

Reforming Research Evaluation in Emerging Systems: Designing a National Register of Scholarly Journals in Georgia

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Abstract. This paper examines international practices in the development of national registers of scholarly publication channels and assesses the feasibility of implementing such a system in Georgia. It demonstrates that major citation databases – Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar – provide incomplete coverage of research outputs from developing countries, particularly those addressing local or regional contexts. The study employs comparative policy analysis and descriptive bibliometric indicators to evaluate Georgia’s research system, drawing on publication data, funding statistics, and international benchmarking. Particular attention is given to Scandinavian models (Norway, Denmark, and Finland), where national publication registers are integrated into performance-based research funding systems. These models combine expert-based evaluation with bibliometric measures and moderate financial incentives. The paper discusses their institutional design, advantages, and potential risks, and assesses their applicability to the Georgian context. It argues that the establishment of a legally grounded and technologically integrated national journal register would enhance transparency in research evaluation, improve the quality of scholarly publishing, and strengthen the international integration of Georgian science. © 2026 *Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.*

Keywords: national journal register, bibliometrics, research evaluation, scholarly publishing, Georgia

Introduction

International citation databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar play a central role in shaping global research visibility and evaluation frameworks. However, their coverage remains uneven, systematically underrepresenting scholarly outputs from developing and non-Anglophone research systems, particularly those addressing local or regional contexts. Studies in information retrieval theory and citation analysis

demonstrate that indexation tends to prioritize a limited set of internationally recognized “core journals” (Aksnes & Sivertsen, 2019).

The principles articulated in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) emphasize that research should be evaluated on its intrinsic merit rather than on the prestige or impact factor of the journal in which it is published. Nevertheless, journal-level indicators – especially

impact factors – continue to shape institutional evaluation systems and funding models worldwide.

A substantial number of peer-reviewed journals remain locally oriented and consequently underrepresented in international citation databases. Conference proceedings and scholarly monographs are likewise insufficiently reflected in major indexing systems (Aksnes & Sivertsen, 2019). As a result, national research systems face structural asymmetries in global knowledge visibility.

To address these challenges, several countries have established national registers of scholarly publication channels – often referred to as “white lists”. These registers include verified and authoritative peer-reviewed journals and academic publishers across disciplines. Their purpose is to ensure comprehensive representation of national scholarly output, improve quality standards, and provide a more balanced framework for research evaluation and funding allocation.

National journal registers are currently implemented in countries such as Norway, Denmark, Finland, Poland, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Australia, Italy, Spain, Russia, and China. In several Scandinavian countries, national registers are integrated into performance-based research funding systems (PRFS), serving as instruments for institutional evaluation and resource allocation.

This paper analyzes the structure and functioning of national journal registers, with particular emphasis on the Scandinavian model. It evaluates the potential applicability of such a system within the Georgian research landscape and outlines the institutional, legal, and technological prerequisites for its implementation.

Types of national journal registers. National journal registers may be classified into three principal types: disciplinary lists, composite lists, and unified national systems.

Disciplinary national lists focus on specific academic fields, most frequently within the social sciences and humanities. These lists typically include peer-reviewed journals that are not covered

by major international citation databases but are considered significant within national research communities. Such systems are common in Eastern European countries and in China, where national priorities and language-specific scholarship require structured recognition mechanisms.

Composite national lists complement international citation databases such as Web of Science and Scopus by incorporating additional peer-reviewed journals deemed authoritative at the national level. These systems represent a compromise between global integration and support for domestic scholarly publishing. They are particularly prevalent in countries where publication in high-impact international journals remains comparatively limited.

Unified national systems provide comprehensive coverage of all publication channels – journals, book series, conference proceedings, and academic publishers – through a structured ranking framework that combines quantitative and qualitative (expert-based) evaluation. This model is characteristic of the Scandinavian countries and is closely integrated with research evaluation and funding mechanisms. Unlike composite systems, unified registers function independently from international citation databases, although they may use them as reference tools.

Among these models, the Scandinavian approach is widely regarded as the most systematic and institutionally embedded, particularly due to its integration into performance-based research funding systems (PRFS).

Development and functioning of national journal registers. Over the past two decades, several European countries have established performance-based research funding systems (PRFS), whereby a defined share of annual governmental core funding allocated to universities is distributed based on bibliometric indicators and research performance outcomes (Hicks, 2012; Jonkers & Zacharewicz, 2016; Sivertsen, 2017; Zacharewicz et al., 2018; Turgel & Chernova, 2025).

Poland introduced its PRFS in 1991 and began publishing national journal rankings in 1999 (Kulczycki & Rozkosz, 2017). In 2005, Norway implemented a PRFS model based on fixed institutional funding, in which scientific publications across all disciplines are evaluated according to publication type and expert-based rankings of journals, series, and publishers, as reflected in a comprehensive and authoritative list of publication channels (Schneider, 2009; Sivertsen, 2010, 2018b). Denmark (2009) and Finland (2012-2015) subsequently adopted modified versions of the Norwegian model. All three countries employ multi-level classification systems for publication channels.

At the basic level, peer-reviewed publication channels are included, while higher levels (Levels 2 and 3) are assigned to leading and top-tier outlets based on quality, reputation, and academic prestige. Some systems also include a Level 0 category for non-qualified or rejected channels. The classification of publication channels is conducted through expert evaluation. The number of disciplinary panels and experts involved in the Scandinavian systems is presented in Table 1 (Pölönen et al., 2020).

Norway. In 2005, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research introduced the Norwegian Publication Indicator (NPI), widely known internationally as the “Norwegian Model” (Sivertsen, 2010, 2016b, 2018). Its development comprised three main components:

The establishment of a standardized national bibliographic database covering all scientific disciplines and publication types;

The classification of publications according to type and publication channel, with corresponding point allocation;

The distribution of a small proportion (approximately 2%) of annual institutional research funding based on accumulated publication points (Sivertsen, 2010, 2016b, 2018).

The bibliographic database serves as the foundation for the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, which includes

national lists of journals, series, and academic publishers. The register is administered by the National Board of Scholarly Publishing (NPU), which is responsible for approving inclusion and classification decisions. The primary objective is to identify reliable peer-reviewed publication channels and rank them according to quality, influence, and prestige.

The register consists of two main lists: one covering more than 35,000 journals and series, and another including over 3,000 academic publishers (Pölönen et al., 2020). Both lists are updated annually.

Publication channels are classified into two principal levels. Level 2 includes leading international journals and publishers that disseminate the most influential research. The share of publications in Level 2 outlets is capped at approximately 20% of total global output within each discipline. All remaining qualified channels are assigned to Level 1, provided they meet established criteria, including peer review and sufficient institutional diversity (i.e., a maximum of two-thirds of authors affiliated with a single institution).

A distinctive feature of the Norwegian model is the organization of expert evaluation. Norwegian universities have established 89 disciplinary panels comprising over 300 senior scholars. These panels annually review Level 2 lists and assess proposed changes. Researchers also actively contribute by submitting proposals via the NPI online platform, ensuring openness and transparency.

While international metrics such as impact factors from Web of Science and Scopus may inform evaluation, they are not decisive. The primary objective of expert panels is to ensure balanced representation of high-quality publication channels across disciplines (Sivertsen, 2010).

Final decisions on Level 2 classifications are made by the National Board of Scholarly Publishing, typically entering into force two years after nomination. Publication points are assigned according to publication type and level. For example,

Level 2 monographs receive the highest score (8 points), while journal papers are assigned 1 point (Level 1) or 3 points (Level 2) (Ahlgren et al., 2012; Sivertsen, 2016).

Importantly, points are attributed to institutions rather than individual authors. In cases of multiple affiliations, points are distributed proportionally among contributing institutions.

Although only a small proportion (approximately 2%) of total funding is allocated through this mechanism, the Norwegian model has been shown to enhance research productivity, improve publication quality, and foster a culture of performance recognition without generating excessive publication pressure.

Denmark. In Denmark, the national register of journals and book publishers (List of Series and Book Publishers) forms the basis of the Bibliometric Research Indicator (BFI), which is used to allocate a share of research funding among universities (Deutz et al., 2021; Mouritzen & Opstrup, 2019; Söderlind et al., 2019).

Following a policy decision in 2008, all universities and individual researchers were required to register their scientific publications. Since 2010, funding allocation has been partially based on bibliometric indicators.

The classification of journals and publishers is carried out by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science based on recommendations from 67 expert panels established by Danish universities. These panels review and update the lists once or twice per year. All researchers in Denmark may submit proposals for changes (Söderlind et al., 2019).

The journal list includes more than 20,000 titles, while the publisher list comprises over 1,000 organizations (Deutz et al., 2021; Pölönen et al., 2020). Both are publicly accessible. Journals are classified into three levels:

- Level 1: Normal;
- Level 2: Leading;
- Level 3: Top.

Level 3 was introduced in 2018 and is applied selectively across disciplines. Journals that do not meet Level 1 criteria are excluded.

Publication points are assigned according to publication type and journal level, with fractional allocation among co-authors. Articles receive 1, 3, or 5 points depending on the level, while monographs published in higher-level outlets may receive up to 8 points (Deutz et al., 2021).

Initially, the bibliometric indicator accounted for approximately 10% of the funding allocation formula; this has since increased to 25%. The financial value of a single publication point has also risen significantly, increasing from approximately €200 in 2010 to around €2,000 within a few years (Mouritzen & Opstrup, 2019).

As the importance of bibliometric indicators has grown, so too has the incentive to publish in indexed journals, with institutions increasingly allocating resources to support publication in approved outlets (Deutz et al., 2021).

Finland. In 2010, Finland introduced the Publication Forum (JUFO) to support systematic evaluation of research quality. The system, based on the Norwegian model, covers journals, series, conference proceedings, and academic publishers (Mathies et al., 2020; Pölönen et al., 2021). Since 2015, JUFO classifications have been incorporated into the funding model of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The share of funding allocated based on JUFO indicators increased from 13% to approximately 14% for the period 2021-2024. Funding calculations are based on performance over the preceding three years.

Publication channels are classified into four levels:

- Level 0: non-qualified or marginal channels;
- Level 1: basic peer-reviewed channels;
- Level 2: leading international outlets;
- Level 3: top-tier publication channels.

Level 1 requires adherence to formal academic standards, including peer review and editorial inde-

pendence. Channels failing to meet these criteria are assigned to Level 0.

Levels 2 and 3 include high-impact international journals and publishers. Level 3 channels meet all Level 2 criteria and demonstrate particularly strong citation impact.

The system is coordinated by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, which oversees 23 expert panels comprising approximately 250 members appointed for four-year terms. Panel members are nominated by universities, research institutes, and academic organizations (Mathies et al., 2020; Pölönen et al., 2021).

Evaluation and classification processes are conducted annually via an online platform. Publication points are assigned based on type and level:

Level 1 article: 1 point;

Level 2 article: 3 points;

Level 3 article: 4 points;

Level 2 monograph: 12 points;

Level 3 monograph: 16 points (Pölönen & Auranen, 2022).

Open-access databases used in these systems allow for analysis of the share of national journals. As of March 2023, national journals accounted for less than 2% of the Norwegian register and approximately 2.5% of the Finnish system. Only 10 Norwegian journals were classified as leading, while in Finland, 50 national journals were included at Level 2 and only 2 at Level 3 (Tretyakova, 2023).

Comparative assessment of Scandinavian systems. The Norwegian, Danish, and Finnish models share structural similarities but differ in funding weight, classification depth, and implementation mechanisms. Several comparative observations may be highlighted:

Moderate financial incentives. In Norway, only about 2% of institutional funding is redistributed through publication indicators, whereas these share are significantly higher in Denmark and Finland. The Norwegian approach is widely regarded as more balanced, minimizing publication-driven distortions.

Expert-centered governance. All three systems rely heavily on disciplinary expert panels rather than purely automated bibliometric thresholds. International citation metrics may inform decisions but do not determine them.

Limited national journal representation. Despite their national orientation, domestic journals constitute a relatively small proportion of total registered publication channels – typically below 3% of the overall journal count. This reflects the globalized nature of academic publishing.

Transparency and annual monitoring. Registers are publicly accessible and subject to continuous review. Researchers may submit proposals for inclusion or reclassification of journals, ensuring procedural openness.

Overall, the Scandinavian model represents a hybrid evaluation framework combining bibliometric measurement with structured peer-based judgment. Its gradual implementation and cautious financial weighting appear to reduce unintended negative consequences.

Preconditions for establishing a national register in Georgia. The potential establishment of a national journal register in Georgia must be evaluated in light of existing structural challenges:

The absence of a unified national bibliographic database;

Fragmented publication records across universities and research institutes;

Limited international visibility of domestic journals;

Insufficient statistical infrastructure for evidence-based science policy;

Relatively low public expenditure on research and development.

Despite these constraints, foundational elements for reform are present. The development of standardized bibliographic databases within Georgian scientific information institutions, ongoing monitoring of national journals, and the translation of international editorial standards into Georgian provide an institutional starting point.

A phased implementation strategy may include:

Conceptual and legal framework development. Establishment of a national working group; analysis of comparative international models; definition of legal status and governance structure; development of transparent inclusion criteria.

Technical infrastructure development. Creation of a digital platform with standardized metadata architecture; API integration with universities; DOI integration; cybersecurity protocols.

Pilot registration and accreditation. Initial inclusion of 30-50 journals; establishment of disciplinary expert panels; introduction of a three-level classification system (Basic / National / International).

Full-scale implementation and international integration. Gradual policy integration into research evaluation mechanisms; annual monitoring; editorial training programs; interoperability with global indexing platforms.

Let us assess Georgia's readiness to complete these steps.

Georgia's scientific capacity can be assessed through a set of standard research system indicators, including R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP, number of researchers (FTE), publication output, patent activity, and international collaboration rates.

These parameters, obtained from various official sources, are summarized in Table 1 below.

Since 2000, the Institute Techinform at Georgian Technical University has been developing a national bibliographic database of Georgian scientific publications. This includes the Georgian Abstract Journal (GAJ) and the Georgian Humanitarian Abstract Journal, which together provide structured metadata on national scholarly output across disciplines.

To date, the passport data of 168 Georgian scientific periodicals registered at the ISSN National Center of Georgia have been studied. Information about the publication is taken from the official website of the journal, verified and confirmed by the publisher. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Classification of Scientific Fields (FOS) was used to determine the thematic affiliation of the scientific journal; the results of the research were published in the Georgian Scientific Periodicals Directory in 2020 and 2023 (Kopaleishvili et al., 2021, 2024).

As for Georgian scientific publications in the humanitarian field, in order to reflect them, Techinform published the first electronic issue of the Georgian Humanitarian Abstract Journal in 2021. The study of scientific periodical publications on this topic has not been completed, although their

Table 1. Data on the scientific potential of countries

Country	Domestic research expenditures, E million (2024)*	Domestic expenditure on research, % of GDP (2024)**	Innovation Index (2024)***	Patents (2024)***	Publications (2019)***	Researchers per 1 million (2023)****
Norway	3805.71	1.94	49.1 (21)	1397	11 803 (34)	7450.6
Denmark	3498.24	2.81	57.1 (10)	1281	13 979 (27)	8837.5
Finland	2498.70	2.99	59.4 (7)	1745	10 599 (38)	8314.9
Georgia	2.12 ¹	0.24	30.4 (57)	230	Annually approx. 1500-2000 (Scopus/WoS)	1768.2

*ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics

**UNESCO Institute for Statistics

***World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Global Innovation Index. – Geneva: WIPO

****UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe)

() – Ordinary place among 150 countries in the world

¹ The Georgian budget for 2026 will allocate 6700 thousand GEL for research, approx. 2.12 million EUR (exchange rate 3.15, 20.02.2026)

registration and description using the same standardized bibliographic data is envisaged.

When studying basic information about scientific journals, it turned out that the passport data of Georgian scientific periodicals are much more multi-component than the descriptions of journals included in the national registers of the countries under consideration.

Based on the Georgian Abstract Journal (2000-2025) and the Georgian Humanitarian Abstract Journal (2021-2025), a Georgian national database in Georgian-English was created at Techinform with standardized bibliographic data of scientific publications, which contains over 20 thousand documents. In order for this database to become complete and fully reflect the country's scientific publications, additional efforts are needed, which exceed the current status and financial capabilities of the Institute.

Research work at Techinform began in 2011 and continues to this day to improve the quality, transparency, and international integration of Georgian scientific publications. Within the framework of this work:

- The requirements of international standards for the content and format of scientific publications have been studied, and a number of international standards in the field of scientific and technical information and publishing activities have been translated into Georgian (2012-13);
- Bibliometric data of Georgian scientific periodicals are studied, and the monitoring results are published on a regular basis (Kopaleishvili et al., 2021, 2023);
- Recommendations have been developed for the editorial boards of Georgian scientific journals to bring scientific publications into line with international requirements (2014);
- Trainings are being conducted for editorial offices to assign a Digital Object Index (DOI) to Georgian

scientific publications, place them in international databases, and promote increased indexing of publications (2019-2025).

The available evidence indicates a clear institutional readiness to implement the project of creating a national registry of Georgian scientific publications.

Conclusions

National journal registers represent an effective instrument for structuring research evaluation systems, particularly in countries with limited representation in international citation databases. However, their integration into funding allocation mechanisms should remain proportionate to avoid excessive metric-driven behavior.

The Scandinavian model illustrates a balanced approach, combining expert-based assessment with bibliometric indicators and moderate financial incentives. Its gradual implementation and institutional embedding reduce the risk of unintended distortions.

For Georgia, the establishment of a national journal register is both feasible and strategically justified. Existing bibliographic infrastructure and institutional experience – particularly within Techinform – provide a foundation for implementation.

A phased adaptation of the Scandinavian model, tailored to national capacity constraints, would enhance transparency, improve publication quality, and strengthen the international integration of Georgian research.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that creating a national journal register offers Georgia a viable pathway toward a more transparent, balanced, and context-sensitive research evaluation system.

სამეცნიერო და საჯარო პოლიტიკა

კვლევების შეფასების რეფორმირება განვითარებად სისტემებში: საქართველოს სამეცნიერო ჟურნალების ეროვნული რეესტრის შექმნა

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის რამაზ ხუროძის მიერ)

სტატია განიხილავს სამეცნიერო პუბლიკაციების არხების ეროვნული რეესტრების ფორმირების საერთაშორისო პრაქტიკას და აფასებს მსგავსი სისტემის დანერგვის შესაძლებლობებს საქართველოში. ნაშრომში ნაჩვენებია, რომ საერთაშორისო ციტირების ძირითადი ბაზები – Web of Science, Scopus და Google Scholar – არასრულად ასახავს განვითარებადი ქვეყნების სამეცნიერო პროდუქტს, განსაკუთრებით იმ პუბლიკაციებს, რომლებიც ლოკალურ და რეგიონულ კონტექსტებს ეხება. კვლევა ეფუძნება პუბლიკაციების მონაცემებს, დაფინანსების სტატისტიკასა და საერთაშორისო შედარებით ანალიზს და იყენებს შედარებით პოლიტიკის ანალიზსა და აღწერით ბიბლიომეტრიულ ინდიკატორებს საქართველოს სამეცნიერო სისტემის შესაფასებლად. განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება ეთმობა სკანდინავიურ მოდელებს (ნორვეგია, დანია და ფინეთი), სადაც ეროვნული რეესტრები ინტეგრირებულია შედეგებზე დაფუძნებული დაფინანსების სისტემებში. აღნიშნული მოდელები აერთიანებს ექსპერტულ შეფასებას ბიბლიომეტრიულ ინდიკატორებსა და ზომიერ ფინანსურ სტიმულებთან. ნაშრომში განხილულია ამ სისტემების ინსტიტუციური მოწყობა, უპირატესობები და შესაძლო რისკები, ასევე შეფასებულია მათი გამოყენებადობა საქართველოს კონტექსტში. შეიძლება დავასკვნათ, რომ სამართლებრივად გამყარებული და ტექნოლოგიურად ინტეგრირებული ეროვნული რეესტრის შექმნა ხელს შეუწყობს კვლევების შეფასების გამჭვირვალობას, აკადემიური პუბლიკაციების ხარისხის გაუმჯობესებას და საქართველოს მეცნიერების საერთაშორისო ინტეგრაციის გაძლიერებას.

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