward-looking funding strategy is essential. AAL is recommended to develop a strategic funding roadmap targeting national and EU research competitions, cultural and innovation grants, and business-sector funding. This will help diversify income streams and strengthen AAL's position in international research networks. The timing is critical, as many of the key projects highlighted in the self-assessment report have ended, making it necessary to define new strategic directions for future research development.
- To strengthen collaboration with non-academic sectors, AAL is recommended to establish structured partnerships with industry stakeholders beyond the cultural sector, such as public health, and to launch pilot projects through its new institutes to demonstrate industrial relevance and attract commercial interest. One way to build future capacity is to incorporate industry into teaching, as collaboration with businesses can help students strengthen their skills and boost employability. Greater use of service design approaches could also support innovation in industry partnerships and applied research.
- Success in developing applied research and enabling collaboration with industry and entrepreneurial initiatives will depend heavily on strengthening infrastructure. AAL is recommended to prioritise the full operationalisation of the Riga Makerspace as a centre for technology transfer and prototyping. Ensuring adequate technical support will be key to enabling interdisciplinary experimentation and supporting collaborative projects.
- Professional, artistic, research-focused doctoral study remains a developing area. To strengthen the doctoral framework, AAL is recommended to establish a clearer and more coherent structure for artistic research, including defined methodologies, appropriate supervision models, and alignment with international standards. Supervisors with expertise in practice-based research should support this. It may also be beneficial to explore joint doctoral programs with institutions such as Riga Technical University and industry partners to expand capacity and advance interdisciplinary collaboration.

H_9 Riga Technical University - Institute of Architecture and Design

2.2.17 The unit

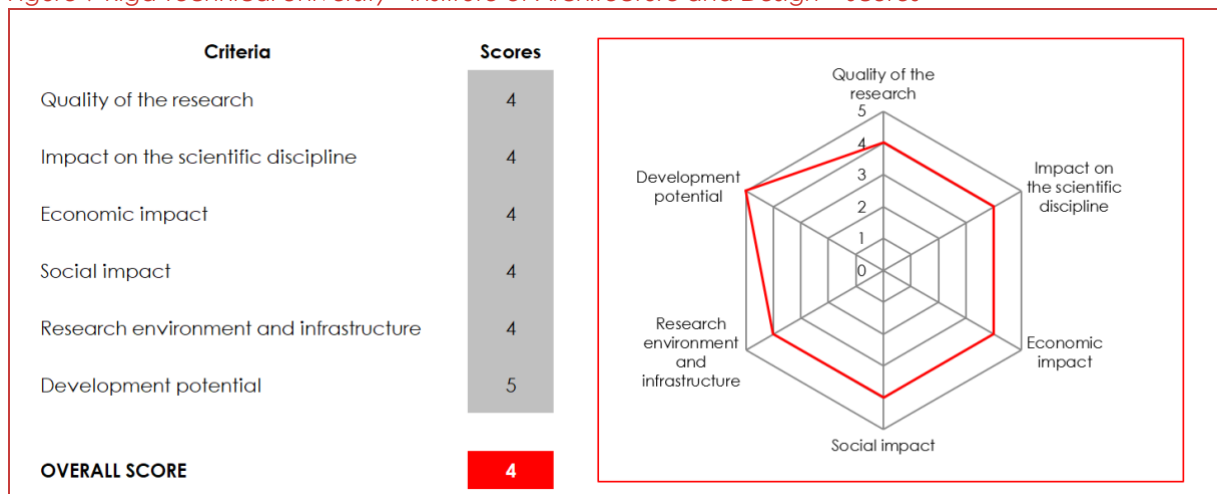
The Institute of Architecture and Design (ADI) is a newly independent institute within Riga Technical University, formed through the merger of the Faculty of Architecture and the Institute of Design Technologies of the Faculty of Material Science and Applied Chemistry. ADI focuses on research in architecture design, smart materials, and technology, aiming to deliver internationally competitive research, education, and innovation. The institute's main research direction, "Sustainable Transformation in Architecture, Smart Materials, Technology and Design," aims to harmonise and improve the functional and aesthetic properties of materials and structures, integrating them into architectural and design objects to ensure quality of life and safety in accordance with societal needs and climate dynamics.

ADI's research is organised around three main areas: sustainable architecture, urban planning, and mobility; renewable materials and wood construction; and design and textile technologies, including smart textiles and clothing. The institute pursues interdisciplinary research covering urban regeneration, the quality of public open spaces, the development of historic housing centres, and sustainable product development. Researchers work on innovations in design, materials science, and smart technologies, including smart textiles, bioactive coatings, and nanoscale materials.

2.2.18 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 9 Riga Technical University - Institute of Architecture and Design – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: *Very good level of research*

The unit is a strong international player, firmly established in the national and international research community. It combines research and teaching activities in a productive way that creates valuable research outputs and, at the same time, fosters students' development. Its research benefits the economy as well as society as a whole and engages with relevant and up-to-date topics. The unit combines expertise over a wide range of fields and scales, stretching from nanoparticles to urban development. The unit maintains consistent, stable

partnerships with municipal, national, and international academic and governmental institutions, as well as professional and commercial stakeholders.

Quality of Research

Score 4: Very good

The unit has recently been merged from two formerly independent departments. Whilst the merger is promising synergies in both the humanities and engineering, it has yet to make a significant impact on the covered research fields, which cannot be expected within the very short time since the merger came into effect. Over much of the evaluation period, the unit has been able to maintain a research work force that was significantly larger than in the previous evaluation period. The unit produces very good, high-quality research, generating a large part of its research funding through competitive international (23%) and national (15%) funding. Its research spans from material research to urban planning, resulting in very good quality publications in prestigious international journals. Students of all levels, from BA to PhD, are involved in the research activities of the unit for mutual benefit. With “research platforms” and “research groups,” the unit provides flexible sub-structures to foster interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research, to develop new research fields, and to advance the recent merger in practice.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 4: Very good

With the merger of the Faculty of Architecture and the Institute of Design and Technology, the unit has expanded its scope beyond the humanities, resulting in a good scientific impact in both areas. This is reflected in the two existing research groups, which are focusing on urban planning and prototyping, respectively. While much of the research of the unit already cuts across disciplinary borders, the Expert Group expects this to intensify over the following evaluation period, thus creating an even more significant impact on the scientific field. The unit is collaborating with numerous international partners (e.g. Osaka University, Sapienza University of Rome, Aalto University, and the Royal Danish Academy) in a number of high-profile projects (Horizon Europe and Interreg) on innovative, up-to-date topics, such as sustainable cycling solutions or antibacterial and antiviral materials. It is constantly working on applications and has developed professional expertise in writing applications for international grants, within consortia, as well as increasingly being the lead partner, inviting international collaborators. Existing international collaborations and participation in conferences, summer schools, and COST Actions ensure that the unit's research is internationally disseminated, recognised, and valued. The number of articles listed in the SCOPUS database has significantly increased in the review period (from 12 to almost 50) and the in-house open-access journal has recently been evaluated as Q1, thus boosting the unit's international reputation.

Economic impact

Score 4: Very good

The unit is engaged in fundamental as well as applied research, with the latter being most important for its very good economic impact. Stable collaborations with partners from industry, the public sector, and NGOs ensure that results are not only disseminated but also applied in practice, e.g. facilitating urban regeneration projects in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy's Housing Department. Measurable economic impact stems, on the one hand, from materials research. On the other hand, the unit has produced sustainable spin-offs that provide new job opportunities and contribute to the Latvian economy and social welfare. The

development of sustainable materials from renewable sources furthermore generates societal benefits by potentially reducing the environmental impact of building activities. Other fields of research, especially on an urban scale, generate economic benefits for the national economy as a whole. Projects on sustainable mobility, urban regeneration, and development studies directly benefit the everyday lives of Latvians and inject state-of-the-art expert knowledge into public administration departments.

Social impact

Score 4: Very good

The unit's research covers fields of high societal relevance, such as housing, urban regeneration, and sustainable materials and has a very good social impact, reaching many important partners. This is especially true for the field of urban development, where the department works closely with the government and significantly improves people's health, mobility, social networks, and their ability to organise their everyday lives, either through its research output or by advising policymakers. Research on nature-based solutions currently focuses on urban development, climate change mitigation, and it may yield further social benefits by reducing the impact of extreme weather conditions.

As the unit is currently educating the large majority of Latvia's architects, it also has a significant impact on Latvia's built environment and urban landscape, which is instrumental for the formation of its cultural identity. Its impact ranges from new construction, such as the National Library, to heritage conservation, e.g. Riga's rich Art Nouveau heritage and the UNESCO heritage historic city centre.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 4: Very good

The research environment and infrastructure are very good, with the bulk of technical facilities servicing engineering-related activities. The materials research is equipped with the required technical apparatus, whilst urban research can be sufficiently supported by appropriate IT and GIS resources. It is noteworthy that the unit integrates students from the stage of BA onwards into its research by means of research-led learning, which helps to recruit sufficient numbers of PhD-level researchers. The support infrastructure for students doing research is excellent and will be further enhanced by the new doctoral school system that provides PhD students with a reliable income. PhD conferences together with other Baltic or Nordic countries offer interdisciplinary exchange and networking opportunities. Additionally, the unit has a tradition of older faculty members mentoring younger ones, and research groups facilitate intergenerational learning in various fields, including grant writing and collaborative research papers. The unit also provides support with writing grant proposals, making the complicated processes, especially around international grants, more manageable and relieving researchers from administrative burdens. It is noteworthy, though, that the administrative workforce has not necessarily grown proportionally with the increased grant volume.

Development potential

Score 4: Outstanding

The unit has outstanding potential for becoming a strong international player. It has recently been created by merging two formerly independent entities. This process presents both important opportunities and challenges. The future research strength of the department will depend on whether this merger will be made fruitful and result in actual collaboration or whether the two units keep working largely independently. The skill sets typically available in

the fields of architecture and urban design need to be and can be employed to further materials science and vice versa, but the merger also entails a danger that less financially successful research fields might be marginalised in the future. With current research themes such as “Nature-based solutions,” the Expert Group sees abundant possibilities for close collaboration between architecture, urbanism, and material science.

The overall development potential of the institution is nevertheless very high, as it is already performing very well at international and national levels. It has excellent international contacts and is well connected to the Latvian industry, economy, and society. The unit has excellent links to the political sphere and to public administration across all levels, and its research is clearly beneficial for the larger public. Its publication strategy has proven successful with a significantly increased number of articles in SCOPUS journals and the publication of the unit's own Q1 journal. The unit has attracted competitive international funding, and its research is internationally recognised. The unit has the potential to become globally competitive in the specialisms that it has created over the years.

The unit is largely dependent on public funds and is likely to suffer if budgets shrink or research emphasis is shifting to other fields due to political changes. The mix of engineering and humanities in this unit provides some resilience to such developments but might nevertheless be significantly affected.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The unit has a long tradition of offering doctoral studies. Compared to the previous evaluation period, the number of defended doctoral theses has significantly increased (from four to eleven). This proves that the efforts to develop a structured doctoral programme have been successfully implemented. Nevertheless, virtually all PhD students exceed the allocated time to complete their studies. The Expert Group expects this to improve through the new funding regime, although this might also lead to restrictions in admitting PhD students if overall funding becomes too scarce. It remains to be seen whether the level of funding provided by the new system will be sufficient to lead to shorter periods of PhD studies or whether the ongoing need to earn additional money will lead PhD students to delay finishing their degree.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The emphasis on circular economy, sustainable architecture, integrations of digital technologies and smart materials all align with the Smart Specialisation Strategy. The applied side of the research carried out at the unit engages in practical research conducted together with the Ministry of Territorial Evaluation (Evaluation of 22 developments) or with the Latvian army. There are also a range of other examples of excellent cooperation of the research unit with businesses, NGOs, and municipalities, e.g. in the field of sustainable materials technology.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The unit firmly aligns itself with Latvia's scientific and technology development as laid out in the National Science Technology, and Innovation Development Policy as well as in the Education Development Policy. It seeks to foster heritage conservation and Latvian cultural identity while keeping an international outlook and engaging with global trends. Its work on smart textiles and sustainable building materials, as well as on circular economy principles, both feed into high-value technologies as well as environmentally responsible economic development. The unit's activities connect research and education to governmental and economic stakeholders and, in doing so, contribute to societal and technological progress in Latvia.

Recommendations

The Expert Group recommends that:

- The unit should focus on making the merger successful, developing a joint mission and identity that encompasses both technology and humanities, as represented by the merged sub-units.
- To this end, the unit should introduce a research group that connects and engages researchers from both the merged entities. The topic of “Nature-Based Solutions” might be suitable as an initial opening of interdisciplinary cooperation between all research fields from nanoparticles to urban fabric.
- The unit should continue to internationalise, e.g. by attracting more international contributions to its conferences or to its journal beyond, current international collaborations and collaborators.
- The unit should take into account that competitive funding might become scarcer or favour other fields of expertise in the future and implement contingency measures, as this might seriously impact its ability to retain research talent.
- The unit should recruit fewer staff from its own alumni and aim to attract researchers and teachers with more diverse educational backgrounds, possibly also leading to a more international faculty.
- The unit should carefully monitor the progress of its PhD students and evaluate whether additional measures are needed to expedite graduation.
- The unit should explore collaborations with the Art Academy of Latvia, e.g. between the unit’s material science cluster and the Institute of Restoration and Material Science.
- The unit should update its website to reflect the new structure.

H_10 Luther Academy

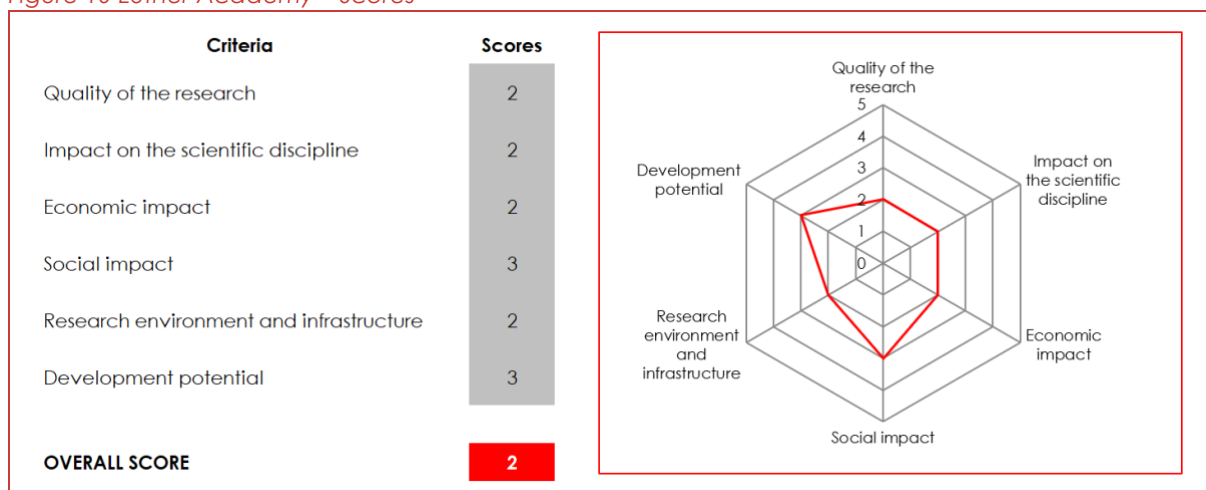
2.2.19 The unit

Luther Academy (LA) is a small higher education institution established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL). The unit focuses on theological education and research within the Lutheran tradition. The academy aims to prepare clergy and laity for service in ELCL congregations and other institutions such as schools or hospitals, with a vision to be an internationally recognised centre of theological learning. The academy's funding is supported by ELCL and international partners. LA's research is organised around its primary focus on Lutheran theological anthropology, addressing questions of human identity, ethics, and spirituality through a theological lens. The academy's strategic research directions include Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology, Church History, and Practical Theology. LA's research outcomes are disseminated through publications, conferences, and collaborations with local and international partners, enhancing its role in theological education and research.

2.2.20 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 10 Luther Academy – Scores



Overall score

Score 2: Adequate level of research

Luther Academy's (LA) inclusion in this report is testimony to its serious intention to develop the future research of the institution within its limited means and critical mass. LA is a small national player in research. Given LA's highly specialised focus on Lutheran theological anthropology, the Expert Group notes that assessing progress against the broader research criteria requires careful contextualisation. The Group recognises LA's commitment to developing its research capacity and acknowledges its intention to grow as a research institution. These intentions are evaluated in the section on "Development potential".

LA states that it has difficulty renewing its research staff due to the limited number of suitably qualified academic theologians who obtain a PhD. The Expert Group acknowledges that most work in the Academy is conducted on a voluntary basis and that the number of employed academic staff is extremely limited (according to the SER, 14 academic staff correspond to only 4.4 FTE). This staffing situation is highly problematic for the quality and sustainability of research, as it leaves insufficient capacity for systematic scholarly activity, reduces the ability

to maintain consistent research output, and limits participation in competitive research environments. At present, LA's research performance depends heavily on the admirable sense of commitment and belonging shared by its researchers, teachers, and students, rather than on a robust and adequately resourced research infrastructure. All interviewed staff members and students expressed their feelings of contributing to the common goal. In order for LA to be a strong national player with the intended interdisciplinary research profile, the unit will have to broaden its focus to a research-based relationship with relevant fields of the humanities and social sciences, as well as with the entire academic and religious composition of Latvia.

Quality of Research

Score 2: Adequate

With the focus on future strategy and limited evidence of research conducted over the evaluation period, the Expert Group found it difficult at this stage to assess the research quality realised over the previous five years. There has been a clear effort to produce research. However, it is overwhelmingly in Latvian and centred on the institution's own journal. Only nine articles were published in indexed journals in the evaluation period, and six presentations were made at international conferences. The field-weighted citation index of the unit is below world average. The unit collaborates with the University of Latvia and a number of international higher education institutions studying Lutheran theology. However, the unit did not acquire any funding from competitive funding for national or international projects. This makes the unit a satisfactory national player with an acceptable level of research and some limited evidence of international recognition, based on institutions with which the unit cooperates.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 2: Adequate

The impact of LA's research can only be measured against the restricted group of peer institutions it is comparable with, i.e. communities of researchers of Lutheran theology. LA interacts with a limited number of academic partners abroad and its impact on the international scientific community is thus limited. Since the Academy addresses contemporary challenges in society and ethics, further collaborations with institutions in sociology and philosophy could be envisaged (the Danish Cultural Institute has contributed to a conference on Kierkegaard in 2024). This approach would obviously necessitate expanding their research scope and broadening its rather narrow focus on Lutheran theology.

The Academy has a dedicated digital repository for publications by staff members, which is only accessible in Latvian. LA also has a dedicated website, some pages of which are also available in English. It is LA's intention to make the website available in other languages and to provide English (or German) summaries of the published articles in the repository, thereby improving the potential for collaboration with academic partners abroad. Having an English-language web presence is essential for increasing the visibility of LA's research within the international scholarly community, as it enables researchers, students, and potential partners to discover, assess, and engage with the Academy's work. It also supports greater disciplinary impact by facilitating citation, networking, and participation in global research conversations, which depend on accessible and transparent communication.

Economic impact

Score 2: Adequate

The Academy measures its economic impact on the development of human capital. It aims to foster social cohesion and integrate Latvia's communities, guided by the moral values of Lutheranism. Furthermore, it has the intention to study the history of Lutheranism in Latvia critically, and to inform the general public of the results in order to oppose widely spread misconceptions.

From the interview with the stakeholders' panel, the Expert Group has understood that LA's contribution to the development of human capital in Latvian society is highly valued by the country's ecclesiastical, scientific, and military representatives, especially in the light of the challenges faced nationwide as a result of the current geopolitical situation. However, this is more closely linked to theological education than to research; therefore, the economic impact of research is very limited. While LA clearly plays an important societal role through training clergy, strengthening community resilience, and providing ethical guidance, these activities do not translate into measurable, research-driven economic outcomes. Research at LA is not yet embedded in broader innovation ecosystems, nor is it generating outputs that could lead to applied collaborations, policy influence, or knowledge transfer beyond the theological domain.

The research activities of the unit are characterised by a low level of interaction with the non-academic partners.

Social impact

Score 3: Good

LA's research direction of Lutheran theological anthropology has a direct relation with the society in which it operates. It specifically aims to address modern societal challenges, yet without addressing the religious composition of Latvian society in which LA operates, including other branches of Christianity and other belief systems. During the interview with the stakeholders, the representative from the armed forces strongly underlined the human capacity of chaplains to embrace believers from different faiths and non-believers, a capacity that calls for research.

It seems that the increase of scientifically oriented articles over the last years is negatively matched by a lower number of science communication activities, although LA is engaging with society through public lecture series, outreach activities, and also through its engagement with the military of Latvia, as it trains future Lutheran ministers and chaplains and, in this way, has an important impact. However, the reduced emphasis on communicating research findings to broader audiences limits the extent to which LA's scholarly work can inform public debate or contribute to societal understanding of theological and ethical issues. As a result, the unit's social impact remains largely tied to its educational mission rather than to the dissemination and uptake of its research.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 2: Adequate

LA offers limited research infrastructure, which aligns with the institution's limited resources. It has a dedicated secretariat providing academic support services, and it has a specialised library with many important resources for the study of Lutheran theology. Electronic resources are focused on biblical studies. LA has an important collection of archival material on the

history of Lutheranism in Latvia, as confirmed during the site visit. Given the smallness of the institution and the very limited private funding it receives, it is not surprising that the research environment is not the same as that of some of the larger units assessed by the Expert Group. One of the research priorities listed in SAR focuses on upgrading the facilities, technology, and resources.

The unit has taken efforts to improve the research environments and the situation of the scientific personnel by expanding the number of doctoral degree holders, strengthening the research community, increasing staff mobility, and balancing research and teaching workloads. However, the unit's research strategy, in particular its internationalisation strategy and its contribution to the discipline of humanities and arts, needs to be further developed.

Development potential

Score 3: Good

LA has a narrow research profile and might consider broadening its scope of existing research by fostering international collaborations with academic partners in history, neo-Latin, and philosophy, and connecting with other research fields in the humanities in general. It might further enhance its international network by connecting its theological research on international key figures in philosophy (Kierkegaard) and theology to dedicated research centres abroad. Without a significant funding increase, the Expert Group does not see how LA will thrive in future years. In order to become a significant research hub, significantly more monetary resources are necessary. LA has taken the necessary steps toward international collaboration, encouraging research, organising, and participating in scholarly conferences and much more, but all of this on a very tight budget.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

At the moment, LA is too small and lacks the resources and the qualified professors needed to develop a doctoral studies programme, but it is trying to facilitate doctoral studies for its members of staff in collaboration with other institutions in Latvia, like the University of Latvia, and abroad. Without an increase in professorial staff, it is difficult to see how significant steps on the road to doctoral studies can be made.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The smart specialisation strategy is not addressing the core concerns of theology. Hence, LA cannot align itself with it. However, LA's stated goal is to reinforce human capital through critical thinking, ethical leadership, and values-based education. LA aims to contribute to sustainability efforts from a Lutheran theological perspective. It also promotes social innovations and social welfare and wants to contribute to the cultural and intellectual development of the nation. Its contribution to international knowledge exchange and its use of digital tools for its research and education also deserve to be mentioned.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

LA no doubt contributes to the theology teaching and research in Latvia and is deeply involved in the promotion of Lutheran theology and Lutheranism in Latvian society. It incorporates the Latvian perspective on Lutheranism into the international research landscape of Lutheran theology.

Recommendations

The Expert Group recommends that LA should:

- Consider broadening the existing research on Erasmus and Kierkegaard through collaborations with international academic partners in history, neo-Latin, and philosophy,

and connecting with other research fields in the humanities in general. Such collaborations would not only situate LA's work within wider scholarly debates but also provide access to complementary expertise and resources that can enhance the depth and visibility of its research. Expanding these partnerships would further support the development of interdisciplinary perspectives, which are essential for increasing the unit's international presence and strengthening the overall academic impact of its research.

- Make the dedicated repository of publications by staff members available to an international readership by translating the website into English and providing summaries in an international language for the publications.
- Make LA's Open Access journal *Credimus* more accessible by publishing in international languages or adding summaries.
- Clearly outline the connections with the theology research at the University of Latvia and define respective research fields and mutual collaborations more explicitly, especially their roles in doctoral studies.
- To support the education of chaplains and LA's wider social impact, expand the research scope to cover the larger religious map of Latvia.

3 Summary of findings across the set of unit evaluations

The general level of quality of research

On the whole, the Expert Group was impressed with the quality of research in many of the institutions that were assessed. The best ones easily reach an international level of excellence as reflected in their publications, their involvement in international research networks and their promotion of innovative and highly original research among PhD students and postdocs alike. Even where the scores do not reflect such international levels of excellence, the Expert Group often found significant scope for potential development, which bodes well for research in the humanities in Latvia in the future. The improvements that need to be made here are related to increasing the number of publications in English and other languages than Latvian, in order to improve the visibility of the research undertaken and engage with other researchers in the international scientific community. The latter will also lead to the stronger visibility of researchers in international research networks and the award of international research grants. Strengthening the internationalisation of research cultures will also have a positive impact on doctoral and postdoctoral research at Latvian institutions of higher education. For those institutions that have already reached advanced levels of internationalisation, the challenge for the future will be to become research leaders in their respective fields of research excellence. Here, the task would be, for example, to initiate research consortia and become PIs rather than Cols in those networks. The top-ranked institutions have the potential of being world-leading players in key sectors of humanities research in the medium term.

Key strengths

The Expert Group found particular strengths in humanities research related to Latvia and the Baltic region more generally. The research carried out in areas such as history, folklore studies, literature, linguistics, art, music, and theology is overwhelmingly carried out in line with the highest international standards and in line with what is regarded as methodologically and theoretically cutting-edge in those respective fields. The infrastructure for carrying out research was, in most instances, good. There were excellent developments, such as the much-anticipated opening of the House of Letters at the University of Latvia, which will hopefully increase the scope for trans-disciplinary exchanges. The Expert Group was also pleased to note how many institutions played an important role in international research consortia, leading to important publications in languages other than Latvian.

ILFA received an overall score of '5' and stands out as the only unit in Latvia demonstrating outstanding performance across nearly all evaluation criteria, combining research excellence, international visibility, digital innovation, and societal relevance at a level unmatched by other units. As the Expert Group report shows, ILFA is recognised as a global leader in its field, with cutting-edge interdisciplinary research, internationally acclaimed monographs, and pioneering work in environmental humanities, gender studies, and Digital Humanities - all areas where other units show emerging development. Its digital platforms (such as garamantas.lv, literatura.lv, humma.lv, and iesaisities.lv) are exceptional in the broader European context, positioning ILFA as an innovator in open science and citizen-science-based humanities research. ILFA's societal impact is outstanding, with deep influence on cultural policy, education, heritage preservation, and public engagement, surpassing the outreach capacity of other institutions. Its research environment is well-structured, with a highly collaborative academic culture. ILFA is part of a pan-European humanities research infrastructure, which illustrates its credibility and international relevance. ILFA's development potential is outstanding due to its clear strategic vision, strong international partnerships, and capacity to attract and mentor talent, enabling it to perform not only as Latvia's leading humanities research centre but as a competitive player in the international academic landscape.

Main weaknesses

The main weaknesses of the evaluated institutions were often resource-based. At several institutions, we found a lack of strong leadership figures due to the limited number of full professors who could be funded. The high proportion of competitive (and therefore only temporarily available) funding in the institutions' budgets adds to the overall insecure employment situation for researchers.

The relatively low financial remuneration of researchers, including top researchers, will lead to ongoing brain drain from Latvia, as those who achieve international recognition will realise, they can earn more abroad. The fact that many PhD students and postdocs had to work (sometimes in more than one job) alongside their research work has the predictable effect of making it take them longer to complete their research. This makes them less competitive internationally compared to peers in other European and international countries with a strong research culture.

Furthermore, the Expert Group noted that in a small country like Latvia, there is greater scope for cooperation between institutions. Whilst there have been developments in this direction, further improvements in the scope and depth of the cooperation are possible and should be undertaken in the future. This is particularly striking in the field of digital humanities.

Conclusions

Given that resources are not overly abundant, the level of research in an international perspective is impressive, as reflected in the high number of scores at level 4 (and higher). This is often only possible through problematic levels of self-exploitation. Higher funding levels (especially in terms of salaries, institutional sabbatical systems, and support for younger researchers) will be necessary if the upward trend of the research institutions at Latvian institutions of higher education is to continue.

Recommendations

- Digital Humanities is a research topic/sub-unit in most of the universities the Expert Group visited. There seems to be little coordination, joint investments, or exchange of experience to learn from best practices. The Ministry of Education and Science might consider establishing an advisory group to develop proposals for national guidelines, investment plans, and support for participation in international projects. There needs to be a balance between centralised initiatives and decentralised needs aligned with particular disciplines, regional demands, and the research profiles of specific universities. Some units (NLL and ILFA) attempt to take the lead in this field, but not in a collective national perspective.
- The regional universities in Ventspils and Daugavpils that were part of the assessment are smaller in staff and financial resources than many of the institutions based in Riga and thus have fewer possibilities to engage in larger national and international projects with access to substantial competitive funding. However, in order to attract business, counter a demographic crisis and offer good opportunities for the younger generation in the three regions, it is of vital national interest to secure the existence of research-based higher education outside Riga. The Ministry of Education and Science might consider creating a national initiative parallel to the EU's regional funds to improve the conditions for the regional universities to thrive and progress. The collaboration between the said universities, as well as other regional universities not part of the humanities assessment (e.g. Liepāja), to join forces in the new doctoral school system could mark a promising start to an initiative of this kind.
- The plans to change the structure of employment for teachers in higher education and researchers in research institutions are strongly recommended to take into consideration the importance of finalising the plans with a system that is more aligned with international

career track conditions than the present system. As it stands, it is not transparent for potential international staff or long-term visiting professors, whom all units are trying to attract, so far with modest success. The employment structure is one of the key impediments to future progress in improving the excellence of humanities-based research in Latvia.

- Developing a more comprehensive HR Strategy may help to advance internationalisation, especially in regard to developing a clear plan to recruit and retain leading international researchers and senior scholars who can mentor and lead large-scale research initiatives.
- The Expert Group recommends establishing international advisory boards with leading scholars to guide international funding strategies and publishing efforts in leading globally recognised journals.
- Many universities have introduced performance remuneration related solely to economic bonuses. It may be worth trying to expand the options to include instead extra sabbaticals, extra support for international activities, not least research stays abroad, or similar research-related rewards, which may be an attractive option to some members and at the same time be beneficial for research units as a whole.
- Together with the new doctoral school system, the employment of doctoral students marks an important step forward in Latvia's doctoral education. However, it appears that supervision is different for professional projects and academic projects, with two supervisors for the former and only one for the latter. The Ministry of Education and Science is advised to allow for two supervisors in both cases, one of whom could be affiliated with an institution other than the host institution of the project. This possibility could advance the interdisciplinarity of academic projects, support the collaboration on the doctoral level between research institutions and, in case of a supervisor from abroad, also strengthen international contacts. Furthermore, it will protect doctoral students from becoming overly dependent on a single supervisor.
- The Expert Group was concerned about the widespread practice of hiring former doctoral students as faculty. Whilst the Expert Group realised that for a small country like Latvia, it is difficult to avoid this altogether, it would help to implement strategies that would allow for greater mobility of research staff between institutions.
- Whilst the Expert Group recognises that there is significant concern in Latvia regarding the Latvian language, it still recommends fostering at least some teaching at institutions of higher education in English (and other languages besides Latvian). Familiarising students and future researchers with other languages is a key investment in the internationalisation of research in Latvia.
- Institutions marked as a '4' with potential to move to the rank of '5' are counselled to take the following measures:
 - 1) collaboration with universities and educational facilities that are ranked within the top 150 in the world by global publications on education, for instance, Times Higher Education Supplement
 - 2) continuous publication in journals ranked as being in the top ten within the given field
 - 3) publication with globally recognised academic publishers in monograph format
 - 4) collaborating with top institutions to gain funding for long-term projects of 4 to 5 years.

Appendix A Feedback on Panel assessment

Feedback to the Expert Group assessment by the Latvian Academy of Culture

Riga, December 19th, 2025

To the Expert Group

International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions, Latvia

This letter is intended to present the Latvian Academy of Culture's separate opinion regarding the Expert Group Report. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the constructive dialogue that accompanied the discussion of the Report (LAC letters of 28.10.25, 9.12.25, and 15.12.25). At the same time, several of our core arguments remain, and we therefore respectfully restate our position below.

While we acknowledge that, following several exchanges, the Report text has become more detailed and explicit, we note that the final version still identifies a number of shortcomings and improvement needs in areas where the Latvian Academy of Culture has, in fact, demonstrated sustained and high-quality performance over an extended period, both at the national and international levels. Consequently, it remains unclear what additional actions or qualitative shifts the Expert Group expects the institution to undertake in the coming years in order to achieve a higher evaluation outcome.

For this reason, and in the interest of ensuring a transparent, consistent and methodologically robust evaluation process, we consider it necessary to present below a detailed, fact-based clarification of the points where we believe the assessment does not adequately reflect the documented evidence provided in the self-assessment report and supporting materials.

Impact on the scientific discipline – *“The efforts to increase internationalisation will help put the LAC on the map in Europe”* (p.2).

We consider that the Latvian Academy of Culture has already established a strong and visible presence within the European research landscape. The implementation of four Horizon Europe projects alone, involving a total of 37 European partners—without even accounting for an additional ten international projects carried out during the review period—demonstrates that the LAC is firmly positioned on the European map.

Economic impact – *“For a top score, the Expert Group would expect more longitudinal, independently verifiable evidence showing that the LAC's research has shaped economic, cultural policy, or other decision-making or sectoral transformation. Evidence should be provided of this happening over the long term (5 years plus). Furthermore, more international impact is expected beyond the national level”* (p.3).

We respectfully submit that the scope, duration (exceeding ten years), and high-level profile of the LAC's applied research do provide such longitudinal evidence. This includes, for example, the impact evaluation of two successive medium-term Guidelines of Cultural Policy, the impact assessment of the National Programme *Latvian State 100*, as well as research commissioned by other high-level institutions and national programmes. Together, these activities demonstrate sustained, long-term impact. Furthermore, we have submitted evidence of the LAC's systematic and long-standing engagement at the international level, including work with UNESCO, contributions to the Compendium of European Cultural Policies, and participation in the European Commission OMC working group on the working conditions of artists, among others. We consider these to be clear indicators of international impact beyond the national context.

“The Expert Group recommends, for instance, reaching out to collaborate with European art institutions and festivals, setting up vibrant cultural and student exchanges which benefit the local industry and the cultural sector and collaborating on more internationally funded research projects. The LAC has made progress in this endeavour, but should continue on this trajectory. The Expert Group also recommend fostering a start-up culture for cultural entrepreneurs evolving out of the LAC student body” (p.3).

The LAC would like to clarify that it has maintained long-term collaboration with major European art institutions and festivals within its artistic specialisation areas—namely theatre, film, and contemporary dance. Also, our students do establish their own enterprises in the creative industries on a regular basis. However, we would like to

respectfully note that this particular indicator is not part of the evaluation criteria. In addition, the Academy has consistently participated in international projects across these thematic fields over many years. Further details are provided in the Self-Assessment Report.

“However, evidence of influence and of systemic impact management and tracking of impact pathways is scarce” (p.3).

In our view, the LAC’s sustained collaboration—over more than a decade—with the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science, and a wide range of cultural and creative sector organisations enables both the exercise of influence and the systematic tracking of impact. This is achieved, for instance, through the continuous provision of data and through the citation of LAC research in key national policy documents.

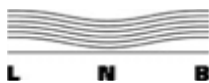
Social impact – *“For a ‘5’, the Expert Group would expect systematic evidence that the unit’s research underpins major developments in the social and cultural spheres and that its staff are in sustained, not occasional, demand as experts across sectors. This includes the ability to demonstrate influence at scale, continuity of impact over time, and the embedding of impact mechanisms across the unit rather than through isolated projects or individuals. In short, the Expert Group reiterates that sustained and consistent international collaboration outside of Latvia with prestigious cultural institutions, festivals and artists, as well as international universities will help the LAC to raise its profile to an influential and important level within Europe” (p.4).* The LAC respectfully disagrees with the conclusion that the demand for its expertise is “occasional” or limited to isolated projects. On the contrary, most Lead Researchers and many Researchers at the LAC are widely recognised and consistently engaged as experts across the cultural and creative sectors. Moreover, this engagement has expanded steadily over the two previous assessment periods, reflecting continuity rather than episodic involvement.

Recommendation 2 – *“Continuing to strengthen these ties in the long term will help the LAC consolidate its international reputation, secure more ambitious projects, and ensure its growth trajectory remains resilient amid geopolitical and funding uncertainties” (p.6), and Recommendation 4* – *“However, diversification is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing resilience-building process, particularly for a rapidly growing institution whose ambitions require sustained and predictable funding” (p.6).*

While we broadly appreciate the rationale underlying these recommendations and fully acknowledge the qualitative nature of the evaluation, we would like to express concern regarding the formulation of these expectations as continuously shifting benchmarks. In an increasingly uncertain geopolitical and funding environment, such an approach risks rendering the attainment of the highest score structurally unattainable, regardless of demonstrated progress. For instance, during the reporting period the LAC research budget was 2/3 competitively obtained external funding from diverse sources.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our sincere gratitude for the thorough and professional work carried out by the Expert Group, and especially for the willingness to engage in a constructive and open dialogue throughout the evaluation process.

Feedback to the Expert Group assessment by the Latvian National Library



LATVIJAS REPUBLIKAS KULTŪRAS MINISTRIJA
LATVIJAS NACIONĀLĀ BIBLIOTĒKA

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October 30, 2025

Riga

On the Evaluation Report on the National Library of Latvia

On behalf of the National Library of Latvia (NLL), allow me to extend my sincere appreciation for your time, expertise, and thoughtful engagement throughout the evaluation process. It was an honour for us to welcome you! We are grateful for the attention you have given to our mission, achievements, and development priorities. We will use your insightful guidance for our strategic planning as well as to reinforce our commitment as a national research institution serving both scholarly communities and society at large.

I feel very humbled by how the assessment recognises the NLL's excellence in social impact, research environment and infrastructure, and development potential with the highest score. I also greatly appreciate the positive evaluation of the quality and breadth of our research, its unique interdisciplinary position, and the Library's significant contribution to national cultural memory, knowledge infrastructure, and public learning.

As the overall score of 4 stands between "very good" and "outstanding," and in light of the textual analysis that repeatedly highlights excellence, originality, and national leadership, we respectfully inquire whether the result could be interpreted as 5, or whether specific criteria currently rated as 4—particularly Quality of Research, and Impact on the Scientific Discipline, —might be revisited. Our goal is not to contest the evaluation but to ensure that its conclusions fully reflect the evidence presented and the research performance demonstrated.

Allow me to present to you few additional clarifications and contextual information for your consideration:

1. Publications, Language and International Reach

In the chapter on quality of research that elaborates on the breadth of research outputs, we also recognise the observation regarding the predominance of Latvian-language publications alongside international outputs. Considering this mentioning, we would like to explicate on the importance of Latvian language publishing. The National Library has a state-mandated responsibility for the maintenance and development of Latvian scholarly language and terminology in the fields of library science, book history, bibliographic studies, cultural heritage, and digital humanities, and related fields. Continuing publication in Latvian is therefore not only a scholarly practice, but a strategic cultural and scientific responsibility. Scientific terminology development is inseparable from language vitality and scientific sovereignty. As linguists and terminology scholars emphasise, if science communicates exclusively in foreign languages, the national language risks losing its conceptual depth and terminological precision. Terminology development and usage is part of the language's status, as well as its ability to serve knowledge creation and sustain a research ecosystem. Latvian faces significant lexical pressure from English and other

dominant languages. Without continued domain-specific development, the Latvian language risks becoming a secondary or auxiliary language in scientific contexts, rather than a full instrument of scholarly expression.

Thus, the NLL pays particular attention that our researchers continue publishing in Latvian. Yet while we are aware of the need to be represented and read internationally, we have opted to strategically aim for bilingual and multilingual publications, meaning we either publish bi-lingually (mainly in English but often also in German) or with international publishers. Also, our Proceedings, published at least twice per year, are always published with English summaries, and in several cases full translations into English or German. In the next evaluation cycle, we will highlight translated/bilingual outputs at the time of publication to ensure these aspects are fully visible.

Next to that, we would like to emphasise the international publishers with whom we have been publishing over the last evaluation cycle, and that choose to continue our cooperation, as a token for outstanding quality of research. For example, publishing with Brill represents a benchmark of scholarly excellence: Brill accepts only rigorously peer-reviewed, original research that meets the highest standards in the humanities and cultural heritage fields. For the National Library of Latvia, this means that our research is recognised alongside that of leading European and global institutions, affirming our authority in book history, library studies, and cultural memory research. It signals that NLL's scholarly output is not only competitive at the international level, but contributes meaningfully to shaping global academic discourse in our fields of expertise.

2. Impact on Scientific Disciplines

The evaluation rightly emphasises our disciplinary influence. Next to impact related to expanded new networks and partnerships, we wish to add further dimensions of how we have strategically endeavoured to expand the European historiography by integrating the Baltic region in the study of book trade and intellectual networks. Namely, the International Conference in Book History "Footprints of Early Modern Book Trade: Transnational Mobility between the Low Countries and the Baltic Sea Region" which we hosted in November 2024, attracted researchers from the United Kingdom to the Netherlands, but Plantin-Moretus Museum and University of Antwerpen were our partners. Conference was a result of longer efforts and served as an important breakthrough to become integrated in prominent book history networks. Furthermore, international conferences and forums to honour Immanuel Kant's 300th jubilee, were organised with partners from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and Potsdam University, and were held in German language, were a significance advancement to not only become partners in various future research projects internationally but also it launched not well-known document to be discovered – the notes from lectures of Kant in 1783 by Isaac Abraham Euchel (1756-1804), which has given a new wave of studies and will result as an international conference in Riga again. We do dare to say that these examples reflect not only national leadership but also global disciplinary visibility and impact.

3. Clarification on Institutional Partnerships

Finally, regarding the reference to the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Arts in chapter on Research environment and infrastructure: we value all academic neighbours and collaborators. Yet, our research environment is strengthened first and foremost by structural cooperation with all our partners: the University of Latvia, Latvian Academy of Culture, Art Academy of Latvia, Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music, and international partners. We also host the Danish Cultural Institute, supporting cultural diplomacy and research exchange.

We humbly ask that this reference be adjusted only to avoid any unintended perception that NLL's research capacity depends upon a single co-located institution rather than a broad, independent and diverse partnership network.

In conclusion, please allow me to once again thank the Expert Group for its constructive approach and generous recognition of our achievements. We would be grateful if the given additional contexts might support the interpretation or reconsideration of the overall score as 5.

We remain at your disposal for any further documentation, evidence, or clarifications.

Sincerely,
Dagnija Baltiņa
Director of the National Library of Latvia