

# MERITOCRACY AND GLOBALISATION: SLOVENIA

MERITOCRACY, EXPERTISE AND FUNCTIONAL  
SUBSYSTEMS IN SLOVENIA

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# CONTENT

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- First part: Meritocracy, expertise and functional subsystems in Slovenia

Results from interviews conducted as a part of the new project on IRSA: *Meritocracy and the knowledge society – between simulation or reality?*

- Second part: The case of academic sphere

Evaluation of scientific achievements, objectivity, measurements, ‘publish or perish’

Including results of discussion between researchers and professors on the topic of *Evaluation in science*, organized by IRSA in February 2019

# *Meritocracy and knowledge society – between simulation and reality*

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- Research plan: Literature analysis, meta-analysis of secondary data, media analysis and quantitative analysis with **interviews** and focus groups with representatives from different subsystems
- 5 test interviews with representatives from: health sector (1), public administration (2) and academic sphere (2)
- 3 interviews conducted in person, 2 through e-mail

# QUESTIONNAIRE

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5 sets of questions about meritocracy and meritocratic principles:

- Organizational level
- Subsystem level
- National/ society level
- Key competences
- International comparison

# ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

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- In all cases hiring/promoting strongly connected to the rules of subsystems
- Very formalized/bureaucratic entry criteria based on education and experience in public administration and in public higher education institutions
- Other skills important when hiring in public administration: team work, leadership skills, general knowledge
- Important in public higher education institutions: *'being at the right place at the right time'*
- In medicine strict entry criteria based on education and experience, very important specialized knowledge

# SUBSYSTEM LEVEL

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- Two sides of promotion system in public administration because of strict rules:

Everyone is expected to be promoted sooner or later

People who do not meet criteria (education) cannot be promoted even if they show exceptional results

- Grading system for promotion too based on quantification of achievements (especially in higher education)
- Respondents are missing more criteria linked to personal goals, problem tackling, proposing new ideas and improvements, fresh and useful knowledge
- Leadership positions: in public administration closely linked to politics where non-meritocratic principles play a great role

# NATIONAL LEVEL

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- General opinions:
- Meritocratic principles are not the main principles in Slovenia
- Education is valued enough, but knowledge is not  
*,‘Knowledge behind the diploma is not at the same level as it used to be.’*
- Not everyone in Slovenia can succeed if they just try hard (motivation, part of the right network, regional differences, class differences, depriviligid background)
- Interesting: representative from health sector believes in meritocracy much more (institutionalized and in society)

# KEY COMPETENCES

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- Similarly in all subsystems: broader, general knowledge, curiosity, constant learning, adaptability, ability to foresee problems, analytical problem solving, cooperation and team work, reflexivity
- In certain fields (IT, medicine) specialized knowledge is favored, while in general respondent believe broader, multi-disciplinary knowledge is more useful
- Generation gap (millennials with new skills, but lacking some other) – intergenerational dialogue?
- Ethics and integrity very important for each individual personally, they are less convinced about subsystem and organizations



# INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

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- Other countries value achievements, knowledge and merit more than Slovenia (Slovenia is too small)
- Such countries: Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, US, UK, Canada, Korea, France, Argentina
- Those countries where meritocratic principles are more commonly used are more developed (connection to ethics and integrity)

- **Slovenia:**

“On its way“

Upper-middle class

On top of Eastern European countries

Still away from Northern and Western Europe ...

# SOME KEY POINTS

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- Health sector – more strong beliefs and opinions about meritocracy (specialized field?)
- Slovenia – meritocratic principles in theory (strict rules in hiring and promoting in public administration), in practice a bit less so (networks, social mobility)
- General belief that more meritocratic countries are more developed
- Key competences: in specific fields more specified knowledge wanted, in most of the fields and in general for society – broader knowledge, multi-disciplinarity
- Education does not always equal knowledge

# THE CASE OF THE ACADEMIC SPHERE

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- Peer review as the older method of evaluating science
- Expensive, long process, subjectivity and possible bias (small countries), reviews were not consistent
- Desire for more objective, quicker and easier evaluation of scientific achievements – bibliometrics
- Indicators measuring: productivity of researchers, quality of research outputs and connections between author, publications and field of research
- Indicators (H-index, impact factor, citations, ...) based on databases (Web of Science, Scopus, ...)

# RECENT TRENDS

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- Do bibliometrical indices really measure what they want to measure?
- San Francisco declaration against impact factor (field dependant, easy to manipulate, calculations are not transparent or publicly available)
- Dutch researchers to move away from impact factor
- Publish or perish: promotions, habilitations and funding allocation based on number of publications and citations forcing researchers to publish as much as possible as fast as possible, not focusing on quality but quantity.
- Longitudinal studies, ethnographic studies, inter-disciplinarity?

# SLOVENIA

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- IRSA organized a workshop titled *Evaluation in science* in February 2019
- 9 individuals participated (doctors, professors, researchers from all fields – natural sciences, humanities and social sciences)

- Among other things (specific situation in Slovenia) discussion was also about:

**Opinions of researchers on quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation in science**

**Recommendations for improvement (methods of evaluation)**

# KEY FINDINGS

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- Researchers are critical towards the use of specific quantitative methods, especially in Slovenian context
- They are less critical towards the use of qualitative methods, but they do recognize their limitations
- Sicris point system does not give a relevant information about the quality of a researcher or research group
- Some researchers want to completely abolish bibliometrical methods and replace them with peer review, but most of them are afraid of possible negative consequences of using only qualitative methods in small Slovenian research community

# KEY FINDINGS

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- Doubts expressed about transparency and professionalism of reviewers
- One of the biggest problems are the constant rule changes by the Slovenian research agency

Key ideas for improvement:

- Combination of qualitative and quantitative mechanisms (but clear rules)
- Re-establishing panel discussions in evaluation process and bigger role of researchers in evaluation process
- Good practices from abroad
- Better and more functional mechanisms for complaints