

A ROAD TOWARD GREATER VISIBILITY OF RESEARCH OUTPUT IN INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEW JOURNALS: LESSONS FROM POLAND

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Internationalization, a relatively new phenomenon in the social sciences in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, is one of the most challenging and important areas for political science in this region (Crăciun 2018). In the area of research, internationalization primarily includes publishing in peer-reviewed international journals (Pohoryles and Cvijetic 2002). This article focuses on publications in peer-reviewed journals in general and, more specifically, on factors that may explain why Polish scholars lag behind their Western European counterparts.

From a Teaching to a Research Mission in Political Science

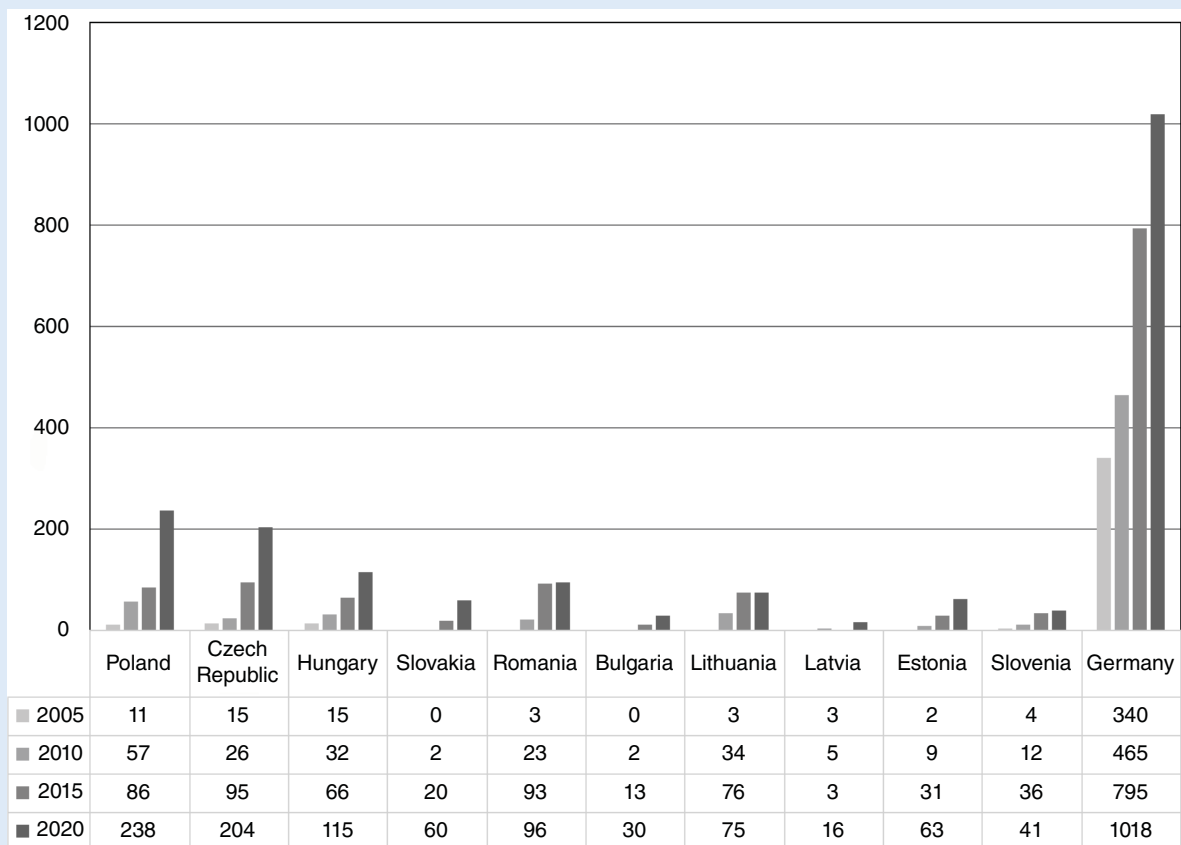
The democratic transition of the 1990s brought many changes in academia in Poland that—along with the legacy of communism—shaped the development of social science disciplines until the early 2000s. Trends and reforms emerging during the transition

period (i.e., 1990–2000) oriented the focus of the social sciences toward a teaching mission (Curaj, Deca, and Pricopie 2018; Korytkowski and Kulczycki 2019; Kutsar and Kovács 2010). The greater focus on teaching resulted from the growing popularity of the social sciences, especially political science, international relations, economics, and law. This increasing interest coincided with the strengthening of the teaching mission of political science programs. This supported the proliferation of political science courses not only at public but also private universities (Dobbins and Kwiek 2017). The large private higher-education sector—which developed rapidly in the 1990s and the expansion of which ceased in the second half of the 2000s (Dakowska 2017)—offered additional financial incentives and attracted faculty members who could not resist them, given the severely underpaid positions at public higher-education institutions.

The teaching mission of political science began to wane at the end of the 2000s due to both internal and external influences (Kwiek 2012). A decline in the country’s population, followed by the decrease in enrollment in social science courses and accompanied by the Bologna process initiated by Poland’s accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004, led to important changes and reforms in the higher-education system (Tarlea 2017). The aim of

Figure 1

Total Number of Published Articles in Political Science and International Relations (Scopus 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020)



Source: Scimago Journal & Country Rank (2021).

the reform that began in 2009 was to internationalize research in the social sciences through collaboration with foreign scholars and a greater visibility of their research output in international peer-reviewed journals (Dobbins and Kwiek 2017; Jokić, Mervar, and Mateljan 2019). However, it turned out that the performance of the social sciences and the humanities in post-communist countries, measured by the scores given to articles published in journals, lagged behind the accomplishment of the same disciplines in the West (Jurajda et al. 2017; Schneider, Bochsler, and Chiru 2013).

Shaping the Visibility of Research by Changing Publication Patterns

A major breakthrough in political science resulted from the 2018 Law on Higher Education and Science (Konstytucja Dla Nauki 2018). The new law required both universities and researchers to increase the visibility of their scientific achievements and internationalize the results of their research. These requirements were linked with the rules for faculty promotion and tenure. More specifically, research performance by individual researchers became closely linked with the assessment of their scientific activity in the university. The most popular indicators included (1) the number of articles and monographs published in peer-reviewed journals and by prestigious publishing houses; and (2) specifically, the percentage of articles developed through international collaboration and research grants. Moreover, after the introduction of the new law, universities had to adjust their internal regulations accordingly, which also was strongly connected with public funding and a university’s status.

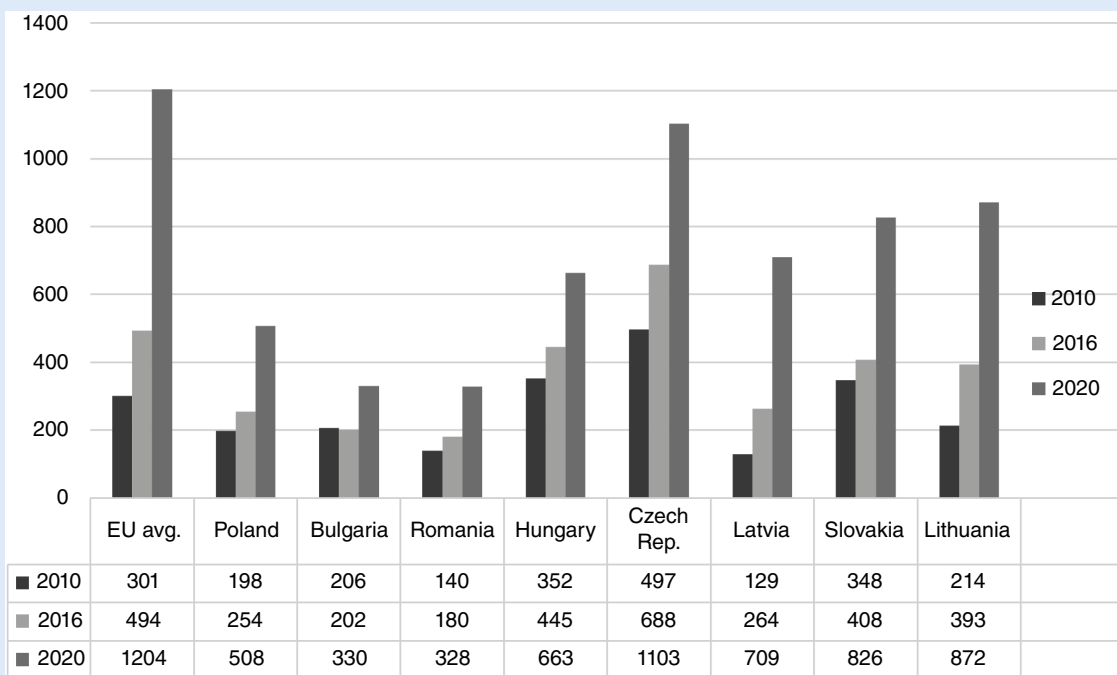
Internationalization of research has been incentivized through various policies, plans, programs, strategies, and approaches at various levels of decision making, including at the national and university levels. These fairly recent developments in Poland corresponded to similar changes in the social sciences and the humanities in other CEE countries. However, in the CEE region, Poland and the Czech Republic were pioneers in international collaboration, number of articles published in foreign journals, citation impact, publication practices, and intensity of changes (Kozak, Bornmann, and Leydesdorff 2015). Recent studies have shown that publication patterns in political science and international relations in CEE countries have evolved toward publishing of articles in journals with greater citation impact, as indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus (Korytkowski and Kulczycki 2019; Kulczycki et al. 2018; Petr et al. 2021). Figure 1 confirms these changes.

If we consider publications in the top journals and according to data compiled by the European Commission,³ the number of international scientific publications from Poland and other CEE countries—which are among the 10% most-cited publications in the world—has increased since 2009. However, despite an upward trend, the research productivity of CEE scholars, especially their publication records in peer-reviewed journals, is still less than in Western countries (Jokić, Mervar, and Mateljan 2019).

Another important measure of visibility of research output is international scientific co-publications because they are a proxy for the quality of scientific research as collaboration and scientific productivity. Poland’s co-publications per million inhabitants

Figure 2

International Scientific Co-Publications Per Million Population (2010, 2016, 2020)



Sources: European Innovation Scoreboard (2021) and Innovation Union Scoreboard (2012).
 Note: Co-publication is defined as a scientific publication with at least one coauthor from a non-EU state.

increased from 198 in 2010 to 508 in 2020. Poland's rates are comparable to those of Latvia and higher than Bulgaria and Romania (figure 2) but it is clear that these countries lag behind the EU average.

There continue to be many individual and organizational challenges that must be overcome. The primary focus of researchers on teaching diminished their research skills—especially those needed to write journal articles—as well as their knowledge of broad scholarly literature. This is coupled with the lack of knowledge of methodologies and a poor command of the English language. Compared to Western European countries, the teaching load is high and the wages of faculty members are low, which are important factors that discourage academics from engaging in more research activity. For example, in Poland, the average number of obligatory teaching hours for research-and-teaching faculty members that hold the position of professor is 180 class hours (i.e., six courses per academic year), whereas for non-professor research-and-teaching staff the average is 240 class hours (i.e., eight courses per academic year). The minimum monthly wage of full-professor academic faculty in Poland is €1,490 and in the Czech Republic, it is €3,337 (average pay); whereas in Germany, it is €6,000 EUR and higher (European Commission, Eurydice 2021).

Overall, the important challenges for universities and researchers in CEE countries are to increase research output and to make their research more visible internationally. Institutional barriers, however, still remain, including a shortage of public funding for social science research (Kutsar and Kovács 2010), the limited ability of universities to offer grants, and professional training and research support for individual scholars. Universities—especially those enjoying the status of research institutions—are currently in the process of adopting new strategies that prioritize internationalization of research and channel funding. This will allow both early-career and senior scholars to develop their research skills, and we remain hopeful for these positive trends. ■

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NOTE

1. See European Innovation Scoreboard (2021) and Innovation Union Scoreboard (2012).

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FOSTERING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE: INSIGHTS FROM THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL GRANTS

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The discipline of political science in CEE countries¹ has traveled a long way during the post-communist transition, having shifted—not unlike the famous Polanyi pendulum (2001)—from the political subordination to the state authorities to the increasing reliance on the market forces. The recent establishment of the grant system, with its inherent market-oriented logic in the CEE region,