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ON THE COUNTER-EUROPEAN CONSEQUENCES OF SSH EVALUATION IN SERBIA: THE RESULTS OF A QUALITATIVE FIELDWORK STUDY*

Abstract The findings of a bottom-up qualitative fieldwork analysis of the social and political consequences the Serbian research assessment system produces, from the point of view of social science and humanities (SSH) scholars, are contextualised in the ongoing debate on the allegedly "European" character of that system. In the context of the recent developments in SSH research assessment put forward by some of the leading European academic institutions and organisations, data analysis points to the counter-indicative character of research and higher education reforms implemented in countries like Serbia.

Key words: research evaluation, consequential analysis, qualitative research, Serbia, European integration, anthropology of science, anthropology of education

Introduction

The metric-based performance assessments of academic work in Serbia – implemented nearly two decades ago – have caused many controversies within academia. On the one hand, most of Serbia's social science and humanities (SSH) scholars make their own evaluations of the scientometric criteria in terms of inadequacy and improper implementation which has a number of negative consequences for the organization, dynamics and the content of their research. On the other hand, the representatives of the (natural) sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, who introduced the reform, advocate the metric-based evaluation framework as the best possible set of universal assessment indicators for scientific research.

Differing standpoints on scientometry, and on the internal structure of research evaluation criteria, heighten the rift between Serbia's STEM and SSH communities, as well as creating many new problems, some of which go beyond the usual focus of academia. Research has revealed the tendency of many influential Serbian academics to develop anti-EU sentiments as a consequence of what they perceive to be the inaccurate and even malicious deployment of a scientometric model which was presented to the scientific community as a set of measures for adjusting to European standards in the early 2000s. The issue of the adequacy of "reformative" policies in the research and development sector, coined as "European" has, in other words, jeopardized the academic integrity of SSH scholarship "in the name of Europe." This can have very harmful consequences, considering that the SSH section of the academic community is widely recognized as fulfilling the role of "guardians" and "protectors" of national identity and cultural heritage.

The findings clearly demonstrate that the country's highly biased and unilateral academic policy is consequent upon research evaluation standards being developed exclusively by colleagues from the STEM fields, in accordance to their interests and self-contained views on the evaluation of scientific results. In addition to being overtly dismissive of the meaning and purpose of SSH generated knowledge, what social roles it performs, and through which channels it is typically communicated to the public, the key players of reform in the academic sector have demonstrated monopolistic tendencies, strongly prioritizing STEM based research, especially in the area of material support and financing. The discriminatory nature of research funding became evident during the 2015–16 multi-year funding call for academic research projects, which saw a 12% total reduction of SSH research financing (7% for social sciences and 5% for humanities). The financial as well as administrative devaluation of SSH fields has unmasked the power relations between the relevant actors within Serbia's academic community and beyond, thus broadening the rift which threatens to break the academic community apart. This not only alienates identity-centred researchers but also counters cosmopolitan European research and development policies.

From the early-2000s on, the academic administration responsible for the development of scientometric criteria has been composed mainly of individuals from the STEM fields, excluding the SSH scholars from decision-making positions. As a result of such preferential treatment, social sciences, and especially the humanities, have been subject to systematic and structural subjugation on the administrative level, legitimized and endorsed by popular views on science, in which the STEM fields are conceptualized as "strong", "pivotal" and "exact" while the SSH scholarship is defined as "weak", "imprecise" and irrelevant to society as a whole. In order, perhaps, to make social sciences and humanities more relevant to Serbian social, political, economic and cultural development, the new evaluation framework was imposed in a implicitly patronising manner, without any genuine intention on behalf of the decision makers to take into serious account the specific historical and disciplinary traditions, or broader interdisciplinary differences in approaches to creating substantial, meaningful and scientifically credible knowledge (as well as a meaningful evaluation framework to assess this knowledge).

Anti-academic consequences of the metric-based evaluation system, already subjected to sharp criticism by colleagues across the EU, pose a serious threat to Serbian EU accession and need to be thoroughly investigated in order to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the broader impact of the country's current scientometric standards. This research has been devised as a decisive step in that direction: it critically reflects on the "war over evaluation criteria" and traces its effects both inside and outside of academia. The findings in this paper are derived from qualitative fieldwork research, carried out in the country's five major university centres: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac, and Novi Pazar. Using "multi-sited" fieldwork, over one hundred participants were interviewed, and investigations were pursued through the diverse spatial, cultural and intellectual milieus of Serbia's academic community. In accord with the research design, the interlocutors were divided into several groups: a) academics who are or were also decision makers; b) young researchers (up to 35 years old, and who had gained their PhD in the last eight years); c) researchers who have been active in research policy debates, and d) researchers who were inactive in said debates. The interviews consisted of four main themes: 1) the intra-academic stature of SSH, 2) research assessment of SSH in Serbia, 3) the social impact of SSH, and 4) the researchers' views of ongoing changes in the regulation of the assessment framework.

How social science and humanities scholars perceive assessment indicators – an excerpt from an ethnographic fieldwork dataset

The almost unanimous disappointment and discontent of the interlocutors with the recent standing of SSH in Serbian academia is chiefly related to the unequal power dynamics in the decision making processes. The systematic

exclusion of voices coming from SSH fields in the academic administration – which in turn tends to regulate every aspect of the academics' professional lives, from the organization of their teaching and/or research activities to their pay grades – is highly inconsistent with the values of plurality and diversity, apparently cherished by academia. In order to circumvent the system of false democracy, majority rule and to reverse the process of the gradual disruption of academic autonomy, some of our respondents have asserted the need for the subdivision or "confederalisation" of academic fields with different regulatory bodies monitoring each field.

The main aim of such adjustment measures would be to diversify the metric standards which are presently unified for both SSH and STEM fields. The diversification of the criteria would aim to reflect the fundamental differences between the fields both in terms of their social roles and cultural functions, as well as in their different methodological orientations, types of research and scientific output. Against this background, the scientometric assessment of SSH-based research is held to be highly unsuitable, as well as being detrimental for SSH institutions, scholastic publications and individual researchers. Humanities scholars are notably puzzled by a particular measurement indicator which devalues a book written in Serbian or in a minority language in favour of a single article published in English in a high-impact journal.

Our respondents also indicated that there was a significant change in their research and publishing behaviour owing to the assessment tools they struggle to abide by and the "publish or perish" policy that arises from the new regime of academic work. The unending race for publication points, according to the information received, is increasingly wearing researchers out, gradually resulting in counter-indications of the expected "excellence" of scholarly work. Measuring academics against one another and forcing them into a market-like arrangement of competition, leads to the quality of their work being abandoned in favour of quantity, since the evaluation system demands that researchers and professors become mini "publication factories" pumping out new papers in ever-increasing numbers. The content and quality of their articles, book chapters and monographs appears to be less important to the reviewers than the physical evidence of their publishing, in foreign journals and international academic press if possible, or as a lesser alternative, in domestic high-impact journals. In the light of the new metric criteria, SSH research is, then, destined to satisfy primarily the interests of international academic audiences, which means that it has to be "fine-tuned" to catch the attention of foreign scholars and publishers. We have detected many types of reactive behaviour against these "international adjustments" of the country's academic policy, including reactive nationalist responses, reflected in the interviewee's interpretive sovereignty discourse, as well as reactive elitism (observed in the ivory tower syndrome of some respondents).

As to the issues of the social role of SSH and their factual influence on the country's politics and society, the interlocutors largely agree that no meaningful

effect of SSH in the public sphere can be obtained with the compromised status of its practitioners, which is internally sabotaged by the actions of their STEM-rooted "outperforming" cousins and their patronizing measures, and externally by the overall poor standing of scholarship in Serbian society and beyond. The distorted power relations within the academy create an atmosphere of suspicion and loss of respect outside of it, in a similar vein to scientific thought – a common distinction of mankind – has been "inspected", "debunked" and held up to ridicule by non-academics in recent global crises. Considering this issue, the favouring of the applied in exchange for basic research in Serbia's current academic policy is perceived by most respondents as an abandonment of unrestricted ways of thinking in favour of a self-restrained mode, bound by an extra-academic agenda and left to the discretion of professionals working outside academia – in museums, media, NGOs, state and local administration, and similar. Opinions were divided on the issue of Open Science and Open Evaluation, with the majority of participants disagreeing with the idea of external stakeholders judging scholarship and scholars in terms of the worth of their outputs and the value of the knowledge they produce, and the minority seeing it as a chance to test their hypotheses and findings against more information sources, thereby furthering their chances of discovering possible errors.[1]

Here are some indicative statements on the main problems the participants addressed and proposals they made:[2]

"As a field, SSH should be independent from STEM in the administrative sense."

"This whole science projects-based system has been imposed on us by people who do not think individually, or write books, or share a commitment to previous research and, all in all, don't understand what social sciences are … and especially the function that the humanities serve. They don't even imagine that scholarship can be published in some language other than laboratory English, which is pidgin and reduced to 300 – 500 words. If we were given the chance to evaluate them, we would surely dismiss their work as non-academic and illiterate. Therefore, we should go our separate ways once and for all."

"Do they even know what it takes to write a book? It's a rhetorical question of course – they do not even read books."

"The incompetence of those who are entitled to promote us is huge. Power to decide which researcher will be promoted is delegated to a committee consisting of colleagues who don't even understand the titles of our books and articles."

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1   Or, in the words of one respondent, "If assessment reports are made open for everyone from the discipline to review, they would be far more objective than bibliometry."

2   Due to the vindictive behaviour of some of powerholders within the research and higher education sector, full anonymity was guaranteed to interviewees and their identity is purposively and completely hidden (and not just altered by anonymisation or pseudonymisation). Pursuant to this all indicative references, such as "English literature professor from the University of Novi Sad" or "Medievalist from an institute in Belgrade", have been removed.

"The preference toward quantity lessens the overall quality of research, editing, peer review, and publishing. No one affected by this system has time to do a proper job anymore."

"Researchers do not have time to think about the application of results and their dissemination to stakeholders outside academia. The whole system is designed to exhaust researchers. The quantification pressure is purposively developed in order to prevent us from being social critics."

"As a semi-peripheral society, it is not expected of us to have strong social sciences. We are considered drones that are supposed to gather data, and someone else will do the thinking instead of us. It is degrading that our own ministry doesn't respect our work at all."

"My colleagues from other faculties think that anyone can write about history or identity. They do not even consider our disciplines as sciences in their own right and many are confused that we still exist at university level. Most of them feel our doctoral studies are unnecessary."

"Pseudoscience is what the public wants and what politics needs. It is very hard to counter pseudoscience and get the public to like you at the same time – almost impossible. It is on the rise, and we are pushed to get published abroad instead of contributing to the body of academic knowledge in our society."

"Our purpose, significance, function, role ... this is all mixed up by that notion of impact. It's a buzzword, in a way. Our impact was long ago predefined and it does not need to be reinvented. We should not accept the game of defining our impact and explaining our purpose. They [i.e., the STEM fields] need to explain why they are getting funded while it should be obvious why we are funded – in order for our state to function, in order for our society to be civilised. Period."

"Basic research is by definition 'impactless', as it were. It would be a grave mistake, with serious consequences, to reorient all of our scholarship to visible, tangible, publicly understandable goals. It is a question of dignity. And it is far less European to think of SSH in terms of their practical utility than in terms of their importance for democracy and culture."

"We were raised, in academic terms, according to the ideal of free intellectuals, a peculiar form of public thinkers from the period of socialism, so it is very hard to reorient to a policy-based agenda, as policies are per definition the open implementation of someone's interest and are hardly treated as a pursuit of the common good. Eastern bloc intellectuals, Yugoslavia included, were more like social theorists. Social theory is of no interest to capitalism."

"Foreign editors and peer reviewers are mostly incompetent when it comes to research topics relevant to Serbia and the Balkans. They sometimes don't even possess a knowledge of basic facts or processes that our freshmen are expected to know in order to pass introductory courses."

"The reforms made in the name of Europe have been mutated by the interests of certain domestic circles and have very little in common with the shared practices of our foreign colleagues, especially when it comes to research assessment. It's a deception, a scam conducted in the name of democracy and progress."

Analysis

Data acquired via this fieldwork confirm that the SSH branch of the Serbian research sector represents a classic example of a scholarly community in the European Research Area. Reservation, opposition, criticism or open detestation toward academic governance by metric-based research assessment procedures are typical of SSH scholars both in Europe and worldwide, so Serbian scholars' reservations, boycotts or criticism are neither an anomaly nor context-specific. The reservations in countries across Europe and beyond have been thoroughly researched during the last decade, with three prestigious European academic institutions advising against overvaluing bibliometric tools (which may lead to the danger of over-simplified methods of evaluation), criticizing the overreliance on citations (as a path to encouraging the establishment of the so called "citation clubs"),[3] and warning of "a serious danger that the undue emphasis on bibliometric indicators will (...) tend to promote those who follow current or fashionable research trends, rather than those whose work is highly novel and which might produce completely new directions of scientific research."[4]

The results obtained in qualitative ethnographic fieldwork research point out that knowledge production in the Serbian SSH is severely compromised by the impetus to publish in foreign academic journals, in foreign languages (typically English), and in agreement with the individual preoccupations (as well as levels of knowledge) of foreign editors and reviewers. Constructing notions of "excellence" and "impact" by making use of such indicators may direct SSH scholars to global "markets", and away from the advancement of critical thinking as a prerequisite for democracy – or to the internal research of (post)modern trends, such as re-traditionalisation, technologisation, the public restoration of far-right politics, etc. – which should be one of the SSH fields' main goals.

The critical reasoning of the participants in the research is generally in compliance with the four major streams of criticism of the evaluation procedures reported globally (see Ochsner, Hug and Galleron 2017, 3). In insisting that

- the research evaluation standards developed for the STEM fields cannot capture the diversity of methods, themes, approaches and types of analysis typical for the SSH; in pointing out that:
- the quantification is unable to capture the non-mechanical thinking, distinctly common in the humanities; in noting that:
- the mere transplantation of STEM-based indicators into SSH fields causes mainstreaming, a decrease in ethical standards, ruptures in the

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3 Aggregates of researchers who boost each other's citation metrics by mutual citation.
4 "Statement by three national academies [the Académie des Sciences, the Leopoldina and the Royal Society] on good practice in the evaluation of researchers and research programmes," October 27, 2017, pp. 1 – 2: https://www.academie-sciences.fr/pdf/rapport/avis111217.pdf

institutional research profile, etc. ('negative steering effects'); in obser-
ving that:

–   SSH disciplines, because of their de-standardised profiles, and mutu-
ally inconsistent character, cannot fall into the classification of fields
and subfields more typical for STEM the Serbian interlocutors follow
the same lines of criticism discernible worldwide.

These objections resemble earlier debates on the unsuitability of directly
transplanting ethical review standards from biomedical to social research
(Israel and Hay 2006), while also pointing out subtler discrepancies between
STEM and SSH fields, which make a common evaluation framework highly
problematic: the linear versus pluralist understanding of scientific knowledge,
the intolerance versus tolerance of competing ideas and opposed worldviews;
the specific humanist concept of knowledge that is not expected to "die out" and
become "obsolete" in two to five years, as in laboratory sciences (Hicks 2004,
474). While reducing complexity in order to achieve effectiveness is perceived
by STEM administrators as a highly desirable aim (especially in the context
of austerity measures), this aim has in the course of academic life produced
inverse effects – scholars, especially those from the humanities, tend to defend
the irreducibility, diversity, and plurality of knowledge as a value in itself.

Belittling the merit of books, book chapters and scholarly articles written in
one's mother tongue (this is regarding non-English native speakers) raises alarm
in both the Serbian and international SSH communities. Both early prognoses
(Thompson 2002; Williams et al. 2009) and more recent studies (Giminez-
Toledo et al. 2015; Basso et al. 2016) highlight the major importance of a book
as the cornerstone of specialisation in a certain subject area. The majority of
humanities and most of social sciences scholars understand publishing a book
as a basic premise for pursuing promotion in academia. These are not mere
subjective judgments, based on some inherited – and presumably outmoded
– way of thinking: recent studies on the subject confirm that monographs
have proven instrumental for the development of many disciplines in the SSH
fields and that the value of books is demonstrated by their information and
idea sharing capacities, their propensity to advance scholarly debates and create
paradigm shifts, their overall quality, and the prestige they procure to their
authors (Basso et al. 2016: 43, 62). As things stands now in Serbia, the country's
research evaluation system has devalued the traditionally expected research
activities and research outputs of SSH scholars, among whom publishing books
and chapters in edited volumes were most common (see: Baćević 2006; Žikić
2009; Kovačević 2013; Milenković 2009; Milenković 2010). To consider Serbian
SSH simply underdeveloped, as some authors do (see: Urošević and Pavlović
2013; Pajić and Jevremov, 2014; Pajić 2015; Ejdus 2018) can be regarded as an
ill-intentioned act of applying the narrow and misplaced scientometric notions
of 'excellence' (which rule out local, national or regional studies), on account of
publishing in foreign/international journals with very high impact factors.

Due to the system of rewarding individual 'productivity' in foreign academic journals, which prevents the transformation of academic knowledge into socially useful policies, both individual researchers and academic institutions are put onto 'lists' and 'ranked' with a view to satisfying the top-down, standardised indicators that are imposed on them as criteria of quality (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003; Shore 2008). In Serbia, the detrimental consequences of such a business-minded, overachiever culture produce war-like, unhealthy competition that gravitates toward significant reconstruction of the organisational and financial priorities of teaching departments and whole research institutions (Gačanović 2010). This mode of governance fosters rivalry for resources in academia, at the same time limiting both institutional and individual autonomy, as the struggle for funding persuades researchers to pull at the sleeve of private funders and other governing bodies that are primarily responsible to major companies or to (local) governments, and not to the academic community per se (Espeland and Sauder 2007). Consequently, SSH scholarship risks a dangerous reduction of its critical stance and even the adoption of sheepish behaviour toward its potential or actual donors.[5] In this regard, some previous findings (Milenkovic and Milenkovic 2013; Milenković and Kovačević 2014) are confirmed – the ongoing public debasement of SSH fields, combined with the existing opprobrium within academia, have an enfeebling effect on SSH scholarship, hampering the researchers' criticism of mainstream political discourse or economic ideology. As seminal work in anthropology and the sociology of policy has revealed too many times (Shore and Roberts 1995; Strathern 1996, 2000; Power 1997; Shore and Wright 1999), the non-academic fiscal control of academic life has globally imposed its self-serving power over scholars, legitimising it on the established yardsticks of quality and "excellence". According to this interpretation, the quantitative performance assessment of scholars and their work is a logical outcome of extra-academic "governing by numbers" which seeks to present itself as a universal instrument for regulating anything academic (Shore and Wright 2015). This has also been confirmed by respondents in this study as well as by previous research in Serbia (Žikić 2009; Gavrilović 2009; Gačanović 2009; Pavićević 2009; Milenković 2009; Baćević 2010; Milenković 2010; Kovačević 2010; Gačanović 2019).

Conclusion

This research has revealed several consequences of the ongoing academic policy toward SSH. First, the imposition of evaluation procedures developed by laboratory scientists to measure the output of all sciences has been set up on the mistaken assumption that what works well for natural sciences and

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5   For the social and political consequences of this 'audit culture', analyzed through the lens of anthropology of policy and related scholarship, see Shore 2008, 2010; Craig et al. 2014

technology should also function properly for social sciences and humanities. This universal, *kontextfreie* method of assessment is, however, bound up with insufficient knowledge of the SSH fields, their disciplinary histories, field-specific purposes and types of research, and henceforth creates an ambience of downright mistrust in the SSH community toward the STEM-rooted evaluation framework. In addition to SSH scholars' general opinion that the evaluation criteria are completely unfit for the assessment of their own research, there is an underlying sentiment that the current procedures are latently devised against SSH institutions and individual scholars and that they aim to gradually eliminate the SSH fields from the academic and public sectors.

A second finding builds on this in terms of the reform's problematic promotion in the academic community. At the very outset, the STEM-based evaluation framework was introduced as "progressive", "state of the art", "developmental" and, above all, as "European". These epithets were, however, not only unjustified – as the reform failed to deliver what it promised at the initial stage – but also dangerous. There were no grounds for the assessment indicators devised by STEM officials in Serbia to bear a *European* label, given that they had no objective correlatives in the major part of European academia, nor were they recommended by the relevant EU governing bodies. In those countries in which they did take hold, their consequences have been largely disputed. As in the Serbian case, the charges against such evaluation frameworks were centred on their observed inimical impulse to abolish SSH fields by portraying their scholarly output as inferior to STEM results, and consequently by aligning their publication patterns with scientometrics – purportedly in the interest of general academic improvement (Lohkivi, Velbaum and Eigi 2012). In Serbia, however, these restructuralisations had additional consequences in uncovering – clearly, already latent – conservative trends in certain parts of the academic community. The correlation of the current science policy and the rise of socio-cultural conservativism among a certain number of scholars is due to their interpretation of the instruction to publish in foreign/international journals as auto-colonial. The apparently liberal tool has, henceforth, led to illiberal consequences in Serbia: today, the public stance of SSH scholars is less supportive towards Serbia's accession to the EU than it was prior to the allegedly "European" reforms in academic and higher education policy. These developments feed on the post-traumatic character of Serbian society and reinforce its continuous re-tradtitionalisation.

The third deduction which can be derived from the research data challenges the pre-assumption that scientometric methods have a greater capacity to make objective assessments than peer reviews. Namely, the analysis of the fieldwork material shows that metric-based evaluation criteria have changed the very perception of how researchers behave in order to achieve quantifiable results. There is nothing objective in measuring any system if the act of measurement significantly affects the way system works. Since it has been proven that the metric-based performance assessment has changed the very nature of scientific

work, the system can be understood as biased rather than as objective. Being biased, it can – and in fact does – have highly invasive and harmful consequences in social and cultural spheres of academic life. In turning parts of the academic community away from liberal values, cosmopolitan worldviews as well as from the idea of reform itself, it moves still further away from the ideal of objectivity, as its very presence increasingly distorts the social roles and cultural functions of academics.

Instead of encouraging superficiality by requesting the amassing of socially and regionally irrelevant publications in foreign journals, most SSH scholars who took part in the research insisted on recognising the academic virtue of scholarly texts devoted to culturally recognisable, socially relevant and politically relatable topics of national interest. The issues of pseudo-science, quasi-expertise and dubious pundits offering their services to the mass media were constantly raised during interviews. The fetishisation of high-impact international/foreign journals, whose editors and reviewers are largely uninterested in the more complex affairs of peripheral societies (such as Serbia), was perceived by the interlocutors as a further step toward the dismissal of philosophical, historical, sociological, anthropological, economic, legal and related science studies from academia, where they rightly belong, as well as from the public sphere, where they are currently most needed. The pointless, derogative, and exhausting requirement of current academic administrators to publish nationally and regionally irrelevant SSH scholarship for the benefit of foreign scholarship, succeeds only in alienating scholars and widening the rift between the SSH and STEM fields.

Today, when the most widely regarded European university centres are opting against scientometry, in Serbia the contested evaluative practice is still promoted as "the international standard" that is "required by the EU." Until recently, Serbian academic administrators have ignored the acute consequences of the predominant evaluation standards with respect to SSH fields completely, even if the recommendations and guidelines regarding the specificity of SSH in the context of evaluation procedures were brought forth by leading European research institutions and organisations. Such miscommunication and evident unwillingness to cooperate on the part of the STEM-based bureaucrats make SSH scholars feel personally offended, their academic identity put under threat, their scholarship devalued and their disciplines inferiorised, with both institutional and individual autonomy undermined. This is widely perceived among scholars as being damaging for higher education and research, apart from having devastating effects on the broader society and the public sphere.

To conclude: if the true goal of the country's current science policy is to put Serbian SSH knowledge into practice (rather than to erode its institutions, diminish its potentialities or to adapt it to either present or future anti-democratic worldviews), then the pattern of the valorisation of research outputs – at least in SSH fields – should be changed, if not abandoned altogether. It

would be naïve to expect the introduction of some fundamentally different evaluation system – one, perhaps, that is not performance-based, as *performance* is the prize-winning word in the country's current political climate. However, its indicators should be fine tuned in order to assign greater value to the production and publication of socio-culturally relevant SSH knowledge, in line with actual, and not construed, European research and development policies. This fieldwork-based research confirms that the SSH research community shares the impression that the current system of research assessment introduced almost two decades ago, rests on a notion that the SSH are inferior to STEM fields in terms of development and "excellence." Now, more than a decade and a half later, it is the SSH scholars who perceive STEM-based administrators to be accountable of unprofessionalism, incompetence, and political and financial abuse of power. This unhealthy dynamics of mutual mistrust calls for urgent policy intervention. Bearing in mind both the "culture war" ignited by the introduction of metric indicators for SSH research assessment based on formally pro-EU yet counter-indicative goals, which are producing anti-EU consequences, and that pivotal research organisations and academies are moving openly toward non-metric indicators, we propose that a thorough reform of research assessment indicators be commenced immediately.

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