

# Who gets to decide what counts? Analysing public responses to Croatia's national criteria for academic promotion

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## Context

- In Croatia, **academic promotion criteria are set nationally**, not by individual institutions.
- This **centralised model** differs from most European systems, where institutions have greater autonomy.
- The **National University, Scientific and Artistic Criteria shape academic careers** nationwide: they influence which activities are **recognised, rewarded and incentivised**.
- Although the document lacks explicit strategic goals and no mechanism for evaluating impact, it still **implicitly communicates values and policy priorities** through what it chooses to include and emphasise.



## Motivation

- In 2025, a **public consultation** was launched on a new draft of Criteria.
- The consultation **drew significant public attention** and provoked strong reactions across the academic community.
- It became a **site of polarisation**, exposing deep divisions regarding values, priorities, and visions of academic excellence.
- The process offers a unique opportunity to examine how research policy is debated, how legitimacy is constructed, and how researchers respond to top-down reform efforts.

## Analysis



A total of **2,592** comments were submitted by **425** distinct contributors, including **individual researchers, organisations, and research-performing institutions**.



The **social sciences** section received the highest number of comments, followed by the **humanities**. The single most active contributor was the largest Croatian institution in the field of SSH.



The largest share of comments addressed the introduction of **new horizontal (quantitative) criteria**, proposed as a separate evaluative dimension.

## OS & Assessment Reform



- Only **11** comments explicitly referred to Open Science, and **19** mentioned initiatives such as CoARA or DORA.
- Mentions of qualitative assessment as an alternative to quantitative indicators were also rare.
- All such contributions were supportive, framing these concepts as positive and necessary.

## Diverging Views on Academic Value



- Open Science and assessment reform were rarely mentioned; these ideas are not yet mainstream in Croatia.
- A small number of reform-minded voices did emerge, aligning with CoARA/DORA principles and calling for qualitative evaluation.
- The consultation exposed deep polarisation in views on academic value and advancement.
- Participants expressed conflicting positions, from constructive suggestions to distrust and rejection.
- Divergent discourses appeared even within the same institutions, highlighting a fragmented academic landscape.

