

Łukasz Wawer

Director of development in PCG Academia

Former deputy director in Digital Transformation Department in Ministry of Science

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1965-3923>

www.linkedin.com/in/łukasz-wawer-546798174

When Evaluation Rules Change but the CRIS Remains: Supporting National Research Assessment with DSpace-CRIS (The Polish Experience)

1. Introduction

The landscape of national research evaluation systems (RAE) is often characterized by instability, resulting from shifting political priorities and evolving definitions of “research excellence.” In Poland, transitions between successive evaluation periods have historically forced Research Performing Organizations (RPOs) to radically adjust their data management strategies. Unfortunately, virtually every governmental term has resulted in a change of direction and, consequently, changes in the rules governing research quality evaluation in Poland. In recent evaluation cycles, the rules were even modified halfway through the assessed period.

This presentation highlights the role of DSpace-CRIS as a flexible infrastructure capable of bridging the gap between specific Polish national requirements and the global movement toward Open Science and standardized research information. It demonstrates how Polish institutions use CRIS systems to operate within a “dual evaluation reality”: fulfilling highly detailed national indicators while simultaneously striving for international visibility and prestige.

2. The Polish Evaluation Landscape: A Case of Exceptionalism

The Polish system of research evaluation stands out due to its complexity and centralized character. Unlike systems based on peer review (such as the UK’s REF), the Polish model is predominantly metric-driven and relies on a complex algorithm that assigns points to individual publications based on a national list of journals and publishers, which does not directly correspond to global standards or citation-based metrics.

2.1. The Complexity of the “Slot” System

The current evaluation model introduced the concept of slots, i.e., the percentage share of an author’s contribution to a given publication. Each researcher may submit a limited number of publications for evaluation, and the “value” of a publication is divided among co-authors according to complex formulas.

2.2. Lack of Alignment with International Standards

A significant challenge in the Polish context is the divergence from international standards. While the international community is moving toward CoARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment) and qualitative assessment criteria, the Polish system remains anchored in:

- a proprietary national journal list with assigned point values that often do not correlate with Impact Factor or CiteScore,
- specific legal and administrative metadata requirements (e.g., precise employment dates, declarations regarding the “N-number”) that are absent from standard CERIF (Common European Research Information Format) profiles.

3. The Dilemma: National Points vs. International Prestige

Polish universities face a strategic paradox. To secure state funding (subvention), they must maximize their score in the national evaluation. At the same time, achieving high positions in international rankings (e.g., THE, QS) often requires a different set of priorities.

Area	National Evaluation Priority	International Ranking Priority
Journal Selection	High-scoring journals on the ministerial list	High Impact Factor / Q1 journals
Language	Significant weight given to Polish-language monographs, particularly in the humanities and social sciences	Publications predominantly in English
Collaboration	Complex “slot” division (point dilution). A large number of co-authors reduces the score	Open international collaboration, promotion of publications co-authored with foreign partners

This “split identity” of RPOs places considerable pressure on the CRIS system. The CRIS must function as a translator, mapping local administrative data onto international standards such as ORCID, Crossref, and OpenAIRE, while simultaneously generating “simulators” to predict national evaluation outcomes.

4. DSpace-CRIS as a Strategic Tool

The choice of DSpace-CRIS by leading Polish universities—both public institutions such as the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University, and private institutions such as SWPS University—was not accidental. Its adaptability and ease of integration with external systems enabled the implementation of the so-called “Polish layer” and the automation of reporting processes to the national CRIS system, POL-on, operated by the National Information Processing Institute (OPI PIB).

4.1. Technical Adaptation

To address the “Polish problem,” DSpace-CRIS implementations required:

- custom metadata schemas—adding fields for discipline codes and “evaluation participation” flags,
- an evaluation module—a dedicated component calculating “slots” in real time, enabling researchers to preview their “score” before the official ministerial procedure,
- integration with the POL-on system—synchronizing data with the national integrated higher education and science information system to ensure data consistency.

4.2. Maintaining Data Sovereignty

By implementing a CRIS, universities shifted from being mere “data providers” for state administration to becoming “data owners.” Instead of responding to regulatory changes through manual spreadsheet editing, institutions maintain a master research record within DSpace-CRIS. When rules change, only the reporting logic requires modification, not the underlying research data.

5. Case Study: Navigating Rule Changes (2022–2024)

During the most recent evaluation cycle, the Ministry of Science modified the journal list and assigned point values multiple times, sometimes retroactively.

Findings:

- Institutions using DSpace-CRIS were able to recalculate predicted evaluation results within days rather than months.
- The system enabled “what-if” scenario modeling: what would happen if Publication A were submitted instead of Publication B for Professor X?
- Crucially, while the Ministry focused on point allocation, the CRIS continued to transmit the same data to Google Scholar and OpenAIRE, ensuring that

international research visibility was not sacrificed for the sake of local administrative requirements.

6. Discussion and Contribution to the CRIS Community

This experience offers several important insights for the international CRIS community:

- **Agility over rigidity** – A CRIS should be decoupled from any specific evaluation model in force at a given time. The data model should remain robust (CERIF-compliant), while the reporting layer must be flexible.
- **The CRIS as a buffer** – The CRIS protects researchers from the “bureaucratic noise” resulting from constantly changing national regulations by providing a stable interface for research output deposition.
- **A bridge to Open Science** – Despite the national emphasis on specific metrics, the use of DSpace-CRIS ensures that Polish research remains part of the global ecosystem through standardized OAI-PMH interfaces and persistent identifiers such as ORCID, DOI, and ROR.

7. Conclusion

The Polish experience demonstrates that a CRIS is most valuable when national rules are most unstable. DSpace-CRIS has proven to be an effective tool not only for “counting points,” but also for safeguarding the integrity of research information in an environment where definitions of “success” are constantly shifting. As other countries consider implementing metric-based evaluation systems, the Polish “DSpace-CRIS model” provides a blueprint for balancing domestic compliance with global academic aspirations.