



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Assessment of working conditions at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences – 2024 report

This report was prepared based on an anonymous survey made available to employees in Polish and English online on May 29, 2024. The questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended questions. Open questions allowed for comments to be added both on good practices that should be continued and on issues that should be worked on. Part one contained questions on the employee's status, the second part included an assessment of individual aspects of work at the Institute, including the form of employment, the work of individual departments and committees, housing conditions, social support, opportunities for improving qualifications and mobility, promotional activities, grant and publication policy, and procedures related to filing complaints. Closed questions allowed for an assessment of individual aspects of work at the Institute according to a 5-point scale: very good, good, neutral, bad, very bad. Employees were asked to use the “not applicable” response option if the question did not apply to them due to the scope of their duties and position at the Institute or if they had not used the opportunities, services or products provided by the Institute in the last 12 months.

The survey was attended by 56 people (64% of employees), including 42 people working in research. There were more women (39) than men (11) among the people completing the survey, which reflects the employment structure at the Institute; 6 people refused to answer the question about gender or did not refer to it. 33 people have experience in a managerial position (within a grant, department, department or Institute authorities), 23 people have no such experience. 15 people declared the status of a young scientist in accordance with the definition in art. 360 sec. 2 of the Act of 20 July 2018 - Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668, 2024, 2245, of 2019, items 276, 447, 534, 577, 730, 823, 1655).

EMPLOYMENT

Most employees rated the type of employment (46) and work mode (48) very well. Only one person is not satisfied with the form of employment. These responses did not contain a neutral assessment, which can be noted in the case of other aspects of employment. Positive or neutral assessments dominate, although it is worth noting that few people rated the employee evaluation system (4), promotion opportunities (6), implementation of the Gender Equality Plan (5), anti-mobbing activities (8), respect for the principles of work-life balance (3) badly. The activities of the Research Ethics Committee are rated very well, well or neutral by employees. Employees did not use the opportunity to leave comments in this part of the survey.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

The discount on PKP (Polish State Railways) travel was considered an exceptional bonus, rated very well by 45 employees. Many people do not use the Assistance and Loan Fund (hereinafter ALF) (18), the medical package (18) and the program supporting sports activity (15). Some people gave bad or very bad ratings to the ALF (2), medical package (7) and sports card (2).

Most people assessed the work of the Social Commission positively (35), a few people negatively (6), only 7 people declared that they did not use the support of the Social Commission. The comments indicate that the Employees used financial assistance in the form of benefits granted in difficult random situations, loans, e.g. for housing purposes, co-financing of self-arranged holidays (however, in the case of co-financing of holidays, the Employees reported concerns about decreasing support rates).

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions were assessed positively by most employees: available equipment and cooperation with the IT department (43), workrooms at the IS PAS headquarters (40), work of the library (37) and usefulness of online resources (e.g. iReteslaw, iSybislaw) (37). Some people assessed badly or very badly available equipment and cooperation with the IT department (4), workrooms at IS PAS headquarters (2), work of the library (1) and usefulness of online resources (e.g. iReteslaw, iSybislaw) (1). The form contained many comments on equipment conditions, workplace, availability of scientific publications and online resources, both positive and negative, which indicates that these aspects are important to employees. The resources of the IS PAS library are not sufficient for the scientific work of some employees, which is why they do not use them. Employees report the need for access to well-known databases of journals and monographs. In many cases, employees use equipment from grants. Purchase of equipment would not be possible for most employees due to the financial situation of the Institute. The change of headquarters (November 2023) resulted in reorganization of the space and in some cases change of the mode of work to remote; some people report a lack of work space dedicated for them in connection with this change.

POSSIBILITY TO IMPROVE QUALIFICATIONS

The best assessment was given to language courses (36) and they also received the most positive comments. Next, training courses on research (30) and presentation of research results (29) were assessed positively, as well as training in soft skills (communication, cooperation, organization and management of team work, also in a multicultural environment) (25) and IT and technology (22). Few people (1-3) assessed each of the opportunities to improve qualifications negatively.

Almost 1/3 of employees chose the answer "not applicable" in relation to each of the courses, which means that many people did not take advantage of the offer presented by the Institute. It is worth considering why this is the case. In the comments employees indicated a lack of time

due to other duties, a lack of knowledge about courses or workshops, or in their opinion the offer was not suitable for their job position.

Employees believe that this practice should be continued and expanded to include new courses within the Institute (e.g. ethics, career development paths), but also the possibility for employees to participate in courses organized by external entities (participation co-financed by the IS PAS). Individuals did not find the offer helpful, perhaps the solution would be to provide them with external training that meets the needs of improving qualifications in their position.

GRANTS

Most employees positively assessed cooperation with the Research Support Office (hereinafter RSO) (37), less so the training on the possibilities of obtaining domestic and foreign grants (27). The grant offer was not used by 11 (RSO) and 14 (training) people. Many positive remarks about cooperation with the RSO appeared in the comments, regardless of whether the application process for funding was completed successfully or not. The Research Support Office was called the most professional unit, the cooperation was described as excellent, and there was even a postulate to grant recognition awards to the team members.

It is necessary to continue and develop the grant policy, to continue to mobilize employees to use the offer and cooperate with the RSO in this area. The results of this work in the form of the number of co-financed grants testify to the success of the Institute's grant policy.

PROMOTION

Promotional activities were rated good or very good by most employees: the website (48), the newsletter (41), the social media (43) Only a few people (1-3) rated negatively each of the activities related to the promotion of research carried out at the Institute.

Employees noted that the social media is well-run, especially since a new person was hired to handle promotion. In addition, the website and newsletter are described by some employees as archaic forms, and a need for modernization was reported, including the visual identification.

There were several critical remarks in the comments about the excessive (to the detriment of scientific debate and critical thought) or insufficient importance given to promotion, and consequently also the funds allocated for this purpose. Employees also reported ambiguities related to the promotion policy resulting mainly from the disproportion in promoting employee achievements and the selection of information (some events are publicized, while others are not). The question is to what extent this depends on the promotion department and to what extent on the activity of the employees themselves.

MOBILITY

The Institute's activities aimed at increasing mobility are assessed positively in terms of the implementation of the Erasmus and the Foreign Cooperation Office (hereinafter BWZ) programmes and the information provided on mobility offers. Taking into account the quantitative results and comments, the Erasmus programme is assessed better than BWZ (2

people assessed the functioning of BWZ negatively), especially due to the amount of funding. It is interesting that many people are not concerned by this question, which means that they did not use the mobility offer (21 Erasmus, 19 BWZ).

On the other hand, the employees assessed negatively the co-financing of conference trips, 14 people assessed it badly or very badly, while 17 people were not concerned by this question at all. The comments indicate that participation in a scientific conference is usually financed from grant funds, own or external entities (e.g. organizers), occasionally from the Institute's funds. For some employees it is not clear on what basis the IS PAS co-finances trips to conferences.

There is a need to increase funds for conference trips and to create a clear message for employees about the process of applying for and settling funding. Perhaps preparing additional messages on mobility programs: Erasmus and BWZ should be considered (a proposal for an organizational meeting on this matter appeared in the comments).

PUBLICATIONS

Support in the scope of publishing activities was assessed positively by most of the people who used it. It is worth noting that many employees are not concerned by this question: the publishing house (20), the Publication Team (26) and translation funding (27). Cooperation with the publishing house was assessed good or very good by 25 people and bad or very bad by 4 people. The negative comments mainly concerned the exceeding of deadlines.

Some comments indicate that employees do not know how the Publications Team works and who is a part of it; additional information about the scope of support for this Team is necessary. Employees are also unsure whether and how they can apply for funding for translations of publications.

GENERAL ASSESMENT

Despite the critical remarks presented in this report, the overall assessment of work at the Institute is very good. Most employees assessed the following aspects positively: the working atmosphere (46), freedom to conduct research (45), relations with the direct superior (36). Only 1 person assessed the working atmosphere as negative, while relations with the direct superior was assessed negatively by 2 people. Several people added in their comments that the Institute is not only a place of work, but also a place of development and establishing friendly relations. Many negative comments were related to the financial situation of the Institute, the level of subsidies causes anxiety related to employment and the future of the Institute. In the opinion of the employees, the working conditions are very good despite financial difficulties, and the reported problems are often a consequence of underfunding rather than poor management. Insufficient funding is also noticeable in staff shortages, in the comments the need to employ additional people to carry out necessary 'scientific-related' tasks was mentioned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continuation of activities in the field of improving qualifications, especially in the field of language competences. Continuation of the grant policy.

Action to increase statutory funding, which will allow for support for research workers (financing participation in conferences and external training, translation of articles, purchase of equipment, access to databases, etc.) and filling staff shortages.

Undertaking information activities on: career path and promotion, possibilities of applying for funding for conferences, translation of publications, etc., division of competences between individual departments/persons of the Institute (especially regarding the Publications Team). Development and presentation of a clear procedure for submitting complaints and applications.