



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Assessment of Working Conditions at the Institute of Slavic Studies PAS – 2025 Report

This report was prepared on the basis of an anonymous survey made available to Employees in both Polish and English in an online form on 6 June 2025. The questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to add comments concerning both good practices that should be continued and issues requiring improvement. The first part of the questionnaire concerned the Employee's status, while the second part comprised an assessment of various aspects of work at the Institute, including type of employment, the work of departments and committees, workspace conditions, social support, opportunities for professional development and mobility, promotional activities, grant and publication policies, and procedures related to filing complaints. Closed questions enabled respondents to evaluate selected aspects of work at the Institute on a five-point scale: very good, good, neutral, poor, very poor. Employees were asked to use the "not applicable" option when the question did not concern them due to their duties, position, or because they had not used a given service, opportunity, or resource within the past 12 months.

A total of 41 individuals participated in the survey (42% of all Employees), including 26 research staff members. Among the respondents, women (28) outnumbered men (8), reflecting the Institute's overall employment structure; 5 individuals declined to answer the question concerning gender. Eleven respondents reported experience in holding a managerial position (within a grant, department, division, or Institute authorities), while 30 had no such experience. Ten individuals declared the status of early-stage researcher in accordance with Article 360(2) of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science.

EMPLOYMENT

Most Employees rated the type of employment (39), work mode (38), and recruitment process (36) as very good or good. For other aspects of employment, positive or neutral evaluations prevail. Nonetheless, a small number of negative or very negative assessments were recorded regarding the employee evaluation system (2), opportunities for promotion (8), implementation of the Gender

Equality Plan (5), anti-mobbing measures (8), and respect for work–life balance (9). The activities of the Research Ethics Committee were rated very good, good, or neutral. No comments were added in this section.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

The PKP railway discount was rated very good or good by 20 Employees – a notable change from the previous survey, in which most Employees rated it very highly. Seven individuals assessed it neutrally, four negatively, and nine indicated “not applicable.”

Many Employees do not use the Mutual Assistance and Loan Fund (18), the medical package (16), or the sports activity support programme (13). Among those who do make use of these options, ratings were largely positive, with a few negative or very negative evaluations: Mutual Assistance and Loan Fund (1), medical package (6), sports card (3). Most respondents positively assessed the work of the Social Committee (24), while 3 assessed it negatively; 5 respondents indicated that they do not use the Committee’s support.

Comments indicate that Employees make use – more or less extensively – of all available forms of financial support. Changes to the PKP subsidy rules were evaluated negatively, and Employees expressed hope for their reinstatement. A small number of comments referred to updates to the Social Committee’s regulations, limitations of the medical package, and the available sports card.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions were positively evaluated by most Employees: available equipment and cooperation with the IT Department (30), office facilities at the Institute’s locations (25), library services (25), and the usefulness of online resources (e.g., iReteslaw, iSybislaw) (22). A small number of respondents rated these aspects negatively or very negatively.

Comments pointed to a need for better organisation and availability of workspace for Employees who work primarily remotely and do not have assigned offices at the Institute. Employees also indicated a need for access to well-known journal and monograph databases. Many Employees use equipment purchased through research grants.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities directly related to conducting research received the highest number of positive assessments (21). Training on presenting research results was also positively evaluated (16), as

were soft-skills training sessions (14). Each type of training received between 1 and 3 negative assessments.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of Employees who did not participate in any training. Employees described the Institute's training offer as limited.

Respondents expressed interest in upskilling, especially through language courses, programming courses, digital humanities workshops, and training in the use of artificial intelligence in academic work. Given the Institute's financial constraints, Employees suggested the organisation of internal training sessions on Open Access (OA), access to journal databases, and soft skills.

GRANTS

Most Employees evaluated cooperation with the Research Support Team (ZOBN) positively (30), and to a lesser extent the training opportunities related to national and international grants (24). Eight respondents had not made use of ZOBN services, and nine had not used the training offer.

Many comments praised cooperation with ZOBN but noted the Team's heavy workload, suggesting that additional staff should be hired.

The Institute's grant policy should continue to be developed, and Employees should be further encouraged to use available opportunities and collaborate with ZOBN. The number of successful grants highlights the effectiveness of the Institute's strategy.

PROMOTION

Promotional activities were rated good or very good by most Employees: website (33), newsletter (30), social media (33). A small number of negative evaluations were recorded, with the newsletter receiving the highest number of negative assessments (6).

Employees rated the work of the staff member responsible for promotion very highly. Some comments pointed to insufficient dissemination of research results outside social media – for example, during dedicated events or in academic press. Remarks were also made about the relevance and timing of the newsletter. The need to modernise the website's visual identity was repeatedly emphasised. Some Employees do not share information about their promotional activities; therefore, clearer communication guidelines between the promotion team and Employees are needed.

MOBILITY

Activities supporting mobility – Erasmus, International Cooperation Office (ICO), and mobility-related information – were evaluated positively. A few respondents rated ICO negatively (2) and Erasmus (1). Many Employees had not used mobility opportunities (17 Erasmus, 15 ICO).

Funding for conference travel was evaluated poorly or very poorly by 19 respondents; for 14 individuals the question was not applicable. Comments show that conference participation is typically funded from grants, personal resources, or external entities. The lack of institutional support for conference travel results in Employees withdrawing from conferences or suspending parts of their research.

There is a clear need to increase funding for conference travel. Employees suggested providing an additional communication on mobility programmes Erasmus and ICO, including the possibility of organising an informational meeting.

PUBLICATIONS

Publication support was evaluated positively among those who used it, though many respondents indicated that the questions did not apply to them: publishing house (11), Publications Team (17), translation funding (24).

Cooperation with the publishing house was rated good or very good by 21 respondents and poorly or very poorly by 6. Negative comments focused on missed deadlines, communication difficulties, and long waiting times for publication without external funding.

Cooperation with the Publications Team was positively assessed by 12 respondents and negatively by 3. Some Employees remain unclear about the Team's structure and remit, indicating a need for further communication. The lack of funding for translations was evaluated very negatively.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Despite critical remarks, the overall assessment of working conditions at the Institute is very positive. Most Employees expressed favourable opinions regarding workplace atmosphere (33), academic freedom (29), and relations with supervisors or academic mentors (41). Negative assessments were rare (4 for atmosphere, 2 for supervisor relations).

However, Employees emphasise that good interpersonal relations cannot compensate for excessive workload and insufficient funding.

Many negative comments addressed the Institute's financial situation, including low salaries, the absence of additional benefits, and a lack of funding for conference travel and research activities. Employees report that the workload sometimes exceeds what can reasonably be expected of one

person and is carried out at the expense of personal time and rest. Financial instability and the lack of prospect for salary increases cause anxiety and prompt some Employees to consider changing employment. Concerns were also raised about evaluation requirements (slots, points, grants), which Employees feel prioritise financial output rather than scientific development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase statutory funding to support research staff (conference and external training participation, article translations, equipment purchases, access to databases), expand the social fund, and address staffing shortages.

Continue upskilling initiatives, especially in the use of artificial intelligence.

Continue developing and strengthening the grant policy.

Undertake steps to organise internal training sessions.