



# **Report on the evaluation of the Luxembourg Institute of Socio- Economic Research (LISER)**

**Commissioned by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
of Luxembourg**

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# 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR) in Luxembourg mandated Interface Policy studies Research Consulting, Switzerland to organise and lead an evaluation of the performance of the Centres de Recherche Publics (CRPs) in Luxembourg in the period from 2018 to 2021. In this report, the overall results of the evaluation of the CRP Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER) are summarised. The report is based on departmental peer reviews of LISER's departments, a bibliometric analysis, interviews with representatives of LISER's governance bodies and a benchmark analysis with an international research institution. In this chapter, we present the framework of the evaluation, including its overarching objective and methodological approach, and give a brief description of the institute.

## 1.1 Framework of evaluation

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg operates three non-university public research and technology institutions defined as Centres de Recherche Publics (CRPs): the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST), the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER).

The overarching tasks of the CRPs are defined in the law of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014 (CRP law).<sup>1</sup> As stipulated in the law, the CRPs' mission is to carry out targeted fundamental and applied research activities as a necessary support for research, development and innovation activities and to transfer knowledge and technology to the public and private sectors. The detailed activities of the CRPs are defined in four-year performance agreements between the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR) of Luxembourg and the individual CRPs.

### 1.1.1 Objective

The overarching objective of the evaluation is to assess the three CRPs and their research and transfer performance. This can be broken down into three sub-areas, namely input, output and outcome/impact:

- The *input* includes the preconditions for the research conducted, such as strategies, financial and human resources, infrastructure, organisation and external collaboration.
- The *output* includes the research performance, exemplified through research and innovation results and their dissemination.
- The *outcome/impact* refers to the medium- and long-term effects as well as the relevance of the output on areas such as science, society, economy and public administration/politics.

The three sub-areas of the evaluation are examined at the level of the departments of the three CRPs. Each department evaluation is summarised in a *department report*. Subsequently, an aggregation of the departmental evaluations is carried out, resulting in individual *institute reports*. Based on the department and institute reports, the entire sector of CRP research in Luxembourg is assessed in a *synthesis report*. Through the identification of CRPs' strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and

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<sup>1</sup> Loi du 3 décembre 2014 ayant pour objet l'organisation des centres de recherche publics: <https://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2014/12/03/n2/jo>, last accessed: 27.10.2022.

challenges, the aim is to contribute to improving the input of the CRPs in order to optimise their research and transfer performance.

### 1.1.2 Methodological approach

The evaluation is based on a combination of methodological approaches:

- *Departmental peer reviews*: For each department within the three CRPs, a peer review was conducted. The departmental peer reviews consisted of a self-assessment report written by the CRPs and the departments, and a hearing at the departments in August/September 2022. The hearings were organised and moderated by Interface and carried out by group of experts working in the departments' research fields. Each hearing comprised a presentation by the department, a group discussion of the self-assessment report and several individual and group interviews. These included interviews with representatives from the management teams and members of the research staff as well as clients. The experts involved in the peer reviews and the evaluation reports are listed in Appendix A 1.
- *Bibliometric analysis*: A bibliometric analysis was carried out in order to determine the positioning of the three CRPs in comparison to their international academic peer community. The analysis was carried out at the level of the 11 departments and was based on academic publications in 2018–2021 as well as on a collection of publications that served as benchmarks. The following main performance indicators used were:
  - Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI), indicating how the number of citations received by the institution's publications compares with the average number of citations received by all other similar publications in Scopus
  - Outputs in Top (10%) Citation Percentiles, indicating the extent to which an institution's publications are present in the top 10% most-cited percentiles (by SciVal's CiteScore).
  - Publications in Top (10%) Journal Percentiles, indicating the extent to which an institution's publications are published in journals present in the top 10% most-cited percentiles (by SciVal's CiteScore).
- *Governance interviews*: In order to gather information on the internal and external governance of the three CRPs, interviews were carried out with representatives from the CRPs' government commissioners, boards of directors and executive management. The interview partners are listed in Appendix A 2.
- *Benchmark analysis*: Finally, a benchmark analysis was carried out to assess selected aspects of the CRPs compared to international research and technology organisations. The benchmark analysis aimed to compare governance structures. Furthermore, information about the institute's strategy and performance was collected. Based on the results of the benchmark analysis, the evaluation team draws conclusions on the institute's governance. Where possible additional conclusions as regards strategic positioning and performance of the institute were drawn. The benchmark analysis was based on document analyses and interviews with representatives of the benchmark institute. The benchmark institute was selected based on a pragmatic approach: the evaluation team selected institutes of comparable size and similar thematic orientation. Moreover, a benchmark institute with whom the evaluation team had previous contacts and access was chosen. Nevertheless, the comparison focused on selected aspects, especially governance, and does not provide a detailed analysis of all core aspects of the institute. For LISER, the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences (FORS) was chosen as the benchmark institute.

### 1.1.3 Report structure

This institute report summarises the overall results of the evaluation of LISER. The report is divided into four parts. Chapter 2 presents a synthesis of the results at the departmental level. Chapter 3 presents the results as regards the external and internal governance at institute level. Chapter 4 describes the results of the benchmark analysis. Finally, the report concludes with the overall assessment and recommendations for the institute (see chapter 5).

## 1.2 Description of the institute

### I Vision and mission

LISER was established in 2014 through the reorganisation of the Centre d'Etudes de Populations, de Pauvreté et de Politiques Socio-Economiques (CEPS/INSTEAD). The vision of the institute is to be an internationally recognised socio-economic research institute focused on societal changes which, through multi- and interdisciplinary research, contributes in an active and incisive way to a sustainable and inclusive society at national and international level. In addition to the general mission defined in Article 4 of the CRP law, LISER has the specific mission to carry out fundamental and applied research activities in social sciences with the aim of expanding knowledge, providing insight into the actions of public authorities and socio-economic actors at the national and international levels in relation to the social and economic fabric and spatial development, and informing society (Art. 37, CRP law).

### I External governance structures

The government funding (block grant) and activities of LISER are defined in the four-year performance agreements between the MESR and LISER. The agreement also defines elements such as reporting and evaluation. The objectives of LISER are defined as performance indicators, e.g. for external funding, scientific publications, dissertations and completed doctoral supervisions at the University of Luxembourg. The size of the block grant depends on the overall government budget allocated to the funding of public research and the CRPs, the quality of the CRP's strategic plan, its expected social return and alignment with national priorities and the performance of the institute over the previous four-year period. In addition to the block grant, the performance agreement defines a financial institutional bonus linked to the institute's performance and success in the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. The bonus is intended to go directly to the departments and the research groups taking part in the research activities.

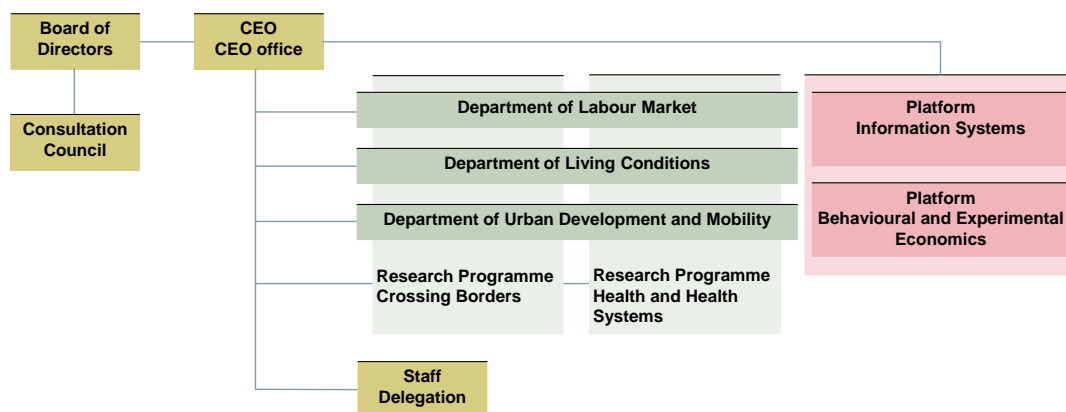
### I Internal governance structures

According to the CRP law, each CRP is to have the following bodies: a Board of Directors consisting of representatives from civil society and the research community who are nominated by the government commissioner of LISER for a (once renewable) mandate of five years, a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) appointed by a recruitment committee following a recruitment procedure, a Staff Delegation elected on a five-year basis by staff members, a Consultation Council consisting of representative staff members and elected on a five-year basis by staff members and the Staff Delegation. The CRP law further stipulates that the activities of the institutes are to be structured into departments representing related disciplines defined by the Board of Directors. The departments may be supplemented by technological platforms in order to pool the institute's resources. In addition, the CRPs may set up support services for research, development and innovation, as well as innovation, administrative and technical support services.

Since the 2019 evaluation, LISER has carried out a restructuring process, dismantling the departmental research groups and introducing a flat hierarchy. In addition, new heads of departments have been recruited. Today, the management of LISER is organised as an

Executive Committee, consisting of the CEO and the heads of the departments (the Department of Living Conditions (DoLC), the Department of Labour Market (DoLM) and the Urban Development and Mobility Department (UDM)). The institute also has two platforms (“Information Systems” and “Behavioural and Experimental Economics”) and it has developed two cross-departmental interdisciplinary research programmes (“Crossing Borders” and “Health and Health Systems”). The structure of LISER is presented in graphic D 1.1.

D 1.1: Structure of LISER



Source: LISER self-assessment report.

LISER staff are supported by a number of research management and support infrastructures at institute level, including Project & Planning, National Policy Coordination, International Development Coordination, People Management, Quality & Process Management (Accounting & Finance, External Institutional Communication and Marketing, Facility Management, Services Procurement Management) and Data Protection. Finally, the institute has established several collegial committees: the Project Portfolio Management Committee (responsible for selecting, parameterising and positioning research projects), the Research Support Projects Management Committee (responsible for selecting, prioritising and parameterising projects to improve support services) and the Research Ethics Committee (responsible for ethics reviews of project proposals and ongoing projects).

**I** Financial and human resources

LISER is funded by two sources: direct government funding through the MESR (block grant) and externally raised funding (international and national competitive grants and contract research). In the period between 2018 and 2021, LISER received a block grant of approximately 49.6 million euros. In the same period, LISER raised around 35 million euros in external funding. The block grant thus accounted for around 59 per cent of the institute's total funding in the evaluation period. In 2021, LISER employed a total of 187 staff members (full-time equivalent [FTE] 167.87), 65 per cent of whom had a permanent contract.



## 2. Input, output and outcome/impact at department level

In this chapter, we collate the results from the peer reviews of the three departments of LISER. The peer review results are supplemented with the results of the bibliometric analysis and the governance interviews and with information from the departmental self-assessment reports.

### 2.1 Input

#### 2.1.1 Strategy

In all three departmental peer reviews, the experts conclude that the departments of LISER have clear research strategies in terms of vision and mission. Furthermore, all three departments demonstrate a dual strategic focus on both fundamental research and applied research, thus adhering to the overarching mission of the CRPs in Luxembourg. The experts find that the departments' strategies provide a clear framework for their research activities while allowing flexibility to explore new avenues within core areas and respond to new societal needs. The experts further conclude that the departments' core research areas are of great importance for Luxembourg's society. In the peer reviews of the DoLM and the UDM, the experts recognise clear definitions of the departments' research priorities. In the case of the DoLC, the experts find it somewhat difficult to identify a clear strategic thematic positioning, as the department is conducting research in a large number of areas.

In all three peer reviews, the experts identify clear developments in the research areas and topics in the evaluation period. The developments in the DoLM and the UDM are perceived as strategic restructurings and realignments, in part as a response to the recommendations of the 2019 evaluation. The developments in the research areas of the DoLC are perceived as more dynamic and somewhat fragmented. The departments are advised to ensure a focus on their core research areas, as this could increase the visibility of the departments and their scientific and societal impact. The DoLC is additionally encouraged to define the scope of its research areas to prevent a fragmentation of its research agenda.

#### 2.1.2 Human and financial resources, infrastructure and equipment

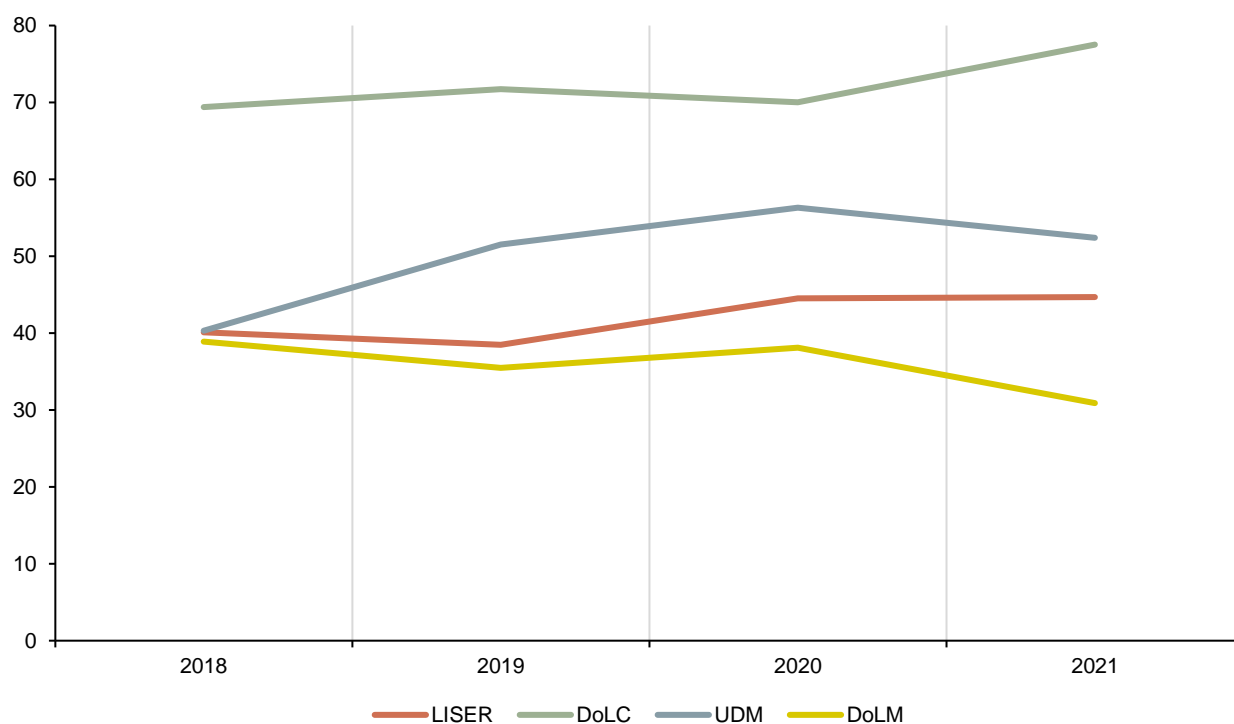
In terms of human resources, the experts note that the departments have experienced a large increase in personnel during the evaluation period, especially in staff on fixed-term contracts. This is mainly due to a large increase in the number of PhD students in all three departments, from a total of 19 PhD students in 2018 to 29 PhD students in 2021. In principle, the experts welcome the increase in fixed-term contracts, as it enhances the scientific orientation and flexibility of the departments. However, the increase in staff has put a strain on the departments' infrastructure, with limited office space becoming a growing concern for staff members. Furthermore, the experts see the national restrictions on the length of fixed-term contracts as potentially hindering the departments' ability to recruit and retain promising researchers. Considering the increasing numbers of staff on fixed-term contracts, all three departments are encouraged by the experts to improve their career development support, especially for PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.

The experts conclude that the departments of LISER have been successful in acquiring third-party funding during the evaluation period. The departments' self-assessment reports show that the largest increase in third-party funding was recorded by the UDM. The large increase is mainly due to additional funding from the Fonds National de la Recherche and from contract research commissioned by the public sector in Luxembourg. The DoLC has also increased its third-party funding over the same period, mainly through Horizon 2020 funding and contract research on behalf of the public sector in Luxembourg and abroad. In contrast to the DoLC and the UDM, the DoLM has seen a slight decrease in third-party funding between 2018 and 2021.

The experts assess the growth in funding through competitive grants and contract research at the DoLC and the UDM as impressive. The DoLC is encouraged to further improve its international funding, especially through prestigious competitive grants such as the European Research Council grants. At the UDM, the experts see the infrastructural and staffing constraints as risks and advise against further strong growth in departmental research activities and projects. With regard to the DoLM, the experts advise the department to increase its funding from renowned international sources.

Overall, LISER demonstrates a substantial increase in external funding in the evaluation period. As shown in graph D 2.1, third-party funding as a share of the institute's total expenditure increased from 40 per cent in 2018 to 45 per cent in 2021. The graph demonstrates that the share of third-party funding in the individual departments of LISER varies greatly, with the highest share in the DoLC and the lowest in the DoLM. The share of third-party funding as a proportion of total expenditure is an indicator of the departments' success in obtaining competitive grants and contract research. It should, however, be noted that the graph may show a somewhat skewed picture, as some projects generate third-party funding at departmental level, while expenditure occurs at platform level (e.g. surveys). Furthermore, the chart does not take into account that the departments contribute to research projects that have been obtained by another department.

D 2.1: Total third-party finances (% of total expenditure) of LISER\*



Source: Self-assessment reports of LISER and its departments. \*The third-party finances are disaggregated according to the supervisory management capacity (not the human resources contribution) of each department.

### 2.1.3 Organisation

The experts find that the departments of LISER have been successfully restructured following the institute's decision to transform into a project-oriented organisation. The heads of the departments, all appointed either shortly before or during the evaluation period, are seen as having played an instrumental role in the successful restructuring of the departments. In all three peer reviews, the experts conclude that the departmental organisational structures function well. According to the experts, the project-based organisation with a flat hierarchy has had a positive effect on the research activities of the departments as it facilitates cooperation between the researchers. In all three peer reviews, the experts conclude that the departments have positive working environments characterised by openness, exchange and highly motivated staff.

In the UDM and DoLM peer reviews, the experts note tensions between the objectives of fundamental and applied research. There are indications that some staff give higher priority to academic research and see contract research as an obstacle to research excellence. In the UDM, the experts attribute this to insufficiently defined strategic objectives as related to societal impact and they encourage the department to strengthen the status of contract research in the department. At the DoLM, the experts note that the distribution of tasks and performance expectations for individual staff members in relation to fundamental and applied research seem unclear. It is therefore recommended that the DoLM should develop a workload model that defines the distribution of tasks.

The experts in the peer reviews of the DoLC and the UDM note that the “Health and health systems” and “Crossing borders” transversal research programmes promote cross-departmental research. However, the integration of the programmes into the departments is seen as rather weak. Both departments are thus encouraged by the experts to assess the

development of the programmes and to consider possible measures to further strengthen their organisational anchoring in the departments.

#### **2.1.4 External research and industry collaboration and service provision**

The experts conclude that LISER's departments demonstrate a high level of cooperation with national authorities and public policy actors, with several long-standing relationships with ministries. These extensive collaborations are illustrated by the high proportion of funding through contract research in all three departments. The experts see these collaborations as an important prerequisite for the departments' societal impact in Luxembourg. Due to the lack of research institutions with similar expertise, the departments have a strong position in Luxembourg. While the collaborations are viewed as positive, the experts also identify potential risks. In all three peer reviews, the experts warn against taking on too many commissioned research projects, as this may increase the staff workload and negatively affect the quality of the research conducted.

In the peer reviews and governance interviews, the collaboration between the departments of LISER and the University of Luxembourg is positively evaluated. The joint and affiliated professorships, the doctoral supervision and doctoral programmes and several joint projects all contribute to strengthening the collaboration. The experts further note that all three departments collaborate with a number of international partners in the scientific community and the public sector. International cooperation is seen as beneficial to the visibility of LISER, enabling the institute to attract highly qualified researchers. All three departments are encouraged by the experts to further increase the international focus of their activities and their collaboration with international researchers in similar research areas, for example through visiting programmes.

## **2.2 Output**

### **2.2.1 Quality of output**

In all three peer reviews, the experts conclude that the departments of LISER demonstrate research output of very good quality, with publications in high-ranking international journals. In the UDM, in particular, the experts note an overall research output of impressive quality. In the DoLC, the experts particularly emphasise the high quality of the publications resulting from the "Health and Health Systems" transversal research programme and from collaborations with visiting researchers. In the DoLM, the experts highlight the number of publications in high-ranking journals as particularly positive. The experts in the peer reviews of the DoLC and the DoLM point out that the departments' ability to publish in high-ranking journals may be limited by their dual mission of fundamental and applied research.

The research topics represented in the departments' publications largely correspond with the research strategies of the departments. In the peer reviews of the DoLC and the DoLM, the experts note that some publications and research activities are not in line with the departments' core research areas. While this may open up new research areas, it may also lead to a fragmentation of research activities and a lack of alignment between the research profile of staff and core research areas. The experts thus encourage the departments to ensure that publications are consistent with the research strategy.

The experts conclude that LISER's departments demonstrate very good quality commissioned research; overall the departments' partners are highly satisfied. In the DoLM, the experts highlight the department's contribution to Eurofound, while in the UDM, the experts are particularly impressed by the department's involvement in the observatories. In the peer review of the DoLC, the experts note the high quality of the department's contribution to the Covid-19 taskforce. Some of the DoLC's partners offer

criticism of the quality and timeliness of the contract research. The experts attribute this to insufficient quality control in the planning and implementation of contract research and a possibly excessive staff member workload.

The bibliometric analysis supports the conclusions in the peer reviews. In terms of quality, the bibliometric analysis shows that LISER’s performance, overall, is good, and above the research field average during the evaluation period. All three departments produce publications with average or above average field-weighted citation impacts and focus on publications in high quality journals (see table D 2.2). The UDM demonstrates scientific output of especially high quality, with substantially higher levels than the DoLM and the DoLC across all quality performance indicators. As shown in the table, 53 per cent of UDM’s publications were published in the top 10 per cent of journals. The field-weighted citation impact shows that UDM publications received 62 per cent more citations than the average in their research field. In the DoLC, a decrease in the department’s share of top 10 per cent cited and top 10 per cent journal publications may indicate a publication strategy that emphasises quantity over quality. With regard to the DoLM, the analysis indicates a significant increase in the quality of the output towards the end of the evaluation period, with an increase in the number of annual publications in the top 1 per cent journals and in the field-weighted citation impact.

**D 2.2: Cross-departmental comparison of quality performance indicators, 2018–2021**

	<i>DoLC</i>	<i>DoLM</i>	<i>UDM</i>
Field-weighted citation impact*	1.05	1.02	1.62
Output in top (10%) citation percentiles	11.0%	7.5%	22.2%
Publications in top (10%) journal percentiles	33.0%	33.8%	52.8%

Source: Bibliometric analysis. \* Number of citations received by publications, divided by average within the same Scopus Subject field. Values >1 indicate above average field citations, values <1 indicate below average.

In the experts’ opinion, all three departments have the potential to further improve the quality of their research output. The strengthening of scientific research is viewed as beneficial for the international visibility of the departments and their ability to attract highly qualified researchers. The DoLC is advised to improve the quality control of its contract research and to adopt a more selective strategy for the acquisition and selection of projects.

**2.2.2 Quantity of output**

The experts conclude that all three departments show evidence of a very good quantity of research output. The departments produce a wide range of output, ranging from refereed journals and book chapters to reports and policy briefs. In all three peer reviews, the experts conclude that the quantity of scientific publications is impressive when compared to the resources of the departments and their parallel focus on contract research.

The departments’ self-assessment reports show that all three departments have increased their annual average number of peer-reviewed journal publications between 2018 and 2021, both in total and per full-time researcher. A comparison of the departments shows that the UDM demonstrates the highest quantity in absolute and relative terms, while the lowest is found in the DoLM (see table D 2.3).

**D 2.3: Cross-departmental comparison of quantity performance indicators, 2018–2021**

	<i>DoLC*</i>	<i>DoLM</i>	<i>UDM*</i>
Number of publications	106	62	180
Annual average number of peer-reviewed journal publications	17	16	45
Annual average number of refereed journal publications per FTE research personnel	1.09	0.74	1.32

Source: Bibliometric analysis, self-assessment reports of departments. \* Excluding contributions in transversal research programmes.

### 2.3 Outcome and impact

The experts conclude that LISER's departments demonstrate a clear scientific impact in their core research areas. According to the experts, the high quality of the departments' scientific output contributes to an increased international visibility and reputation in the international research communities, for the individual departments and for LISER as a whole. Aspects highlighted in the peer reviews include the fields of microsimulation models (DoLC) and cross-border issues (UDM). The experts encourage the departments to continue to invest in the quality of their research output in core research areas, as this can further enhance their scientific impact.

The experts further conclude that LISER's departments have a clear societal impact. The departments are valued and sought-after partners, especially for national ministries. Through their extensive contract research, the departments develop knowledge that contributes to policy decisions and developments. Examples highlighted in the peer reviews include the UDM's contribution to the observatories, the DoLC's contribution to the Covid-19 taskforce and the DoLM's contribution to the "Gender Game" project.

The national focus of the departments is seen as a key competitive advantage in terms of societal impact. The experts in the DoLC and UDM peer reviews note that the focus on the national context in Luxembourg may offer limited opportunities for generalisations relevant to a wider European audience, thus reducing the departments' international impact. According to the experts, increased international cooperation and a focus on methodological advances could increase the relevance of the research to a wider audience. In the peer reviews of the DoLM and the UDM, the experts see potential to further diversify their societal impact, especially through increased participatory research and outreach to the private sector, civil society and the public.

The societal impact of the CRPs is an important aspect in Luxembourg, as public research is essentially financed by the taxpayers. The experts of the peer reviews of the DoLM and the DoLC identify room for improvement as regards the visibility of the societal impact. In both departments, this is linked to a need for increased documentation and monitoring of the societal impact.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These recommendations are in line with the recommendations in the external evaluation of LISER's societal impact, see Stecher-Rasmussen, S.; Peeters, B. (2022): External evaluation of LISER's societal impact. Kessel, South Research.

## 3. External and internal governance at institute level

In this chapter, we present the findings regarding LISER's external and internal governance. The results are based on interviews with representatives of the Government Commissioner, the Board of Directors and the Executive Management of LISER and are supplemented with information from LISER's self-assessment report and the peer reviews of the three departments.

### 3.1 External governance

As mentioned in chapter 1.2, the CRP law stipulates the general mission, objectives and organisation of LISER. It further regulates the staff, intellectual property and relations with the government, including multi-annual planning, financing and cooperations.

#### 3.1.1 Performance agreement

The main instrument of external governance is the performance agreement between LISER and the MESR. Based on the CRP law, the MESR and LISER negotiate four-year performance agreements. At LISER, the Board of Directors has mandated the CEO to negotiate the performance agreement.

The agreement includes the following main elements:

- The performance indicators for LISER's activities
- The financing through the government-provided block grant
- The strategy of LISER

The performance agreement is considered a suitable governance instrument by all partners involved. For the MESR, the agreement enables the Ministry to specify its expectations as regards the performance of LISER. Furthermore, it serves as a basis for accountability to the population. For LISER, the agreement defines a clear framework for the institute's activities, sets concrete goals and ensures financial predictability. Further, it is viewed as an essential structural element for the discussions and decisions of the Board of Directors and in the Executive Management of LISER. At the same time, the agreement gives the institute sufficient freedom to define its focus on research areas and the way in which it plans to fulfil its mission. According to the partners involved, the negotiation of the agreement provides an opportunity to discuss the main pillars of the institute's activities and the performance indicators. The scope of the negotiations is limited by the agreements between the government of Luxembourg and the MESR and the resulting room for manoeuvre of the Ministry.

#### I Performance indicators

Until 2017, LISER's performance agreement only included indicators for academic output. As LISER has a dual mission that also entails applied research, the institute recommended the inclusion of societal impact indicators. As a result, the performance agreement for the period from 2018 to 2021 included performance indicators for scientific publications, PhD students/dissertations, third-party funding *and* societal impact.

Overall, the performance indicators in the agreement are seen as an effective means of defining the expected performance in terms of research, collaboration, funding and impact. The defined performance indicators, among others, serve as the basis for regular internal

dashboard reports from the Executive Management to the Board of Directors. The performance indicators are seen to have contributed to LISER moving towards a focus on academic research. However, quantifying the performance within a short timeframe is seen by the institute as a somewhat difficult exercise, especially as regards societal impact.

### I Budget

In the performance agreement for the period between 2018 and 2021, the total block grant was set at around 47 million euros. Due to a negotiated increase, the final block grant amounted to around 49 million euros. The block grant accounted for approximately 59 per cent of the institute's total funding in the evaluation period.

The Board of Directors and the Executive Management consider the budget available for the institute's activities to be adequate. Currently, salaries account for about 75 per cent of the institute's expenditure. As salaries are automatically indexed in Luxembourg, the current situation with significant inflation is considered worrying, as an even larger part of the budget will have to be used to finance salaries.

The financial institutional bonus linked to the institute's performance and success in the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation is seen by LISER as an instrument to promote research excellence and to support activities that enhance the international visibility of Luxembourg and its CRPs. At the time of implementation, the instrument was seen as very ambitious. Today, the instrument is seen as a positive stimulating incentive. However, this raises the question of why funding from other international prestigious sources is not rewarded with a bonus.

Although the block grant provides stability, there is some uncertainty regarding the future national policy on CRP funding. Luxembourg has experienced significant growth in the public research sector since the creation of the CRP law. However, there is uncertainty within LISER on the long-term strategy of the government and the possible consequences of reduced funding.

### I Strategy

As mentioned in chapter 1.2, the vision of LISER is to be an internationally recognised socio-economic research institute focused on societal changes, which through multi- and interdisciplinary research contributes in an active and incisive way to a sustainable and inclusive society at national and international level. While CEPS-INSTEAD, LISER's predecessor institute, focused on contract research on behalf of societal actors, LISER has been entrusted with a dual mission of fundamental and applied research.

According to the MESR, LISER has undergone a remarkable development in recent years and can now compete with other institutes in terms of research excellence. The increased focus on academic research has promoted the international reputation of LISER and made it possible to recruit and retain highly qualified researchers. At the same time, both the MESR and LISER see it as important to maintain a balance between academic research and applied research. It is pointed out that LISER's core research areas are highly important at a societal level and have become even more so during the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the continued importance of contract research.

#### 3.1.2 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors determines the general policy, strategic decisions and activities of LISER. The explicit strategic responsibility of the board is seen as a suitable instrument to guarantee the freedom and independence of the strategic orientation of the institute. The partners involved describe the collaboration between the Board of Directors and the



Executive Management as constructive, supportive and cooperative. There are regular formal meetings and informal exchanges on the strategic direction, strategy implementation and the performance of the institute.

The MESR appoints a Government Commissioner who attends the meetings of the Board of Directors of the CRP in an advisory capacity. According to the MESR, the main task of the Commissioner is to ensure that all the regulations in the CRP law and the performance agreement are fulfilled. To this end, the Commissioner has a veto right on the board. According to the interviewed partners, this right is very rarely used. According to the partners involved, the representation of the MESR in the Board of Directors functions very well. Due to the Commissioner's limited role as an observer and the fact that LISER does not negotiate the performance agreement directly with the Commissioner, neither the MESR nor LISER see any potential conflict of interest or priorities. Rather, the Commissioner's participation in the board meetings is seen as ensuring the flow of information between the Ministry and the institute, thereby reducing the risk of asymmetric information.

### 3.2 Internal governance

#### I Organisation

LISER's strategy stipulates that the institute is to create knowledge in a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary manner. According to representatives of LISER, this has led to a restructuring of the institute in recent years. Hierarchical structures have been dismantled and transversal research programmes have been developed to promote cross-departmental and cross-disciplinary research. Within LISER, the new organisation is defined as a matrix organisation that enables fluid and dynamic project-based collaboration.

Prior to implementation, the restructuring process was seen as very ambitious, and there was a certain degree of resistance among staff members. However, there is now agreement that the restructuring has been successful. The recruitment of the new heads of the departments is seen as a key factor in the successful process. The new organisational structure is seen as beneficial to the implementation of LISER's mission; it allows the institute a high degree of flexibility and the ability to respond to the needs of Luxembourg's society, and also promotes cooperation within and between the institute's departments, thus strengthening interdisciplinarity. It is, however, pointed out that the institute is still in transition and the restructure is not yet complete. Although the new organisational structure is seen as beneficial, both the MESR and LISER see a risk that the structure could be seen as too complex by external partners. It is emphasised that the structure must remain comprehensible, both internally and externally.

Decision-making at institute level is mainly entrusted to the Executive Committee consisting of the CEO and the heads of the three departments. The collaboration between the CEO and the heads of the departments is viewed as positive and supportive. LISER assesses its internal governance structures positively, highlighting the shared commitment of the Executive Committee to the institute's vision. Nonetheless, the institute identifies a need to further expand the decision-making opportunities of middle management.

#### I Support structures

The peer reviews have identified issues regarding the research support structures at institute level. The processes, especially with regards to project management support, are perceived by departmental staff as slow and bureaucratic and as a hindrance to research activities. Another issue identified during the peer reviews relates to career development support, with the support for early career researchers perceived as insufficient. At the institute level, it is emphasised that LISER has implemented different measures to improve

the support structures. Among other things, a training programme for staff has been developed and established in the collective labour agreement. Given the large increase in staff on fixed-term contracts, the institute acknowledges that further measures are needed. The institute especially sees a need to increase the representation of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers on governing bodies such as the Staff Delegation. At ministry level, career development support is seen as important to be able to recruit and retain highly qualified researchers.

#### I Allocation of financial resources

According to the CRP law, the Board of Directors are responsible for adopting the budget of LISER. The Board of Directors determines the distribution of the block grant based on a proposal by the Executive Committee. Currently, the *block grant* is allocated to three different areas: research force (55%), research support and infrastructure (35%) and investments in strategy implementation (10%). Since 2019, and in line with the restructured organisation, LISER operates with budget structures that are sub-delegated to the respective department/programme/platform leaders. The major component of *project funds*, the personnel costs, is allocated according to the researchers' contribution to the project. The remaining project funds are integrated in the budget of the department of the Principal Investigator (PI) responsible for the project. The decision-making authority regarding the project budget lies with the PI. The performance-based allocation of the departments' *non-project-related communication budgets* is based on the aggregate size of project funds for which the individual departments are responsible.

Within LISER, there are ongoing discussions about the allocation procedure. One discussion concerns incentive-based funding. In the UDM peer review, the experts note a certain degree of dissatisfaction with the lack of financial incentivisation. The experts encourage the department to be proactive in advocating an alternative allocation model (or models) to the institute's management. A further increase in the performance-dependence of the allocation is currently under discussion by the Executive Committee of the institute. At institute level, an individual performance incentive for researchers is seen as a measure to promote excellence in research and fundraising. At the same time, such an incentive may lead to increased competition between researchers and may potentially have negative effects on collaboration.

## 4. Benchmark analysis

In this chapter, we present the results of the benchmark analysis. The analysis is based on document analyses and interviews with representatives of the benchmark institute, interviews with representatives of the Government Commissioner, the Board of Directors and the Executive Management of LISER as well as information from LISER's self-assessment report.

FORS was chosen as a benchmark institution for LISER. The selection of FORS was based on the comparable size and thematic orientation of the institute with LISER and previous contacts of the evaluation team with FORS. The benchmark analysis focused on the governance of the institutes. Furthermore, we took additional aspects regarding organisation and performance into account. Differences between the institute were elaborated on and discussed by the evaluation team. However, the pragmatic approach in comparing the institute does not allow for a detailed, in-depth analysis of the institutions. However, it draws attention to some important aspects that should be considered in the institute's development.

### 4.1 Comparison of strategy and areas of activity

#### I Development

FORS was founded in 2008, making it a relatively young organisation compared to LISER, which dates back to the founding of CEPS-INSTEAD in 1989. The origins of FORS are in the research programme “Demain la Suisse”, which was launched in the 1990s with the aim of revitalising social sciences in Switzerland. The programme gave rise to the idea of founding a centre of excellence that could bring together long-term social science projects in one institution. This would allow for the concentration and development of knowledge on the collection, archiving and dissemination of social science data as well as the provision of services to social scientists. The University of Lausanne was mandated to act as host institution for FORS. Broadly speaking, the founding of FORS and of LISER were thus based on similar objectives, namely, to strengthen the social sciences. The two institutions have, however, different legal statuses; while LISER is a public research institution anchored in the CRP law, FORS is an independent foundation.

#### I Strategic orientation

The mission of FORS is threefold: to implement large-scale national and international surveys, to offer data and research information services to researchers and academic institutions and to conduct methodological and thematic research (“science for science”). Thus, some differences in the strategic orientation of LISER and FORS can be identified. The mission of FORS focuses on research infrastructure and methodological research and exhibits a strong service orientation towards academia and researchers. The mission of LISER focuses on both fundamental and applied research in the context of societal development and challenges. Furthermore, LISER has a clear strategic orientation towards multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research, which is not the case with FORS.

#### I Research and service areas

The main research areas of FORS include methodological research, political participation and public opinion, values and attitudes, social change, life course and wellbeing. An overlap between the research areas of LISER and FORS is mainly found in the areas of life course, wellbeing and living conditions. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, research on the pandemic was added as an additional research focus by both

institutions. Furthermore, both institutions are active in international surveys and have worked on the national implementation of surveys such as the Survey on health, ageing and retirement and the European values study.

The service areas of FORS include data and consultancy services and tools for national and international data and information infrastructure. Here, a clear overlap is identified between FORS and the “Data Centre” platform of LISER, both of which can be defined as research infrastructures for the collection, distribution and archiving of social science data which also offer support for social science researchers.

#### I Target groups and partnerships

The main target group of FORS is researchers in empirical social research at national level. This is reflected in the fact that in 2021, around 90 per cent of the consultations by FORS collaborators were for customers (mainly scholars) in Switzerland. Cooperation with the public and private sector is not very pronounced at FORS and mainly takes place selectively in external assignments, e.g. studies on voting. As such, LISER has a much more broadly defined target audience, addressing both the national and international scientific community, public stakeholders and the general public.

Regarding partnerships, FORS places specific emphasis on cooperation with the University of Lausanne (e.g. through joint research programmes) and other Swiss universities, as well as with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. Other national and international partners include research centres, data and competence centres as well as various consortia and associations. In addition, FORS takes part in the development of an international information infrastructure. Similar to FORS, LISER focuses on cooperation with research institutions at the national level, such as the University of Luxembourg and the other CRPs. LISER also places great emphasis on international scientific cooperation and considers the international visibility of the institution to be important. Overall, LISER has a stronger international focus than FORS.

#### 4.2 Comparison of financial and human resources

At 11.8 million euros in 2021, the annual budget of FORS is about half that of LISER (24.6 million euros in 2021). Between 2008 and 2020, the main activities of FORS were funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). Since the beginning of 2021, the SNSF has entirely taken over the funding of FORS’ main activities. As such, both FORS and LISER are mainly financed through government funding (see table D 4.1). However, unlike FORS, competitive grants and contract research make up an important part of LISER’s funding.

FORS is also significantly smaller than LISER in terms of human resources (see table D 4.1). In 2021, FORS had 53 employees (FTE 44.3), while LISER had 187 employees (FTE 167.9). While the number of staff at FORS has remained relatively constant over the last four years, LISER has experienced a large increase in staff, especially staff on fixed-term contracts. Overall, the proportion of employees with permanent contracts is significantly higher at FORS than at LISER (91% to 65%).

**D 4.1: Financial and human resources (as at 2021)**

	<i>LISER</i>	<i>FORS</i>
Financial resources (euros)		
Government contribution	14,120,000 (57%)	8,287,812 <sup>1</sup> (70%)
Competitive grants	5,399,420 (22%)	1,439,599 (12%)
Contract research	4,784,170 (21%)	0
Other	319,740 <sup>2</sup> (0.01%)	2,066,160 <sup>3</sup> (18%)
<i>Total financial resources</i>	<i>24,623,330 (100%)</i>	<i>11,793,571 (100%)</i>
Human resources		
Staff (FTE)	187 (167.9)	53 (44.3)
Share of permanent contracts	65%	91%

Source: LISER self-assessment report; FORS 2021 annual report.

Detail: <sup>1</sup>SNF; Rent, Management fees, <sup>2</sup>Registration fees, Funding allocation; <sup>3</sup>Subsidy (in kind) University of Lausanne.

### 4.3 Comparison of governance

#### 4.3.1 External governance

The external governance of FORS and LISER has many similarities, although some aspects are different (see table D 4.2):

- *Government funder*: For FORS, the government funder is the SNSF (a foundation), whereas for LISER, it is the MESR (a ministry).
- *Performance agreement*: As with LISER, FORS is governed by four-year performance agreements with the government funder (in FORS' case, the SNSF). Both agreements specify the research activities and expected results that the institutions must fulfil with the funds provided. The agreement between LISER and the MESR includes quantitative performance indicators. In the case of FORS, the expected outputs and outcomes are formulated qualitatively, and no quantitative performance indicators are defined. Both FORS and LISER have the option to negotiate the details of the agreement with the government funder.
- *Representation of government funder in governing body*: Both the CRP law in Luxembourg and the statutes of FORS stipulate that the government funder can appoint an observer to attend meetings of the institutions' governing body. However, while the MESR is represented on the LISER Board of Directors, the SNSF does not to make use of the option to attend the meetings of the Foundation Board of FORS.
- *Reporting and evaluation*: FORS and LISER report annually to the government funder on their activities. In addition, both institutions are regularly assessed in external evaluations mandated by the government funder. While LISER is evaluated every four years by an external reviewer, the SNSF has appointed an international panel to evaluate FORS' applications for the upcoming funding period and to conduct on-site visits every two years.
- *External scientific board*: FORS has a scientific advisory board composed of external experts who advise on scientific matters related to the institution's activities and development. According to FORS, the external perspective of the board on strategy and activities is highly valuable. LISER has no external scientific advisory board.

**D 4.2: External governance: Overview of bodies and instruments**

	<i>LISER</i>	<i>FORS</i>
Government funder	Ministry of Higher Education and Research	Swiss National Science Foundation
Contract type	Four-year performance agreement	Four-year performance agreement
Performance indicators in contract	Yes	No
Reporting and evaluation	Annual report External evaluation every four year	Annual report External evaluation every two years
Representation of the government funder in governing body	Yes, defined in CRP law (advisory capacity)	Yes, defined in foundation charter (advisory capacity)
External scientific advisory board	No	Yes

Sources: LISER self-assessment report; FORS website and interviews with FORS representatives.

**4.3.2 Internal governance**

The governance structures of LISER are stipulated in the CRP law, while the structures of FORS are specified in its foundation charter. The internal governance of LISER and FORS share similar aspects (see table D 4.3); both institutions are governed by a strategic board and a management board. In addition, LISER has a consultation council, composed of representative staff, which advises on the institution's research, development and innovation policies. LISER also has several committees, such as a staff delegation and collegial forums, thus displaying a considerably more complex internal governance structure than FORS. Lastly, both institutions have developed a multiannual strategy defining their missions, objectives and activities.

**D 4.3: Internal governance: Overview of bodies and instruments**

	<i>LISER</i>	<i>FORS</i>
Strategic leadership	Board of Directors	Foundation Board
Executive leadership	Executive Management, Executive Committee	Director, Executive Board
Internal scientific advisory boards	Consultation Council	
Other committees	Staff delegation Project Portfolio Management Committee Research Support Projects Management Committee Data Protection Officer Research Ethics Committee	
Instruments	Multiannual strategy	Multiannual strategy

Source: LISER self-assessment report; FORS website.

**4.4 Comparison of output and impact****I Output**

The output of the two institutions differs somewhat in content. At FORS, the main form of output is datasets produced by or made available through FORS. In 2021, the FORS database had around 8,000 active users, around 2,400 datasets were downloaded from the database and around 1,700 datasets from FORS projects were distributed. Another

important form of output is publications. At LISER, the main form of output is scientific publications and commissioned reports.

A comparison of the two institutions’ peer reviewed articles in journals over the period from 2018 to 2021 shows a significant increase for both institutions, with a slightly higher average per full-time employee at FORS (see table D 4.4). The interviews indicate that both institutions strive for a "balancing act" between excellent research on the one hand and the provision of high-quality services to clients on the other. Nevertheless, both institutions have a high level of scientific publications, especially considering their service orientation.

D 4.4: Comparison of output

Output	LISER				FORS			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of peer reviewed journal articles	57	86	98	118	17	20	40	37
Number of peer-reviewed journal articles per FTE (all employees)	0.43	0.56	0.63	0.70	0.41	0.44	0.81	0.85

Source: LISER self-assessment report; FORS annual reports 2018–2021.

### I Impact

Both institutions create an impact through their research activities and services. The comparison makes it clear that both institutions benefit from unique selling points. As one of the few institutions in the field of social science research in Switzerland that is able to organise and manage large scale long-term projects, FORS has a clear collaborative advantage. The same is true for LISER, due to the combination of its research areas and its knowledge of national systems and structures. The comparison indicates that FORS’ impact lies primarily in its services to the research community, while LISER has a clear societal impact through its extensive contract research on behalf of the public sector.

### 4.5 Concluding remarks

The benchmark analysis has revealed similarities but also differences between FORS and LISER. In terms of *strategic orientation and activities*, the comparison shows that both institutions were founded with the overarching objective of strengthening the social sciences in their respective countries. Based on this objective, both institutions have clearly defined missions, target groups and research activities. While FORS mainly aims to provide service-oriented data, infrastructure and advisory services to the research community, LISER has a broader mission of achieving societal impact through fundamental and applied research.

Further differences are found in the *resources* of the two institutions, with FORS having substantially fewer financial and human resources than LISER. FORS has a substantially larger proportion of government funding than LISER, making FORS likely to be less dependent on third-party funding. The higher proportion of third-party funding could be seen as a strength of LISER, as it reduces its dependence on the government funder and promotes the institution's visibility and societal impact.

As regards *governance*, FORS and LISER have many similarities, both in terms of contractual regulations and in terms of governance bodies. The comparison indicates, however, that the government funder is more involved in LISER than in FORS. This is evident from the lack of quantitative performance indicators for FORS and the absence of

a government funder observer on the strategic board. The comparison shows that there are alternative solutions to the external governance of LISER, with less influence on the part of the government funder. However, LISER's status and its legally defined mission as a public research institution reinforce the need for close cooperation between the responsible ministry and the institution.

Finally, the different objectives and target groups of FORS and LISER lead to somewhat different forms of *output and impact*. While LISER demonstrates both scientific and societal impact at national and international levels, FORS has a somewhat narrower direct impact on the research community. Taking into account that LISER has a higher share of third-party funding than FORS, the similarly high scientific output of the institutions is evidence of LISER's strong research performance.



## 5. Overall assessment and recommendations

This chapter presents the overall assessment and the resulting recommendations for LISER. The results are presented in more detail in the previous chapters.

### 5.1 Overall assessment

#### I Input

LISER's departments have clear research strategies that demonstrate a strong commitment to the institute's mission of achieving scientific and societal impact in Luxembourg and abroad through excellent fundamental and applied research. LISER's various research areas are of great importance to Luxembourg society. The research strategies of the departments have evolved over the evaluation period, with restructurings and a renewed focus. Thus, LISER seems to have been largely able to comply with the 2019 evaluation's recommendation to focus on a more limited number of research subjects. However, there are still some tendencies towards a fragmentation of research topics. Due to this, LISER's departments are encouraged to ensure that they focus on their core research areas. Furthermore, there are indications that some staff members give higher priority to academic research than to contract research. Therefore, as in the 2019 evaluation, LISER is advised to take steps to ensure a balanced focus on fundamental and applied research.

LISER has experienced a large increase in staff during the evaluation period, particularly staff on fixed-term contracts. This has put a strain on the institute's infrastructure and has also created a need for better career development support for fixed-term employees. In terms of funding, LISER has been successful in securing third-party funding during the evaluation period, with a substantial increase in external funding. As such, the institute has responded to the 2019 evaluation recommendation to increase the volume of externally funded research. There are, however, substantial differences in the third-party funding shares of the departments and further potential is identified, for example, in prestigious competitive international grants.

LISER and its departments have been restructured during the evaluation period, following the institute's decision to transform into a project-oriented organisation with flat hierarchies. The new structure has had a positive effect on the research activities of the departments as it facilitates research flexibility and cooperation between researchers. Overall, LISER is characterised by a positive working environment with highly motivated staff. The restructuring process is still ongoing and LISER is encouraged to complete the process swiftly to support the consolidation and stability of the new organisation. There are indications that the new structure is seen as too complex by external partners and LISER is advised to ensure that the organisational structure remains comprehensible, both internally and externally.

LISER collaborates with a broad range of national and international partners. Collaboration with national authorities and public policy actors is particularly pronounced, with several long-standing relationships with national ministries. In addition, LISER has expanded its cooperation with the University of Luxembourg and other national and international research institutions during the evaluation period. Potential is visible in the international orientation of the departments' activities, as this could facilitate publications in highly ranked journals and further increase the institute's international visibility. This potential was also identified in the 2019 evaluation.

### I Output

Overall, LISER demonstrates research performance of very good quantity and quality in the evaluation period, both in fundamental and applied research. All three departments have increased the quantity of their annual publications during the assessment period. Furthermore, the departments have produced publications with average or above average citation impact, and a focus on high quality publications is visible. The institute thus seems to have responded to the 2019 evaluation's recommendation of focussing on a selected number of excellent, highly visible publications.

The extensive commissioned research and collaborations on behalf of several public policy actors, particularly in Luxembourg have resulted in large numbers of reports and policy briefs. As such, LISER has responded to the recommendation of the 2019 evaluation to commit to a balance between excellent scientific literature on the one hand and more popular formats on the other. There are indications, however, that the quality of some of the contract research is compromised by inadequate quality controls and a workload that is possibly excessive. Overall, LISER is encouraged to further improve the quality of its output, both in fundamental and applied research.

### I Outcome and impact

LISER's departments have a clear scientific and societal impact. The high quality of their scientific output promotes the international visibility and reputation of LISER. Through the extensive contract research commissioned by public stakeholders, LISER's departments develop knowledge that contributes to policy decisions and societal developments. The institute has adopted several measures in recent years to strengthen its focus on the societal impact of its research activities, for example establishing a societal impact taskforce, setting societal impact performance indicators in the performance agreement and commissioning an evaluation of its societal impact. There is potential for LISER to further strengthen and diversify the impact of its research activities. In addition, the evaluation has identified areas for improvement in terms of the visibility and the monitoring of the departments' societal impact. Therefore, the 2019 evaluation's recommendation to build a LISER-wide "culture of impact" remains relevant.

### I Governance

The governance structures of LISER function well. The external governance, mainly implemented through the performance agreement with the MESR and the appointed Board of Directors, is seen as appropriate by the partners involved. The performance agreement, including the defined strategy, financing plan and performance indicators, ensures a clear framework for activities and financial predictability, but also gives the institute sufficient freedom of research. The Board of Directors' strategic responsibility guarantees the independence of the strategic orientation of the institute. Furthermore, the MESR representative on the Board ensures the flow of information between the Ministry and the institute. In the 2019 evaluation, it was recommended that all CRPs should put in place advisory boards consisting of external international and national experts. As of 2022, LISER has not yet established such a board.

The internal governance of LISER also functions well. Since the restructuring of LISER and its departments, the complexity of the internal governance has been reduced and decision-making at the institute level is mainly entrusted to the Executive Committee, which consists of the CEO and the heads of the three departments. The 2019 evaluation recommended that LISER further improve the strategic allocation of institutional funding. There are ongoing discussions on the subject of the internal allocation of funds, including a potential increase in the performance-based allocation.

### I Benchmark

The benchmark analysis shows that although LISER and the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences (FORS) were both founded with the aim of strengthening the social sciences, there are substantial differences in the missions, target groups, outputs and areas of impact of the two institutions. The two institutions have similar governance structures, however, suggesting that their structure is suitable. There are, however, clear indications that the involvement of government funding is more pronounced in LISER than in FORS. Overall, the analysis shows that LISER has a more broadly defined mission than FORS, resulting in more diversified funding and a broader impact.

### 5.2 Recommendations for the institute

Based on the overall assessment and the observations stated in the previous chapters, Interface formulates the following recommendations for LISER:

#### I Recommendation 1: Ensure dual focus on fundamental and applied research

Based on the dual mission stipulated in the CRP law, LISER has substantially increased its focus on fundamental research in recent years. There are, however, indications that academic research activities are increasingly being given a higher priority than contract research. Interface therefore recommends that LISER ensure that the dual objectives of scientific and societal impact are given equal priority. Potential measures include:

- Inclusion of further performance indicators for societal impact in the performance agreement with the MESR
- Establishment of an external scientific advisory board at institute level with external experts active in fundamental and applied research in LISER's core research areas
- A recruitment policy that ensures a dual focus on skills and experience in fundamental and contract research
- Incentives at departmental and individual level for participation in fundamental and contract research
- Measures to promote high quality, impactful fundamental and contract research

#### I Recommendation 2: Improve career development support for fixed-term staff

LISER has experienced a large increase in the proportion of fixed-term staff. To ensure that the institute can continue to recruit and retain promising and excellent researchers, Interface recommends that LISER take steps to improve career development support for fixed-term staff, including PhD students. Potential measures include:

- Review of the institute-wide career development policy for fixed-term staff
- Improving support services enabling career progression (e.g. in collaboration with partners such as the University of Luxembourg).
- Representation of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers in governing bodies (e.g. in the Staff Delegation)

#### I Recommendation 3: Strengthen research support services

There are indications that the institute's research support services are perceived by staff as bureaucratic and time-consuming. Good and efficient research support services are a prerequisite for success in large-scale programme research and highly competitive funding schemes. Interface thus recommends that LISER strengthen research support services at institute level. Potential measures include:

- Staff survey to identify potential for optimisation in research support services
- Regular meetings between the Executive Management, departmental delegates and research support services

**I Recommendation 4: Adapt allocation of block grant within institute**

There are ongoing discussions within LISER on the allocation of funding, with indications that the current system lacks incentives and has a limited degree of freedom. Interface recommends that LISER adapt the allocation of funds within the institute. Potential measures include:

- Increased room for manoeuvre for departments as regards finances (e.g. increased departmental strategic investment budgets)
- Examination of alternative models of departmental and individual performance-based funding allocation

**I Recommendation 5: Examine medium-term measures to alleviate infrastructural constraints**

LISER is experiencing increased tensions in terms of office space. Interface recommends that the institute monitor the infrastructural constraints resulting from the large increase in staff and consider medium-term measures to alleviate the constraints. Potential measures include:

- Development of infrastructural plan with defined criteria for further growth
- Examination of possibilities for increased teleworking

**I Recommendation 6: Implement systematic societal impact monitoring**

LISER has taken a number of steps in recent years to document and enhance its societal impact. Interface recommends that LISER, in conjunction with its departments, systematise the monitoring of its societal impact and use the information to further enhance the standing and visibility of the impact. The selection and definition of institution-wide measures should be based on an analysis of the common understanding of societal impact on the one hand and the impact objectives on the other. Potential measures include:

- Analyses of the use of findings from LISER's applied research, including comprehensive analyses of media response
- In-depth analyses in conjunction with stakeholders of the societal impact of key projects (e.g. multi-year projects or projects with high impact potential)
- Dissemination and visibility activities as an integral part of contract research
- Presentation of good examples that demonstrate chains of impact

# Appendices

## A 1 Departmental peer reviews

### I Evaluation teams

<i>Department</i>	<i>Experts</i>
Department of Living Conditions (DoLC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prof. Dr. Massimo Bordignon, Professor of Public Economics, Catholic University of Milan, Italy</li> <li>– Prof. Dr. Emily Grundy, Professor of Population Science, University of Essex, United Kingdom</li> <li>– Prof. Dr. em. Wiemer Salverda, Professor emeritus of Labour Market and Inequality at the Amsterdam Centre for Inequality Studies and Director emeritus of the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands</li> </ul>
Department of Labour Market (DoLM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prof. Dr. Bernd Brandl, Professor in Management and Director of the Research of Management and Marketing Department, Durham University Business School, United Kingdom</li> <li>– Prof. Dr. Steffen Müller, Professor of Economics: Productivity and Innovations, Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg and Head of the Department of Structural Change and Productivity, Halle Institute for Economic Research, Germany</li> <li>– Prof. Dr. Rudolf Winter-Ebmer, Chair of the Department of Economics, Johannes Kepler University and President of the Austrian Economic Association, Austria</li> </ul>
Urban Development and Mobility Department (UDM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prof. Dr. Brett Christophers, Professor of Economic Geography, Department of Social and Economic Geography and Institute of Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University, Sweden</li> <li>– Prof. Dr. Desmond Dinan, Professor of Public Policy and Ad personam Jean Monnet Chair, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, United States of America</li> <li>– Dr. Roman Rudel, Institute director, Institute for Applied Sustainability to the Built Environment, University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland, Switzerland</li> </ul>

### I Departmental evaluation reports

- Rieder, Stefan; Thorshaug, Kristin (2023): Report on the evaluation of the Department of Living Conditions (DoLC) at the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), Interface Policy studies Research Consulting, Lucerne
- Haefeli, Ueli; Thorshaug, Kristin (2023): Report on the evaluation of the Department of Labour Market (DoLM) at the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), Interface Policy studies Research Consulting, Lucerne
- Haefeli, Ueli; Thorshaug, Kristin (2023): Report on the evaluation of the Department of Urban Development and Mobility (UDM) at the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), Interface Policy studies Research Consulting, Lucerne

## A 2 Governance interviews

<i>Level</i>	<i>Interview partners</i>
The MESR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Robert Kerger, Government Commissioner</li> <li>- Christiane Huberty, Government Commissioner</li> </ul>
Board of Directors, LISER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Véronique Hoffeld, Chairwoman</li> <li>- Jean-Marc Goy, Vice-Chairman</li> <li>- Valérie Ballouhey-Dauphin, Board Member</li> <li>- Claude Lüscher, Board Member</li> <li>- Jim Cledes, Board Member</li> </ul>
Executive Management, LISER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aline Muller, CEO</li> <li>- Karen Dewulf, Head of Quality Assurance &amp; Processes</li> <li>- Jennifer La Shiazza, Head of People Management</li> <li>- Frédéric Docquier, Research Programme Leader Crossing Borders</li> </ul>