

# Eastern Europe as a blind spot in the research assessment reform

**EMANUEL KULCZYCKI**

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Many Eastern European research institutions and organizations have joined the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment, an international effort aimed at reforming how research is evaluated, including a move away from the crude use of metrics and rankings.

Research is so international that it's easy to think of it as a flat world where everyone faces the same conditions and constraints. However, national systems retain significant differences that often go overlooked in the enthusiasm for international reform efforts, which tend to originate from and be driven by Western Europe.

Eastern Europe has a long and distinctive tradition of research evaluation. Various countries have used publication counting as a means of evaluating research for two centuries. This is one of several reasons why, broadly speaking, in many parts of the former Soviet bloc and more generally in Eastern Europe, metrics are trusted more than experts.

The socialist era also deeply embedded the idea of the social function of science in these countries' research systems, as a means of contributing to the economy or fulfilling Soviet ideals. Yet Western European policymakers often treat societal impact as a recent discovery that they need to export to other, less up-to-date parts of the world.

On top of this, Soviet and socialist science management systems in higher education and science have left a legacy of relatively centralized, national-level decision-making. Government-level incentives are still crucial in shaping research and academic advancements.

In my talk, I will use the concept of the 'evaluation game,' developed in my recent book (*The Evaluation Game: How Scholarly Metrics Shape Scholarly Communication*, CUP 2023), to show how this concept can enrich our understanding of how researchers, institutions, and other stakeholders respond to pressures generated by metrics and research evaluation exercises. More importantly, I will show why, in reforming research assessment, we have to take into account the history and heritage of diverse evaluation traditions and attitudes towards metrics.