

The background of the cover is a stylized, textured map of Central Europe, rendered in shades of brown, tan, and yellow. The map shows the outlines of countries and major geographical features. At the bottom of the cover, there is a close-up, high-resolution image of a blue surgical mask, showing its pleated filter and elastic ear loops.

POLITICAL SCIENCE IN **CENTRAL EUROPE** IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

edited by
Arkadiusz Żukowski
Maciej Hartliński
Miro Haček

Institute of Political Science
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

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How to manage political science in Central Europe in the time of pandemic?

It can be said that referring to the academic world in the current pandemic, it is of utmost importance to effectively continue teaching and doing research, as well as coordinating organizational activities. A totally new and urgent situation has induced numerous changes in the functioning of universities around the world and in all scientific disciplines (Marinoni, van't Land and Jensen 2020; Watchorn, Heckendorf and Smith 2020; UNESCO 2020; Witze 2020; Bergan et al. 2021; European Commission 2021; Maggetti, Meyer and Tresch 2021; Schleicher et al. 2021). The experiences of political science in Central Europe are particularly interesting to us.

This collective monograph is an attempt to present and analyse the situation in which researchers, students and universities found themselves at the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and later until October 2021. Our main goal is to present and assess the first signs of coping with the new situation, on-line learning and attempts to return to regular activity while adapting to new conditions.

The focus will be put on various aspects related to education, research and academic institutions. We wish to collect texts presenting the experience and conclusions based on conducting classes and research in this difficult period in particular countries of our region. That is why the aim is to prepare texts that are descriptive rather than analytical in their character. The collection of articles is intended to provide a better insight into the problems that political scientists in particular countries have had to face.

The preliminary version of the publication, addressing the diversity of ways of dealing with the above issues, was discussed during the Round Table on Political Science in Central Europe During the Pandemic, as a special panel of an international scientific conference: The 25th Annual Conference of Central European Political Science Association "Challenges to Democracy: Political Processes in Central and Eastern Europe" organized by the Central European

Political Science Association in cooperation with the Polish Political Science Association, the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Institute of Political Science, under the honorary patronage of the Marshal of Warmia and Mazury, financed by the Ministry of Education and Science (co-financed by the “Excellent Science” programme of the Minister of Education and Science). The session was held in Olsztyn on November 17–19, 20211.

Particular chapters were prepared according to a scheme which had been previously developed to aid the authors in the writing process and facilitate comparative analyses readers may perform. Nevertheless, the editors decided to grant the authors a certain amount of freedom so that it was possible to capture the specificity and individual perspective on the situation in a given country better. All of the selected countries are located in Central Europe: Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The structure and concept of individual chapters resulted from an attempt to illustrate the general situation of political science, as well as its specific functioning in the difficult pandemic period. To ensure better understanding of the situation, each text begins with an outline of the status of political science in a given country. Then comes the presentation of a subject-matter-related and chronological description of the situation and limitations imposed by governments and universities in conducting classes and research. The next element is a diagnosis of the shortcomings and advantages of the implemented solutions. Each study is completed with conclusions.

In a comparative perspective, it can be seen that individual countries and universities introduced similar solutions. However, a closer examination of the content of the chapters reveals disparities in the pace and scope of implementing formal regulations. Obviously, this was largely conditioned by decisions made by the governments of particular countries, yet notably, the autonomy of universities or even faculties is what determined the final application of possible solutions.

When presenting the content of the publication, it is worth remarking that the action was first taken by Slovenian universities, where the transition

¹ The congress, which took place in Olsztyn was attended by about 150 researchers from 21 countries. Foreign scholars came from, among others: Austria, Czechia, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine. Conference participants also included officials from the Central European Political Science Association. In addition to attending numerous presentations, congress participants also took part in 25 panels; two round-table discussions on the challenges for political science during the pandemic and on the future of political science.

to distance learning took place immediately. On the other hand, for example, in Poland, classes were initially suspended for two weeks, and only after that remote learning was implemented “step-by-step.”

Moreover, different solutions were employed in an attempt to return to in-person teaching in October 2021. In Poland, regular education was then started, and when a case of infection is detected, individual groups of students switch to distance learning. In Czechia, for instance, education in the hybrid system began immediately, which, in this case, means that classes are held at the university’s premises, but are simultaneously broadcast online, which results in approximately 30% of students participating in-person in such classes.

The internationalization of research and education was perhaps the greatest challenge with limited travel opportunities and closed campuses. It is visible in the drastic decrease in the number of foreign students and trainees. Opportunities for participating in student and research mobility programmes are now severely affected.

All political scientists employed at universities faced technical obstacles as well as subject-matter-related difficulties. It seems that the greatest challenge everywhere was to adapt the content and teaching methods to distance learning. From the lecturer’s point of view, the lack of interaction with students and many hours of talking in front of a monitor screen was particularly burdensome, which increased both mental and physical fatigue manifold.

The advantages of online education certainly include the emergence of new research areas, but also a completely new approach to classic studies on parties or elections, as they are now seen from the pandemic perspective. Forced computerization and informatization resulted in a significant increase in the skills and proficiency in using software dedicated to distance learning.

Managing research and education during a pandemic, as well as maintaining a balance between attempts to return to normal life and the health and safety of students and teachers, are extremely challenging tasks. It is not easy to identify which solutions are most effective. However, it can certainly be said that guidelines for the functioning of universities are created on three levels: national, university and faculty. The changing dynamics of the virus forces executives at various levels to take difficult and unpopular decisions.

The benefits and difficulties outlined above are thoroughly presented and analysed in each of the chapters. The editors believe that getting acquainted with them will allow readers to understand the specificity of solutions implemented in each country much better. Preliminary results and the ongoing pandemic en-

courage further, more in-depth comparative studies. They will certainly assume the form of subsequent research initiatives.

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Political science in Central Europe in the time of pandemic. The case of Austria

1. Introduction

In 2021, the Austrian Political Science Association (AuPSA) celebrated its combined 50th and 51st anniversaries. The event took place online due to the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions, which prohibited meetings in person. The celebration of the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the association, which was planned for 2020, was eventually postponed to 2021. It was hoped that the pandemic would have been overcome by then. Apparently, this turned out to be a mistake. The pandemic still dominates both the headlines and the political discourse. Moreover, it has serious effects pertaining to the current situation of the sciences, hence to political science as well. The effects concern both research and teaching, but also the administration and organization of political science institutions.

Against this backdrop, this short paper discusses (1) the development of the institutionalization of political science in Austria, and (2) the challenges the discipline has faced (up to the end of November 2021), 21 months of Covid politics and the measures to fight the pandemic which have been implemented by the Austrian government. The focus is on the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna because of the author's familiarity with this department. However, it can be assumed that other political science departments in Austria have been challenged by similar issues. The results of a virtual meeting of representatives of political science departments of Austrian universities, organized in fall 2020 on the occasion of the annual AuPSA meeting are also discussed.

2. Prehistory of political science in Austria

The Austrian Political Science Association (AuPSA) is relatively young (internationally), and the establishment of political science at Austrian universities was a rather recent event.

However, although the Austrian Political Science Association (which currently comprises about 500 members) was founded in 1970, the development of the discipline in Austria started much earlier. Tamara Ehs and Thomas König (2012) traced the deployment of political science and its precursors as an academic discipline to the early 20th century (cf. also Heinisch 2004). The authors referred to the implementation of political science as a part of legal studies as early as 1784. Ehs (2010) identified institutional predecessors of the establishment of political sciences in the democratic years of the First Republic. In 1919, sciences of the state were installed as a doctoral study program at the faculty of law (Ehs 2010: 228; König and Ehs 2012: 218). The latter “focused more on political and economic issues” and introduced students to the ideas of Austrian national economists, “Austria’s first social scientists in the modern sense”. The proponents of this school pursued a progressive agenda and called for the civic and political recognition of their work” (Senn and Eder 2018: 9). However, the dominance of the Christian Social Party in government since the 1920s led to a conservative backlash that also affected empirical social sciences (Ehs 2010a: 229-231). The concomitant anti-intellectual environment eventually forced scholars such as Friedrich August von Hayek, Hans Kelsen, Paul Lazarsfeld, Ludwig von Mises, Oscar Morgenstern, and Joseph Schumpeter (cf. Heinisch 2004: 72) to leave the country and seek asylum in the US and the UK. Under the rule of the Austrian fascist government 1933/1934-1938 and, subsequently, the Nazi regime from 1938-1945, further development of political science was impossible (Senn and Eder 2018: 8). Even after the end of the Nazi regime, “Austria did not seek to re-attract its former academic elite or to reinvigorate the establishment of a modern political science” (cf. Pelinka 2004). Moreover, unlike in Germany, the allied forces did not rely on the establishment of political science as a means for re-education purposes and strengthening democracy in Austria after 1945 (ibid.).

3. A short historical overview and current institution-based background of political science

It took about two decades until the institutionalization of the discipline in the Second Republic. The 1970s have generally been regarded as the decade in which political science was established at the university level in Austria, and it had become anchored outside of universities by the 1960s (cf. Fleck 2000; Sauer 2016; Sickinger 2004). The founding of the Institute for Advanced Studies in 1963 can be seen as a milestone in this regard. The institute provided a two-year postgraduate education in the subjects Economics, Political Science and Sociology, *inter alia*. The institute was founded due to the initiative of the above-mentioned social scientists, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Oskar Morgenstern, and was mainly financed by the US-based Ford Foundation (cf. Ehs 2010; cf. also Pelinka 2004). “Finally, those Austrian approaches to social and political science were further developed mainly in the USA in collaboration with numerous emigrants. From there, these approaches came back later in a modified form” (Ehs 2010: 236).

The founding of the Institute for Advanced Studies certainly had an effect on the university education system “from the outside”. It accelerated the process of institutionalizing political science as a distinct discipline in Austria (Sickinger 2004: 32-36). These developments were closely connected to Social Democratic politics. After the general elections of 1970, a Social Democratic minority government was established, which sought expertise for its planned reforms. New political science chairs and departments were founded at the universities of Vienna (1971)¹, Salzburg (1971/75) and Innsbruck (1975) with distinct study programs (cf. König 2010; Senn and Eder 2018: 10; Sickinger 2004: 47-54).

Anton Pelinka (2004; cf. also König 2011) highlighted that the delayed institutionalization of political science in Austria initially resulted in a predominant focus on Austrian politics. According to Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik et al. (2018; cf. also König 2015; Pelinka 2018), this has meanwhile significantly changed, and political science in Austria has become more visible in the transnational di-

¹ In 1971 the “Institute for the Theory of Politics” at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Vienna was renamed the “Ordinary Chair of Political Science” and, eventually in 1977, the “Institute of Political Science”. In 1974, a chair for political science was installed at the Faculty of Law (König end Ehs 2012: 222). The University of Vienna is still home to two political-science departments (Senn and Eder 2018: 10).

scipline as well. One of the main aims of the AuPSA and SSCI-listed quarterly, the *Austrian Journal of Political Science* is also to advance the internationalisation of Austrian political science (together with fostering political science research in Austria and advocating the interests of Austrian political scientists).

Currently, there are departments dedicated to political science at the universities of Graz, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Vienna and the Central European University Vienna (Department of Public Law and Political Science, University of Graz; Department of Political Science, University of Innsbruck; Department of Political Science, University of Salzburg; Department of Political Science, University of Vienna; Department of Government, University of Vienna²; Department of Political Science, Central European University Vienna). In addition, specialized political science sub-fields are taught at the University of Klagenfurt, Danube University Krems, Johannes Kepler University Linz, University of Economics Vienna, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna, Webster Vienna Private University and several universities of applied sciences.

4. Subject matter related and chronological description and limitations, imposed by governments and universities in conducting classes and research

The first two Covid-19 cases in Austria were confirmed at the end of February 2020 in Tyrol (The Guardian February 25, 2020). From early March 2020 onwards, the Tyrolean town of Ischgl, a famous ski resort, was identified

² The Department of Political Science and the Department of Governance at the University of Vienna belong both to the Faculty of Social Sciences and also share the same Directorate of Studies. Currently, research areas covered by the Department of Political Science are Contemporary Solidarity (CeSCoS), Critical State, Governance and Globalisation Studies, East European Studies, European Integration Research (EIF), Gender and Politics, Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion (INEX), International Politics, International Political Ecology, Latin America, Political Theory, Politics of Marine Biodiversity (MARIPOLDATA), and Visual Studies. The Department of Government has mainly focused on Election Studies (AUTNES), Contributions to the European Value Study, “Strong” vs. “Weak” Governments and the Challenge of Economic Reforms; Computational Social Sciences in the Digital and Social Transformation (Digitize!), and the Meanings of ‘Voting’ for Ordinary Citizens.

by authorities from Germany and north European countries as a Covid-19 hot-spot. The first cases appeared in February 2020. Local and regional authorities in Ischgl and Tyrol initially tried to downplay the issue, but, eventually, Ischgl was put in quarantine in mid-March (Karnitschnig 2020).

Because of the first wave of the pandemic, universities had to stop teaching in person by March 16. In addition, school classes were closed for three weeks. The public was asked to reduce social contact and keep distance. Restrictions concerning public gatherings and events were announced, and travel restrictions were imposed. Restaurants and bars were closed. From March 16 to April 20, it was forbidden to leave home except for approved reasons such as purchasing groceries or medication, assisting others, visiting a doctor, undertaking necessary professional activities, or outside recreational activities alone or with people living in the same household. Face-masks became obligatory in stores on April 6 and on public transport facilities on April 14 (news.ORF.at, April 10, 2020). The lockdown was eased on April 20, due to lower infection and mortality rates. However, in August, reported Covid-19 cases began to rise again alarmingly. Eventually, a second lockdown was imposed by the government. It began on November 17 and ended on December 6 (thelocal.at, November 14, 2020). A third lockdown began on December 25 and eventually lasted until February 7, 2021 because of the virus mutations of the UK and South African variants. On February 8, the lockdown was lifted, and all schools, shops and services, museums, etc., were reopened. However, strict protective measures were still required, such as mandatory FFP2 masks and certificates of negative Covid-19 tests, not older than 48 hours (thelocal.at, February 2, 2021). Some Austrian provinces, for example, Vienna, imposed even stricter regulations than required by the federal government during spring, summer and fall 2020.

Covid-19 vaccination in Austria started in late December 2020. A year later, the average vaccination rate reached 69.96% in Austria (varying from 75.33% in Burgenland to 65.72% in Upper Austria) (Wollny 2021). Regarding vaccination rates, Austria is a middle-ranking country compared to other European nations but is ahead of Central European countries. However, the confirmed Covid-19 cases increased due to the slow progress in the rise of immunisation rates during the summer and early autumn of 2021 and rather inconsistent pandemic management of the coalition government led by former federal chancellor Sebastian Kurz. Eventually, on November 15, 2021, a national lockdown for unvaccinated people went into effect (Schuetze 2021). On November 19, in the midst of the fourth Covid wave, the Austrian government announced a full

national lockdown for all citizens starting on November 22, lasting for 20 days³. A legal requirement for all citizens to get vaccinated was announced starting from February 1, 2022.

Austrian universities were strongly challenged by the lockdowns and related measures and conditions and also by the phases between the lockdowns. Shortly after the start of the 2021 summer term, in the first week of March, the universities were closed down, and in-person teaching was no longer possible from March 16 onwards⁴. Classes, as well as exams, were transformed into online versions and both university teachers and students had to learn new skills and adapt to the new teaching environment.

The following paragraphs mainly focus on the Department of Political Science of the University of Vienna. It can, nevertheless, be assumed that other political science departments in Austria have faced very similar challenges in terms of both research and teaching. The results of a virtual meeting of representatives of political science departments of Austrian universities, organized in fall 2020, after half a year of the pandemic, have suggested relevant issues to be considered.

5. Shortcomings and advantages of the implemented solutions

Lectures, seminars and other types of classes were mainly conducted remotely during the 2020 summer semester. The same applied to exams, including defences of MA theses and dissertations. Online tools such as Jitsi, Big Blue Button, Collaborate and Zoom, as well as the E-learning platform Moodle were used to teach classes and organise exams. Since not all university lecturers and professors were used to teach online and organise classes accordingly, an intense learning process started, which was excellently supported by the Vienna University Computer Center and the university's Center for Teaching and Learning. While the Vienna University Computer Center provided the relevant online conferencing and teaching tools, the Center for Teaching and Learning

³ On November 21, about 40,000 people protested in Vienna against the Covid-19 measures imposed by the government. It was the largest rally against the governmental measures to fight the pandemic in Austria to date. Protests also took place in other Austrian cities (cf. <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/europa/wien-corona-proteste-101.html>).

⁴ Exceptions were eventually only possible for technical and natural sciences study programs which need specialized laboratories for some of the classes.

swiftly offered training opportunities, such as webinars for university teachers, which proved extremely helpful and supportive for improving online didactics, solutions for remote-mediated learning and modes of interacting with students (e.g. <https://intra.univie.ac.at/en/info-teaching/>). During the first semester under pandemic conditions, some lecturers uploaded pre-recorded lectures, presentations and other teaching materials on Moodle in an asynchronous manner while others immediately started to teach online in real-time.

The following semesters (winter semester 2020/2021, summer semester 2021, and winter semester 2021/2022) were also mainly taught virtually, but in most cases synchronously. However, there were some phases between the lockdowns during which distance learning was not mandatory, but hybrid teaching (some of the students on-site and others online) or in-person teaching was possible. Some exams could also take place on-site, at least temporarily. The same applied to reading rooms at the Vienna University Library, computer rooms and so-called Student Spaces, which could be used during breaks between course units on site. Of course, such opportunities had to be in accordance with safety regulations such as mandatory masks in all public interior spaces of the university, COVID-19 hygiene rules and rules of conduct of the University of Vienna, seat number record to enable contact tracing, registering via QR code, and subsequently also vaccination, recovery or PCR test certifications. The 2.5G regulation – vaccinated⁵, recovered or PCR-tested – was enforced at the entrances of university buildings after fall 2021, and students had to present valid identification (cf. <https://studieren.univie.ac.at/en/studying-exams/studying-on-site/>);⁶. Hybrid and in-person teaching were restricted by constraints due to small lecture halls and seminar rooms. A website provided students with up-to-date information, tips and tricks as well as with the most important FAQs regarding studying on-site, in hybrid form and remotely. It was also clearly announced by the Political Science Directorate of Studies that students who could not participate on-site, should not experience any disadvantages (cf. <https://studieren.univie.ac.at/en/studying-exams/studying-remotely/>).

It must be underscored that the pandemic has been extremely challenging for the administrative staff as well, as regards both adapting to the new home office

⁵ As of November 2021, 84% of Austrian students have been vaccinated.

⁶ All employees of the University of Vienna also have had to bring proof of being PCR-tested, vaccinated or of having recovered from a Covid-19 infection at the workplace.

conditions, organizing online office hours for students, and providing support for research projects.

Moreover, the university did not have the necessary equipment to provide all administrative staff and lecturers with laptops, headsets and cameras required for working online. Thus, many employees had to use their private equipment or even buy some items in order to be able to do their job.

The pandemic also posed significant challenges to researchers, especially as regards research projects whose methodological design required fieldwork and empirical research methods such as conducting qualitative interviews and focus groups, to mention just one example. While problem-centred interviews and expert interviews can be conducted via Zoom, MS Teams, Skype and other online tools, the organization of focus groups is hardly possible online without significant loss of quality of the results due to the special dynamics of focus group discussions. Observations are nearly impossible online, except for specific types of observations. Hence, some researchers had to re-organize the methodological design of their projects and related research strategies. In some cases, this also affected the research output. Such modifications had to be re-negotiated with relevant national and European project funding institutions. In addition, contracts with researchers and collaborators were also affected by relevant changes, at least in some cases. Fortunately, most research funding institutions were open to some flexibility regarding these matters, including an extension of delivery dates.

Naturally, it was also suboptimal that participation in scientific conferences and workshops was severely limited, or even impossible for about 18 to 20 months, because of travel restrictions.

It should not be forgotten that many students also initially lacked relevant skills necessary for participating in online teaching settings and needed some time to become familiar with the new situation as well as acquire or improve their remote learning skills. Furthermore, many students also did not have the necessary equipment, and a significant number also did not have the financial means or support to buy such equipment. The same applies to the availability of a high-speed internet connection. The situation was certainly worse for students who began their studies under pandemic conditions. Those students did not have the chance to attend the university in person and experience the relevant atmosphere for about three semesters. They also did not come into face-to-face contact with their fellow students because they only met online. A significant number of students also suffered because of the psychological

effects of the pandemic situation. Psychological/psychotherapeutic counselling services for students have been available via telephone, e-mail and, by prior arrangement, also via video.

6. Conclusions

The majority of research activities and formats, such as conferences, workshops and meetings of researchers, as well as teaching activities such as lectures and seminars, could only take place online during the last 21 months. For some weeks between lockdowns, hybrid and even in-person teaching was possible but limited by infrastructural constraints such as the small size of lecture rooms and seminar rooms.

Though both university teachers and the majority of students swiftly and significantly improved their online skills, the issue of a lack of interaction between teachers and students, and also among students, persists. Many students do not yet use a camera or do not turn it on, which makes it very difficult to involve them in discussions, verify attendance or encourage reactions to the content provided. Overall, it is likely that the quality of academic teaching and learning has suffered, at least to some extent, due to the lack of face-to-face contact and the possibilities of direct interaction.

Additionally, many students are in difficult mental and material situations caused or worsened by the pandemic conditions. University teachers, as well as some students, had to reconcile family obligations and new challenges such as home-schooling with teaching and virtual studying.

The workload of university teachers and researchers, as well as administrative staff, increased significantly since lectures and seminars had to be re-organized to fit online requirements, time-consuming online consultations with students were required, and research projects had to be adapted to the new conditions.

However, the pandemic also triggered and enabled new research fields and related projects. The “Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP) - Panel survey on the corona crisis” (<https://viecer.univie.ac.at/coronapanel/>) can be seen as a successful example. This new research project by the University of Vienna examines how information, attitudes and behaviours are distributed across the Austrian population, and how these developed and changed during the pandemic. An interdisciplinary group of high profile researchers, including Bernhard Kittel (Department of Economic Sociology), Sylvia Kritzinger (Department

of Government), Hajo Boomgarden (Department of Communication) and Barbara Prainsack (Department of Political Science), lead an interdisciplinary team based at the University of Vienna. The group also collaborates with researchers from other institutions. The study comprises a panel survey with a sample of 1,500 respondents selected according to the sociodemographic structure of the Austrian population. These respondents are interviewed repeatedly, which enables the researcher to monitor trends and changes over time. Monthly surveys are conducted and the questionnaires include a set of core questions which are always asked, along with changing questions which go deeper into certain dimensions and are surveyed at larger intervals. Since October 2020, the survey has been financed by the Austrian Science Fund FWF.

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Political science in the Czech Republic in the time of pandemic

1. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to Czech Republic and primarily deals with two university political science centers, one in Prague and the other in Brno. This paper focuses on political science institutes and departments at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University (FSV UK) in Prague and at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University (FSS MU) in Brno.

There are several reasons for this case study selection. First, these are the two traditional (and currently also the largest) political science centers (meaning both in terms of the number of students and academic staff) in the Czech Republic. Second, these centers are the only ones in the Czech Republic enshrined in respective faculties of social sciences. Although there are other political science departments in the country, these are typically located in faculties of arts, meaning they are also usually more extensive in terms of discipline and subject matter (in the Czech Republic they include various disciplines such as history, philosophy, linguistics, etc.). We believe their broad teaching spectrum, including practical and theoretical fields, with more individually and mass-oriented fields could distort their institutional response addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, the focus on FSV UK and FSS MU is useful because both faculties and their respective universities represent a different type of functioning and management, which has influenced their (different) approach to the pandemic crisis.

In this article, we will first briefly explain the development and state of political science in the Czech Republic. Subsequently, we will show how the government and both universities, precisely their respective faculties reacted to the pandemic crisis. In the last part, we evaluate the positive and negative im-

pacts of the pandemic on the university environment with a focus on political science.

2. A short historical overview and current institution-based research background in political science

Political science is one of the youngest disciplines in the Czech Republic, as it began to take shape only after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. In interwar Czechoslovakia, political science as an independent and institutionalized scientific discipline did not exist. Political science was not taught at any university and no academic or scientific political science departments or institutes had been established.

The first attempt to establish political science as a discipline was made in 1945, when the University of Political and Social Sciences (VŠPS) was founded in Prague, with political science being among the subjects taught. However, it was not political science in today's sense. In addition, the VŠPS existed only for few years, being abolished in 1949, upon which the University of Political and Economic Sciences was established (VŠPHV), fully subordinated to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). During the communist regime, political science was, in fact, replaced by Marxism-Leninism or Scientific Communism.

Attempts to establish "Western" style political science took place in the short period of the Prague Spring in the late 1960s. In 1964–1970 the Czechoslovak Political Science Association (ČSPV)¹ operated within the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (ČSAV); in 1969–1970, the Department of Political Science existed at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University and in 1969–1970 the Institute of Political Science existed at ČSAV (Šanc 2009: 25–65).

Actual political science began to take shape in Czechoslovakia in 1990, when political science departments were established at the University of Economics in Prague (VŠE), Charles University (UK), Masaryk University (MU) and Palacký University (UP). The International Institute of Political Science was founded at MU. All of these political science institutions still exist today, and other political science departments at other Czech universities followed. At present, political science is taught at several Czech universities, with the largest political science

¹ The ČSPV formally existed later, in the years 1970–1989, but it was fully ideologized and it was therefore not a political science institution in the true sense of the word.

workplaces to be found at universities in Brno, Prague, Olomouc, Pilsen, and Hradec Králové. However, it is remarkable that a political science institute was not established at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (AV ČR), where it is still missing (unlike sociology, which is very strong here).

In 1990, ČSPV was transformed, turning into an independent association with nationwide operations. However, throughout its existence, the ČSPV has struggled with a low number of members (approximately 200–300), a lack of funds and general passivity (Holzer and Pšejka 2010: 112). Association activity was limited to only two activities: it organized regular congresses and published the Political Science Review, which, however, ceased to exist in 2021.

The *de facto* non-existence of political science in Czechoslovakia until 1990 negatively affected its development. Especially in the 1990s, the field faced personnel problems (there were simply no political scientists in the country and political science was taught by historians, philosophers and sociologists) and weak publishing activity, moreover, aimed at domestic audiences. Staff stabilization of the field began only after about 2000, when the first generation of political scientists with a real political science education began to establish itself. International publishing and cooperation did not develop significantly until the second decade of the 21st century. Only since then can Czech political science be considered a developed and internationally rooted scientific discipline, at least in the European context (see Boncourt, Engeli, Garzia eds., 2020).

3. Subject-matter-related and chronological description and limitations imposed by governments and universities in conducting classes and research

The first positive case of COVID-19 appeared in the Czech Republic on March 1, 2020. Until then, the media monitored the situation in China and northern Italy, but the government did not take any major measures. At the beginning of March, the government tightened travel conditions and introduced a two-week quarantine for returnees from abroad, especially from high-risk areas. On March 11, 2020, all schools, including universities, were closed, and the following day the government declared a state of emergency, which, among other things, restricted the movement of people. On March 14, 2020, most shops and all restaurants were closed, two days later, the state border was closed, and in the next three days, the obligation to wear masks in public was introduced.

However, it was almost impossible to get masks at that time, and the symbol of this initial period of the epidemic became civic self-help in the domestic sewing of masks and their distribution to old and sick people, medical staff, etc. (Císař, Kubát 2021: 104–105).

The Czech Republic was hit relatively mildly by the first wave of the epidemic, and hospitals were not initially flooded. Therefore, on April 14, 2020, the government presented a five-step plan for the gradual release of restrictions, and life in the country returned to somewhat normal, with a few exceptions. The second wave of the pandemic began in September 2020, and the Czech Republic became one of the most affected countries in the world during the autumn of the same year². The government again imposed restrictions, including the closure of all school levels (October 14, 2021). Further waves of the pandemic followed, with the last (fifth) wave starting in October 2021 and continuing.

As already mentioned, all schools, including universities, were closed for the first time on 11 March 2020. It happened immediately. The first unofficial reports of a possible closure appeared at FSV UK at around 11–12 AM, while the university was closed at 5 PM on the same day. FSV UK (as well as the entire university) was not ready for closure. The faculty did not know what to do during the first fortnight, and all teaching was simply interrupted. Only then did discussions begin about a possible transition to an online form of teaching.

A specific feature of the Charles University was the fact that its rector, professor Tomáš Zima (a medical doctor by training), downplayed the effects of the pandemic and gradually became one of the main COVID-19 rejectors³.

² <https://www.novinky.cz/koronavirus/clanek/cr-ma-opet-ma-nejvyssi-prirustky-nakazenych-na-pocet-obyvatel-z-okolnich-zemi-40335274>

³ In 2020, rector Tomáš Zima repeatedly downplayed the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic in the media, spreading disinformation, according to some experts. At the same time, Zima questioned and relativized the official death toll, criticized the intent of vaccinating young people by referring to their relatively small threat to the disease, and in turn relativized the value of most of the measures by pointing out their imperfections. The Scientific Council of the Faculty of Science, Charles University explicitly and officially distanced itself from his comments. In July 2021, he received the anti-award Stray Boulder (Bludný balvan) from the Czech Skeptics' Club Sisýfos. See <https://dvojka.rozhlas.cz/tomas-zima-kolem-koronaviru-panuje-hysterie-vic-lidi-zemre-na-obycejnou-chripku-8142100>; <https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-66866640-rektor-zima-dezinformuje-o-covidu-tvrdi-experti>; https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/vedecka-rada-nesouhlasí-s-rektorem-v-tom-jak-resit-pandemii-vyzvali-zimu-aby-se-zucastnil-odborne-di.A210113_183108_ln_domov_sed;

This meant that the UK sought to continue in-person teaching at all costs (but this was not made possible by the state authorities) and therefore did not prepare for online teaching. Another specific feature of Charles University is its great fragmentation, where its individual faculties are highly autonomous towards the university, and therefore they approached the situation differently. Even within some faculties, there is a relatively strong autonomy of departments and institutes. This applies especially to the FSV UK, where the way of resolving the situation was handled differently by its individual institutes⁴, with weak coordination of the faculty management, which followed the policy of the university, which underestimated the pandemic. However, during March and April 2020, the faculty gradually switched to complete online teaching, with the main technological tools being the MS Teams, Google Meet and Zoom platforms (this was not uniform and centralized; the university has purchased a batch of Zoom licenses, though not for all academics). Even then, however, the faculty did not proceed uniformly, and some courses did not take place or were replaced by various forms of student self-study (for example, reading). Some lectures were recorded and provided to students in the form of videos. The entire rest of the spring semester 2020, including the examination period, took place online⁵. In-person student examinations and consultations with teachers did not take place. Only state final examinations and defenses of bachelor and master degree theses took place in person. All meetings of the management of the faculty and other bodies, especially that of the Academic Senate, also took place online (during the duration of the state of emergency). Meetings of the faculties' Scientific Council were cancelled until May 2020, when the sessions were resumed in an in-person form.

The 2020/2021 academic year was already somewhat more organized and took place online from the beginning using different technological platforms as mentioned above. Some institutes have introduced the obligation to make all study materials available to students in electronic form. Once again, no in-person exams or student consultations with the faculty staff took place. Once again, only the state final exams and the defense of bachelor and master

ncho-testovani-64171622; <https://www.sisyfos.cz/clanek/1521-zlaty-bludny-kovidak-v-mi-moradne-covid-kategorii-druzstev-za-rok-2020-gardiste-a-kadeti>

⁴ The faculty consists of institutes that are the equivalent of departments.

⁵ There was no postponement of teaching to the summer holidays when the epidemic situation improved.

degree theses were conducted. Meetings of the management of the faculty, the Scientific Council and the Academic Senate were mostly online.

In-person teaching was not completely resumed until the beginning of the academic year 2021/2022 in October 2021, but with restrictions. Small seminars and lectures for up to about 30–40 students (each institute of the faculty set the limit differently) take place in-person or in a hybrid form. This means that some students attend the class in person and some students attend it online. All classes are therefore also broadcasted. Lectures with numbers of students over 30–40 take place online or are recorded and then provided to students in the form of video⁶.

The situation of MU and FSS MU differed significantly in several respects. The decision to close was made on March 10, 2020, and rector ordered leave for another 14 days. On the same day, the FSS MU management set uniform criteria – the non-replacement of lectures, the possibility to set alternative tasks instead of seminars, and the extension of all interim deadlines, which fell on the days of rector's leave, for the period after its end. Teachers were required to make all mandatory literature available for online courses within a week and academic staff were mandated to work from home (this also applied to administrative staff older than 60 and pregnant women). All of these measures were published within four hours of the publication of the report on the closure of the university. Over the next ten days, the deadlines for submitting the final qualifying theses were postponed to a maximum at the expense of teachers' comfort and an extraordinary autumn state deadline was declared.

As early as the second week, from March 16, 2020, online lectures and seminars began, from March 23, 2020, there was an obligation for teachers to offer either online lectures or pre-film or at least give presentations. At that time, MU, which, unlike the UK, is significantly more centralized, was already coordinating, or its faculties were acting in a more coordinated way⁷. The university decided to loosen the schedule for the semester, especially the exam period, which lasted through the holiday until the end of September. Because of this, the timetable for the entire next academic year, 2020/2021, has also been moved up. Until the

⁶ This status persists as of 5 November 2021, when this text was written.

⁷ It is a heritage with roots in the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century under the rectors Jiří Zlatuška and Petr Fiala.

end of June, it was also not possible to enforce study obligations (handing in seminar papers, attending seminars, etc.) from the university's decision.

FSS MU followed a uniform approach, with no room for individual rule-setting by departments. The faculty was the only one at the university not to use the MS Teams platform, but since they had taken up online teaching en masse about two weeks earlier than the rest of the university, the Zoom platform went its own way, with all teachers licensed. All faculty meetings, including the Scientific Council or the Academic Senate, also took place through Zoom. Using Zoom, all teaching, consulting, later exams, and state final exams were conducted. Until the spring of 2020, the communication was conducted exclusively online, until the autumn of 2020 it was carried out upon demand, while from January 2021 until the spring of 2021, communication was resumed exclusively online.

Teaching throughout the 2020/2021 academic year was conducted exclusively online, including consultations and exams. This time, teachers at FSS MU no longer had the opportunity to replace lectures and seminars with just reading or presentations, they were obliged to give lectures online, or to provide pre-recorded lectures. In general, students rated the FSS MU process on the organizational mastery of the transition to online teaching in all concerned semesters (spring 2020, autumn 2020 and spring 2021) as the best of all MU faculties. The aspiration in all semesters has been that the FSS MU, as a faculty where a large proportion of students study so-called 'associated studies' with a major and a minor, should be responsive and forward-looking to students. As early as January 2021, for example, students were notified that they would be able to complete the 2021 spring semester remotely, even in the event of unwinding, and could thus cancel their accommodation in Brno.

The 2021/2022 academic year started earlier than the pre-covid years (on 13 September 2021) to get as much learning as possible before any ban on in-person teaching. The MU further coordinates the procedure through the so-called university traffic light, which sets out hygiene measures. Faculties are free to regulate these measures, but their steps are coordinated. At FSS MU, from September 2021, all teaching is in person, with hybrid teaching only for subjects taught by foreign speakers. The size of the groups is limited to 200 people, allowing for all attendance⁸. Again, the reason for this decision was clarity and

⁸ This status persists as of 5 November 2021, when this text was written.

organizational manageability, so that students did not switch between online and in-person teaching.

The COVID-19 pandemic, unlike regular teaching, did not affect the personal development of political science in the country. This includes doctoral examinations and dissertation defenses and higher academic qualifications such as habilitation and professorship procedures. All of these processes and procedures continued, with little delay at most. This was made possible by the introduction of online/hybrid meetings of the relevant faculty and university commissions, councils and boards.

4. Shortcomings and advantages of the implemented solutions

For the most part, political science is not a practical field, so it dispenses with in-person teaching, with exceptions, and so the online form of teaching is relatively full. The problem was teaching quantitative methods with sophisticated software, etc., which was difficult to implement in the online space. However, in contrast to a significant proportion of higher education courses, online learning could be carried out relatively easily. Of course, we leave aside the social consequences of not being able to have physical contact, the fact that students starting their studies from September 2020 had no chance to physically meet for a year and lived in isolation.

The pandemic restrictions on political science research were even less problematic. Some libraries (e.g., the National Library of the Czech Republic or MU libraries) have made their collections available online, so research may not have been significantly restricted at the time of the movement bans, and on the contrary, from a certain point of view, it was also easier, as many sources that are normally only physically accessible and more difficult to find were accessible for electronic searches. The larger impact was to restrict movement to conference and congressional appearances. Although much of the planned events adapted over time and began to take place online, several scholars gradually understood how important the informal parts of these events were – coffee breaks, lunches, receptions, when stronger relationships are formed, new contacts are made, etc.

If we look at Czech political science production, in terms of quantity and quality, from initial observation (published journal volumes, books, articles sent to review procedures, submitted grant applications, etc.) it has not fallen behind the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, new research

opportunities have opened on the impact of the pandemic on politics and society⁹.

The main advantages of the online regime in Czech political science include the operational transition to online teaching and adherence to study plans, the possibility of holding international conferences regardless of travel restrictions and the introduction of an online/hybrid form of various management and academic meetings, even after the pandemic (saving time, money and the environment).

The possibility of online/hybrid meetings of doctoral examination commissions, commissions of habilitation and professorship procedures and scientific councils of faculties and universities have expanded the possibilities of internationalization of academic life. Thanks to online/hybrid meetings, the participation of foreign members of these commissions and councils has become much easier and, therefore, more widespread.

Disadvantages include the severing of personal contacts, not only between students and teachers but also between teachers, the significant disruption of international cooperation and academic contacts, where the ease of holding online meetings does not outweigh the difficulty of establishing new, more personal contacts in the future. The question is also what psychological effects on researchers are caused by their long-term isolation and absence from the workplace.

5. Conclusion

The form of political science teaching at the time of Covid measures was rather different at the two largest Czech political science centers. This is obviously a confirmation of the influence of the organizational mentality on the content of the organization's actions. A more coordinated and centralized university and faculty acted in a more coordinated and centralized way in response to the Covid crisis and vice versa. Separate research would need to be conducted to see if the time that political scientists in more centralized universities and faculties (e.g., FSS MU) did not have to devote to finding their

⁹ See e.g., main topic of the VIII. Congress of the Czech Political Science Association in September 2021: Policy changes (not only) in Central Europe in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic <https://www.cspv.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Program-Kongres-%C4%8CSPV-2.pdf>

own solutions and setting-up their teaching rules, etc. has positively shown up in the university's greater capacity for other tasks (research or popularization of political science, for instance).

Similarly, the impact of Covid on political research, both organizational and thematic, awaits evaluation with more time. In any case, the political science research in the Covid times has been less affected by the pandemic compared to the natural sciences or fields of humanities.

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Challenges and effects of the COVID-19 crisis on political science in Hungary

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 global pandemic, which started in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, and by the early months of 2020 had reached the entire world, including the European continent, had a direct and unprecedented effect not only on the health of many individuals but also created a turbulent mixture of crises in societies, the economy as well as several areas of politics. Research, including political science, has also not remained untouched.

It may be too soon to assess the impact of the COVID crisis on scientific research, including political science, as the crisis does not seem to be over in the days of writing. However, we believe that we can collect some preliminary findings on the Hungarian case. In order to do this, in the first section, we provide a summary of the status of Hungarian political science in the post-system-change pre-COVID period. In the second section, we concentrate on Hungarian political science in the COVID years. Based on the available data and our own experience, our conclusions will not cover only negative tendencies.

2. Hungarian political science in the post-socialist pre-COVID decades

Despite the fact that some roots of Hungarian political science research and education can be traced back to the 18th century and we can also find elements of political science subjects in the curriculum of 19th-century legal education (Boda and Szűcs 2015:166), we cannot speak of the birth of modern political science until the end of the 1980s in Hungary. During the period of communism, there was no political science in Hungary, only the teaching of 'scientific socialism' at universities, the main purpose of which was to acquaint future

intellectuals with the socialist ideology. Despite the ideological objectives of scientific socialism, it played an important role in preparing for the emergence of modern political science after the regime change. In the 1980s, when the control function of the socialist system began to ease, the educators and instructors of scientific socialism began to introduce the theories, views and methods of Western politics and social science to the classes. (Arató and Tóth 2010: 150). It should be noted that the *Hungarian Political Science Association*¹ (HPSA), which has developed into the most important professional organization in Hungarian political science since then, was established in 1982, during socialism, before the birth of the discipline in Hungary. The annual conferences of the HPSA are the most significant events in Hungarian political science².

In the more than three-decade history of modern political science, the following periods can be distinguished in Hungary³: 1. The birth of the discipline from the end of the 1980s until the first half of the 1990s; 2. The large scale expansion of political science from the second half of the 1990s until 2006; 3. The transformation of political science education due to the launch of the Bologna process from 2006 until 2010; 4. The fundamental transformation of the social science research and education, including political science in Hungary from 2010 onwards. (See Arató and Tóth 2010; Boda and Szűcs 2010, 2021).

The first political science department was established at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Faculty of Law in 1989 and the first political science minor program was launched in 1990 at the same institution. The first PhD program started in 1992 also at ELTE. The first scientific journal, the *Hungarian Political Science Review*⁴ (*Politikatudományi Szemle*), which is still the journal ranked the highest among the Hungarian periodicals, was also first published in 1992⁵. The first political science textbooks and introductory books (translation of Western classics) are also from this period. This was the first time that a fundamental

¹ See the website of Hungarian Political Science Association. <https://www.mptt.hu/>

² <https://www.mptt.hu/index.php/2012-11-07-14-35-20>

³ We build on the eras defined by Arató and Tóth 2010; Boda and Szűcs 2010, with the difference that we consider the introduction of the Bologna system to be a milestone in the modern history of political science.

⁴ <http://www.poltudszemle.hu/>

⁵ Political science articles also appear in other journals- published in Hungary: *European Mirror* (*Európai Tükör*) <https://folyoirat.ludovika.hu/index.php/eumirror>; *Foreign Policy Review* (*Külföldi Szemle*); *Region* (Régió) <https://regio.tk.hu/>, *Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics*.

yearbook series, the Political Yearbook of Hungary (*Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve*⁶), developed into a crucial reference for all Hungarian political scientists, was first published in 1988. At the time of the birth of the discipline, as it was not possible to obtain a degree in political science during socialism, the scholars and researchers that were hired for political science departments were sociologists, historians, economists and former scientific socialism instructors. (Arató and Tóth 2010: 150).

The large scale expansion of the discipline started in the second half of the 1990s when the major Hungarian universities (Eötvös Loránd University, Corvinus University, the University of Debrecen, the University of Miskolc, the University of Pécs and the University of Szeged) started to offer degree programmes in political science. Central European University (CEU) was established in 1991 and began to offer an MA in Political Science in 1993.

The quality assurance for political science programs was provided by the established Hungarian Accreditation Committee⁷ (*Magyar Akkreditációs Bizottság*). Five-year, full-degree programs were launched. The number of political science graduates increased every year in this period. The attractiveness of political science education was also facilitated by the fact that many state leaders had political science educational backgrounds (Boda and Szűcs 2015: 168). In this period, political science undoubtedly embarked on a path of professionalization. The proliferation of think-tanks (Századvég, Political Capital, Policy Solutions, Progresszív, Méltányosság, Republikon, Nézőpont etc.) and political advisory firms, as well as political analysts and commentators often appearing in media, were all signs of this. (Boda and Szűcs 2015: 169). But as Ágh rightly put it, there were also some side-effects of the rapid professionalization and the increased attraction of the discipline, namely, that political analyses were often not made on a scientific basis. (Ágh 2010). In line with the large scale extension and professionalization, the picture has also become more diverse in terms of research areas and topics. The range of topics characteristic of the beginning of Hungarian political science, political theory and philosophy, democratic transition, institutions, constitutional and parliamentary topics has expanded to a wide range of topics, such as party systems, political elites, electoral systems,

⁶ The series remained an important reference until 2010, after which it ceased to exist.

⁷ <https://www.mab.hu/>

voting behaviour and campaigning, political communication as well international relations (IR) and European studies. (Arató and Tóth 2010: 153-154)

The year 2006, the start of the Bologna Process, marks a milestone and a new period in the history of modern political science in Hungary. The formerly five-year-long political science programs were transferred into three-year-long Bachelor and two-year-long Master degree programs, which also opened up the possibility of specialization within political science: the political manager program at Corvinus University, the regional and local governance major at the University of Pécs, the election studies at the University of Szeged, etc. appeared at that time. Nevertheless, it was a peculiar development in Hungarian higher education that the discipline of IR, which is an integral part of political science in other countries, was established and still exists in separate departments and faculties⁸. Even more striking is that the institutionalization of European studies has not so far succeeded in either higher education or research institutions in Hungary and therefore has remained a supplementary field. After 2006, due to the declining number of applicants for higher education and the economic problems that have emerged in 2008/2009, the proportion of graduates of political science has started to decrease steadily. Fewer university and research positions were available to political scientists in this period. Only limited financial resources were available to fund basic research, but the *National Scientific Research Funding Programs* (OTKA⁹) provided ongoing funding for the best political science projects. The trends of professionalization, nevertheless, continued in this time period. Step-by-step, Hungarian political science has also begun to engage in empirical research and apply more sophisticated research methods, and the results of Hungarian political science have become visible at the international level. Research topics were further extended to territories of comparative politics, public policy research and also identity politics. However, the centre of Hungarian political science research (both leading universities –

⁸ This institutional separation was maintained up until the 2020s when Corvinus University merged the formerly independent Political Science Department and IR department into one institute, the Institute of International, Political and Regional Studies.

⁹ OTKA, established in 1986, was an independent foundation since 1991, operating from 1993 to the end of 2014, was the only source of basic research in Hungary. Until the end of 2014, the operation of OTKA was regulated by Act CXXXVI of 1997 on the National Scientific Research Fund Programs. On January 1, 2015, the Office of National Scientific Fund Programs (OTKA Office) and the National Innovation Office (NIH) merged, and the National Office for Research, Development and Innovation (NKFI) was established, which also manages the NKFI Fund.

ELTE and Corvinus - and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) has remained in Budapest, despite the establishment of political science departments at the universities in Miskolc, Debrecen and Szeged.

As it is argued by Boda and Szűcs, 2010 again marks a new era, a 'radical transformation of funding and changing institutional context' in social sciences, including political science (Boda and Szűcs 2021: 203). The FIDESZ-KDNP government, after winning a two-thirds majority in the Hungarian parliament, was determined to reform both higher education and research in Hungary. Tuition fees were introduced in several programs, while public spending on education decreased, causing a further decline in the number of students at universities. (Boda and Szűcs 2021: 220) It was then that the government introduced the idea that Hungary does not need unemployed university graduates and that it would be more useful to train skilled workers instead. This was reinforced by the fact that the standard of research was lagging behind by international standards. The idea that a left-wing, liberal approach is predominant in social science research as opposed to the ideology of the right-wing central force represented by the government, has also led the government towards transformation and fundamental changes. The *Center for Social Sciences* at (CSS) within the *Hungarian Academy of Sciences* (HAS) was re-established in 2012, integrating four institutions: the *Institute of Political Science*, *Minority Studies*, *Legal Studies*, and *Sociology*. International performance criteria (publications, citations, international research projects, big-data analysis etc.) were set for the researchers. Due to the consistent and strategic development of the directors (András Körösenyi, Tamás Rudas, Zsolt Boda) at CSS HAS, 2018 marked a breakthrough, when the number of international quality journal publications doubled compared to 2015 and 2016. (See Graph 1.) Growth has continued in recent years, but at a slower pace. At the same time, there has been a qualitative shift: an increasing number of publications, Q1 and D1, have appeared in journals with higher impact factors. In 2018, the government decided to reorganise the HAS research network into a new, independent organization, the *Loránd Eötvös Research Network* (LERN), where the CES and the Institute of Political Science are currently located. Despite protests and demonstrations by researchers, the transformation took place in 2019. Public funding was doubled due to the transformation, which also resulted in better salaries for the researchers. In the field of political science, developments and the fulfilment of international expectations (publications, citations and projects) were continuous even during

the transformation years. The amount of funds won in international tenders by the CSS increased exponentially in the second half of the 2010s.

In the field of higher education, the government has also embarked on fundamental institutional transformations, especially following its third consecutive election victory in 2018. Due to the conflicts between the CEU and the Hungarian government and the uncertainty surrounding the accreditation of the university, the CEU management decided in 2018 that students can start their studies in Vienna from the 2019/2020 academic year, but Hungarian teaching and research activities, as well as the library services of the institution, will not cease to exist completely. With this step, one of the most important institutions of political science left Budapest, which is definitely a loss for the academic community, even if its embeddedness in Hungary was sporadic and never fully established. The transformation of higher education continued with the privatization of Corvinus University in 2019, and continued with almost all public universities of Hungary that offer political science degree programs and conduct research in the discipline. By 2021, a total of six universities remained under state maintenance: the University of Technology and Economics of Budapest, the Eötvös Loránd University, the University of Public Service and three art universities¹⁰ (Liszt Ferenc University of Music, the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, and the Hungarian University of Dance) and the University of Physical Education. From the point of view of political science higher education, this means that private institutions and the boards of trustees that govern them are likely to have a significant impact on the teaching of the discipline both in relation to funding and content in the future. Of the institutions teaching political science, only Eötvös Loránd University, which is still the leading university of the discipline, has remained in the hands of the state for the time being. It is not possible to tell how long this situation will remain since there will be parliamentary elections in Hungary in spring 2022, the outcome of which may change the situation of higher education institutions and may have an impact on funding and personnel issues.

¹⁰ The University of Theatre and Film Arts was also privatized in 2020 against which the actors, directors, and filmmakers protested extensively in Hungary and world-wide and, since then, students and internationally recognized faculty have left the institution.

3. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Hungarian political science

The outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis that caused turmoil in the global economy, employment, healthcare systems as well as our everyday lives, also had an effect on research and education in Hungary. In this section, after a short outline of the chronology of responses by the Hungarian government, we describe how the COVID-19 pandemic affected political science research (content and output) and related university programmes in Hungary.

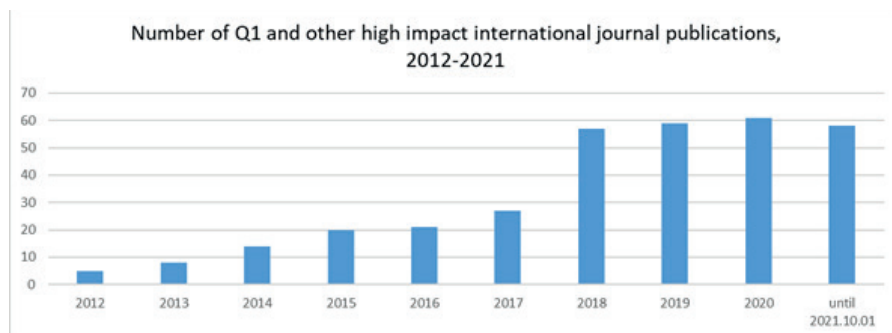
When the first news about the emergency of COVID in Europe was reported, a Hungarian operational task force was formed with the participation of ministers and high ranking officials. In February 2020, the production of sanitary masks was started in prisons. At the same time, people started to buy up antiseptic and cleaning materials and non-perishable food. The first COVID-19 cases were reported at the end of February – early March. On 16 March 2020, the Hungarian government declared a state of emergency, closed down schools and universities, limited the opening hours of shops and restaurants and closed borders, like in other European countries. The Hungarian Parliament abolished the state of emergency on 16 June 2020. However, as the nature of the Hungarian political system has been at the centre of attention both in domestic and international politics and political science, debates around the state of emergency and its sub-categories (medical and migration crises) also continued in the following waves. The second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic was expected from September 2020, but serious closures were only introduced from 11 November. Similar to the first wave, emergency powers to the government, curfews and shop and restaurant closures were introduced and schools and universities went online from the 9th grade upwards.

The third wave of the pandemic started in February 2021, when the second wave was not yet over. While vaccination using non-EU-licensed vaccines (Sinopharm, Sputnik-V) was started and followed by the application of EU-licensed vaccines from April 2021, closures and restrictions were lifted completely in early June. Universities and secondary schools remained closed for the entire second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year. The ongoing fourth wave, which occurred despite the availability of several vaccines (according to the EU COVID-19 vaccine tracker, 67.5% of the Hungarian population is fully

vaccinated¹¹), while the number of casualties and infections are rapidly growing, has not yet thought about closures.

Political science research during the pandemic can be analysed in two ways. First, how it affected the general research output of Hungarian political scientists and, second, how it affected the content of research. As we consider the *Institute of Political Science* within the *Center for Social Sciences* as the flagship institution of political science research in Hungary, Graph 1 shows that their research output did not fall back in 2021 compared to previous years. As the data for 2021 are not complete, we can even expect slight growth. However, we have to add here that - as social science publications are not published in a day – that these results might reflect on previous work, projects and international co-operations that originate from pre-COVID times.

1. *Graph: Number of Q1 and other high impact international journal publications in the Institute of Political Science Center for Social Sciences (Source: Kiemelt publikációk | TK Politikatudományi Intézet)*



Conferences are important for all scientists – these are a forum where our results can be introduced, discussed and challenged, where we can meet colleagues with similar research interests and where joint research and publications can be planned. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, conferences were first cancelled then switched to online platforms. While we all learned how to do presentations using these platforms (and realised how easy it is to keep already existing cross-border co-operations alive), we lost the inspiring informal discussions and chats during coffee breaks where new contacts could be established and ideas exchanged. We assume that this might result in a future temporary

¹¹ <https://vaccinetracker.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/vaccine-tracker.html#national-ref-tab>

fall-back in international co-operation and the number of international publications in political science as well as in other scientific areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a new research subject for political scientists – we can analyse the effects of the pandemic on our political systems, democracy, elections, policy-making, voting behaviour, political participation, civil society, international politics, etc. There are several international examples of early publications on COVID and politics in international political science (See Boin et al. 2021 or Greer et al. 2021) in which Hungarian colleagues published their related research. At the end of 2020, an edited volume was published in Hungarian about the pandemic from the perspective of political science. (Körösenyi et al. 2020). It includes studies on the crisis management of the Orbán regime, the rally-around-the-flag effect, constitutional issues, crisis narratives, political participation, EU politics, etc. The volume was published for both professionals and the wider public.

Universities, including political science programmes, suffered from the pandemic. Because of closures, we had to transfer teaching to online platforms in the first and also the overlapping second and third waves. While it was an advantage that even in the midst of closure we could continue our teaching programmes, professors had to learn to use these new technologies and adapt their teaching methods to them. Both students and professors were soon tired of this new lecturing, especially in the midst of dangers threatening all of us and our families and friends. However, we were lucky since we could – unlike in natural sciences or medical universities where laboratory practices are of utmost importance with personal participation – continue our full teaching programmes. Hungarian universities have been using a wide variety of platforms for online teaching. *Microsoft Teams*, *Zoom* and *Cisco Webex* have been the top three among those. Among the benefits of online teaching, we can mention from time to time greater participation in early hour online classes or more flexible online thesis consultations. However, neither in secondary nor in higher education was there any organized methodological advice from educational institutions – universities prepared online teaching guidelines where there was expertise in this field. However, at the end of online teaching, both students and professors were tired of connecting to each other only through their computers. After the third wave of the pandemic, in fall 2021, universities re-introduced in-person lectures and seminars, although online or hybrid forms of teaching continued to exist when necessary. With the arrival of the fourth wave of the pandemic to Hungary in November, some but not all the higher educational institutions

started to switch to online forms of lecturing, although in-person lectures and seminars also remained parts of teaching forms.

In most political science programmes in Hungary, especially on the BA level, students go out to do their professional training in ministries, political parties, local authorities and research institutes, etc. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, they faced serious problems with finding a place, as most institutions worked online and were not welcoming visitors at all.

Exams during the pandemic were rather problematic. We had to transfer all written exams online, where we had to somehow make sure that students did not use sources that are not allowed or we had to invent exam methods that could also be safely applied online. Online oral exams, BA, MA thesis defences had to be carefully organized to minimise technical problems. Since among the full professors who are usually invited to these defence committees there are many elder scholars, universities organised these events mostly online in order to protect these individuals. All in all, we experienced significantly better results than before the pandemic, which shows that students might have found their way to ease their tasks. Doctoral defences and habilitation processes were also carried-out online, which proved to be rather challenging due to the need to resolve the secret ballot of committee members that sometimes required new IT developments at the universities.

When the pandemic broke out, universities, including political science programmes were worried that the number of students enrolling in our programmes might fall back. However, data show that there was no decrease in the number of students applying to political science programmes at any level in 2021 (at the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, students had already submitted their applications for the 2020/2021 academic year). On the contrary: there was an 11 percent increase in the number of students applying to universities in

Hungary in 2021¹² - which might be connected to students choosing to stay at home in these uncertain times instead of going abroad to study.

4. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic had an effect on several sectors, including research and higher education all over the world. In Hungary, political science research and university education was no exception.

Political science in Hungary has become a well-established scientific area in the last 30 years. We identified several periods after the system change and explained how political science strengthened during these decades. Political science research and teaching and the professionalization of political science research have led to internationally acknowledged publications and to the establishment of several political science departments at universities all over the country.

COVID-19 hit our profession in Hungary just as in other research areas, university programmes or other sectors. We had to handle the lack of personal contacts with colleagues abroad at conferences or with our students. We had to fight ‘Zoom-fatigue’ at online research meetings or classes. We also have to acknowledge that we can save certain techniques for the post-COVID times: it is easier to organize online research workshops, invite a colleague from abroad to participate in our class using Zoom or consult with our students about their thesis on Teams.

When introducing political science in Hungary in this chapter, we also presented certain systemic problems in the 2010s – the transformation of the research institutes of the Academy or the uncertain effects of university reforms. Those changes might challenge political science in Hungary more than COVID-19.

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¹² https://www.felvi.hu/felveteli/ponthatarok_statistikak/jelentkezo_es_felvettek/21A_jelentkezo

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Political science in Lithuania during the pandemic: Lay of the land

1. Introduction

This article analyses the status of political science in Lithuania. The key idea is to establish the development of teaching and research in political science and its adjustment during the pandemic.

Several scholars have described the discipline of political science in Lithuania. Algis Krupavičius (1997, 2002) examined the historical and contemporary social and academic roots of political science and investigated the institutionalisation of political studies in Lithuania. Vaidutis Laurėnas (2000) described political science in Klaipėda university, Egidijus Vareikis (2000) – in Vytautas Magnus university in Kaunas and Romanas Plečkaitis (2000) – in Vilnius university. Dovilė Jakniūnaitė and Inga Vinogradnaitė (2010) reviewed the development of features, standards and norms of Lithuanian political science. The Lithuanian Government Strategic Analysis Centre carried out a comparative expert assessment of Research and Development Activities (2018), including the evaluation of political science across academic institutions in the country.

The structure of the article is the following: a brief historical overview and current institution-based research background in political sciences, followed by the pandemic limitations and digital adjustment.

2. History of Political Science in Academia

The first attempts to incorporate political aspects in academia began in the second part of the 16th century at Vilnius University, established in 1579 by the Jesuits. In the faculty of philosophy, professors Leonard Kraker and Andrius

Novacijus (Nowak) studied different aspects of political ethics. The first rector of the university Piotr Skarga (Powęski), devoted some of his writing to politics – a political treatise “Kazania Sejmowe” (1597) was a well-known opus. The state was seen as embedded in the Catholic tradition. As an academic discipline, political science gained impetus in the second half of the 17th century at Vilnius University. A tense geopolitical situation and the internal strife in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth called for normative discussions on politics. Improvement of state order and management were primary topics among law professors analysing constitutional and elective monarchy. They supported strengthening the power of the monarch. Vilnius University was known for the instalment of civic and other virtues in the youth of nobility (Plečkaitis 2000). After the partitioning of the Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century, Lithuania fell under the Tsarist Russian empire. Vilnius University, along with its Faculty of Moral and Political Sciences, was shut down after the 1830-1831 insurrection. In the aftermath, a Spiritual Seminary was set up on the basis of the aforementioned faculty and the Vilnius Priest Seminary (Stražinskaitė 2011: 36). However, the development of political science stalled until the early 20th century. Lithuania re-established its statehood in 1918, and Vilnius University opened a department of social sciences. In 1920, Vilnius and eastern Lithuania were incorporated into Poland. Lithuania temporarily moved its capital to Kaunas, where a University of Lithuania (Vytautas Magnus University, since 1930) was established. The university did not have a faculty incorporating a discipline of political science. However, Kazys Pakštas, Stasys Šalkauskis, Antanas Maceina, Voslylius Sezemanas and Mykolas Römeris analysed political problems from legal, philosophical and geopolitical points of view. Vytautas Magnus University published a journal *Darbai ir dienos* (Works and Days), in which some topics related to political issues.

In the 1930s, the Institute of Political and Social Sciences, as a social organisation, provided education for the public. The institute focused on the topic of national consciousness, international propaganda and so on (Pšibilskis 1995: 13-34; 1995a: 164-173).

The Soviet occupation in the 1940s abolished all independent academic activities. Ideological indoctrination and apologetics of communism replaced political analysis. Scientific communism dominated in social sciences and humanities, yet a separate study programme for it was not set in any education establishment. (Laurénas 2000: 98). Communist party schools and ideological institutes served to indoctrinate people during the Soviet regime. From 1946-

1990, a research organisation, the (Communist) Party History Institute affiliated to the central committee of the Lithuanian Communist party, and a Lithuanian branch of Marxist-Leninist institute at the central committee of the Soviet Union Communist party operated in Lithuania. Both institutions propagated Marxism, researched the history of the Lithuanian communist party and the Lithuanian communist youth union, provided normative justification of the Lithuanian occupation and annexation and praised the ‘socialist revolution’ in Lithuania. From 1945-1990, the Vilnius (Communist) Party Higher School prepared future party and state apparatchiks.

With the liberalisation of the Soviet regime in the late 1980s, the teaching of political philosophy became less ideologically rigid. Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas was re-established in 1989, and the two departments of political science and sociology were set up. The first diploma in political science was awarded in 1994 (Vareikis 2000: 113). Furthermore, the Institute of International Law and Political Science was opened in 1997 and the Sociopolitical Analysis Centre followed the same year at Vytautas Magnus University. The faculty of social sciences had departments of political science and law, and they were moved to the aforementioned institute. Since Vytautas Magnus University did not exist during the Soviet occupation, there was no need to revamp Marxist-Leninist teaching in it as in other universities (Vareikis 2000: 113).

After the re-establishment of independence in 1990, political science was also taught as a subject at the Faculty of History of Vilnius University. The university had a department of political science at the faculty of philosophy. A strong impetus for the development of political science came about with the set-up of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University in 1992. The institute had the status of a faculty with pedagogical and research staff. In 1992-1994, the institute offered a 2-year university diploma in international relations and diplomacy study programme. Klaipėda University started a political science bachelor study programme in 1992 and a master’s degree programme in 1996.

The first researchers and lecturers in political science came from the disciplines of history, philosophy and law. They comprised a community of political scientists, who commenced publishing the first journal “*Politika*” (“Politics”) at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University in 1989, renaming it “*Politologija*” (“Political science”) in 1991. Until 1998, the journal had two yearly issues, and then the number increased to four (Politologija). By 2011, nine Lithuanian universities had units, carrying out rese-

arch and teaching in political science and employing over 200 scholars (Strakšaitė 2011: 34). In addition, the Association of Lithuanian Political Scientists was set up in 1991. It currently has a membership of over 70 scholars and organises annual political science conferences with the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University. Since 1994, the association has been a member of the International Political Science Association.

3. The Lay of the Land

The Lithuanian institutions have comparable potential. However, they demonstrate many specific approaches to political science teaching and research and related subjects. The topics of Bachelor/Master degree theses indicate that these programmes are training specialists in their specific areas – consistently with the aims and general learning outcomes of the programs and of the institutions.

For example, Vilnius University's International Relations and Political Science Institute is the largest hub for political science in the capital city of Vilnius. The institute has seven departments and centres: the Post-Soviet Memory Centre (with nine members), the Political Behaviour and Institutional Research Department (18 members), the Political Philosophy and Ideas History Department (19 members), the International Relations department (27 members), the Centre of European Studies (12 members), the Centre for Public Administration and Policy Analysis (10 members) and the Centre for Adaptive Leadership (one member). Most of the departments and centres have a multi-disciplinary approach academically. Many faculty members hold membership in several departments and centres. The Institute has 11 professors, 20 associate professors and 20 doctoral students. The Institute accepts an average of 160 students to a bachelor study programme each year.

Vytautas Magnus University is the hub of political science at the Political Science and Diplomacy Faculty in Kaunas. The faculty evolved from the Institute of Political Science in 2000. The faculty has four departments and three centres. Its department of Political Science has 23 members, the Regional Studies Department has 10 members, the Public Administration Department has 15 members and the Public Communication Department has 18 members. The faculty also has the Czeslaw Milosz Centre, focusing on east-central European affairs and employs three people. The Andrei Sakharov Centre

embraces human rights issues and Russian affairs and includes three scholars and the UNSECO Centre which consists of one scholar. The focus in the faculty is on multidisciplinary and area studies. International students enrich the programmes and there is a high ratio in programmes taught in English. The main fields of study are political communication, comparative politics, international relations, public policy and administration and political theory. The faculty employs 58 people with 13 professors and 15 associate professors. The faculty has two Ph.D. programs. One is in political science and the other is in communication science. The faculty has held the right to offer doctoral studies in political science since 2003. Since 2011, the Ph.D. program has been led by VMU in partnership with Klaipėda University, the Kaunas University of Technology and General Jonas Žemaitis Lithuanian Military Academy. Vytautas Magnus University's Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy has enrolled 19 Ph.D. students with another 24 Ph.D. students across all partner universities.

The other Lithuanian institutions and programs in political science are much smaller. Klaipėda University has one department. The Public Policy and Political Science Department has three professors and four associate professors. The university has three Ph.D. students together with Vytautas Magnus University. Kaunas University of Technology has one master's degree program (Public Policy and Security studies) in its Social, Humanities and Arts faculty. General Jonas Žemaitis Lithuanian Military Academy in Vilnius has political science disciplines connected and integrated with defence, national security and international relations programs. The doctoral students study in a joint doctoral programme with the leading partner, Vytautas Magnus University. The Academy has three academic centres: the Centre for Defence Analysis, Defence Innovations and the Military Science information and the Publishing Centre. Research is carried out in the Security Institutions' Management Group, the Security Policy Group, the Logistics and Defence Technologies Management Group, the Defence Economy and Management Science Group and the Security Policy Group. At the Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius, political science is also taught, and research is conducted at the Public Management and Business Faculty of the Political Science Institute in Vilnius. The faculty provides programs in the field of political science. The university offers a bachelor degree in public politics and communication, public policy and management. The master degree programs are in Health Policies and Management and International Political Studies. The political science institute employs six professors, three associate professors and two doctoral students. The Lithuanian Christian

College in Klaipėda has a bachelor degree program, International Relations and Development, taught by 12 foreign teaching staff.

Overall, according to the Lithuanian Quality Assurance Centre, the facilities and learning resources are adequate in their size and possess reasonable quality in all institutions, yet there is a lack of individual working spaces for teachers and student consultations, and sometimes a lack of functional space for student group work. Only in some institutions is the situation better. New university buildings, like at Vytautas Magnus University, have significantly improved the situation. Due to limited funding, library resources are not always properly updated, and there is a shortage of textbooks, but the situation varies depending on the university and the programme. Software for basic statistics and qualitative textual analysis is generally available. The universities have adequate arrangements for student internships, but placements could also sometimes cover a wider range of organizations (e.g. NGOs, international organisations) and be more extensive. Moodle and other social media platforms are used widely for communication between students and faculty staff, but often only for delivering files without using more interactive options. Wi-Fi service is widely available, but sometimes it is too weak or in too limited areas. Where there are physical space issues, institutions should be quick in addressing them for immediate and future development. Placement and internship arrangements and opportunities are generally rich and varied.

Table 1. Journals of political science

Title of the Journal	University	Is there an open access?
Baltic Journal of Political Science	Vilnius University, Institute of International Relations and Political Science	Yes
Politologija	Vilnius University, Institute of International Relations and Political Science	Yes
AGORA: Political communication studies (2018 discontinued)	Vytautas Magnus University, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy	Yes
Politikos mokslų almanachas (2016 discontinued)	Vytautas Magnus University, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy	Yes
Baltic Journal of Law & Politics	Vytautas Magnus University, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy	Yes
Darbai ir Dienos (Deeds and Days)	Vytautas Magnus University	Yes

Lietuvos metinė strateginė apžvalga	General Jonas Žemaitis Lithuanian Military Academy, Vytautas Magnus University and Vilnius University	Yes
Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review	General Jonas Žemaitis Lithuanian Military Academy, Vytautas Magnus University and Vilnius University	Yes
Regional Formation and Development Studies	Klaipėda University	Yes
Societal Studies	Mykolas Romeris University	Yes
European integration studies	Kaunas University of Technology	Yes
Public Policy and Administration	Kaunas University of Technology	Yes

Source: Authors' compilation

Procedures for obtaining doctoral and post-doctoral degrees as well as the title of professor

In Lithuania, the conferment and recognition of higher education qualifications and degrees are regulated by the Lithuanian Law on Science and Studies¹. However, the Lithuanian Science Council evaluates Lithuanian research and study institution applications for the right to conduct doctoral studies in science and art: the right to conduct doctoral studies, organize a dissertation defence (arts projects), award doctoral degrees in science (arts) and issue diplomas of Doctor of Science (arts). The right to doctoral studies is granted by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, taking into account the recommendations and evaluative conclusions of the Council. The regulations for doctoral studies are approved by the government according to Lithuanian Science Council proposals. Those who have defended their dissertation are awarded a doctoral degree².

The Lithuanian Science Council also funds post-doctoral internships. The aim is to promote the development of a system of post-doctoral traineeships for young researchers and to raise the scientific qualifications of trainees³.

Other scientific titles in Lithuania - post-doctoral studies - are awarded by an institution, i.e. university senate. For example, the Senate of Vytautas Magnus University grants pedagogical titles of professor and associate professor to lec-

¹ Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009 April 30. Nr. XI-242, Vilnius

² Acquisition of the right to doctorate, https://www.lmt.lt.translate.google.lt/mokslo-kokybe/doktoranturos-teises-igijimas/2495?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=lt&_x_tr_hl=lt

³ Postdoctoral internships, <https://www.lmt.lt/lt/mokslo-finansavimas/parama-karjerai-mobilumui-ir-sklaidai/podoktoranturos-stazuotes/2382>

turers by the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania and the Statute of Vytautas Magnus University⁴. The institution also conducts admission to the positions of lecturers and researchers of research and study institutions. Candidates for the positions of lecturers and researchers (except for research trainees) shall be evaluated by an admission committee⁵. The pedagogical title of professor at the Vytautas Magnus University, for instance, is awarded to a person who has worked at least 10 years at the university, has held a professorial position (at least part-time) for one 5-year term and won a bid for another 5-year term, supervised at least one PhD dissertation, prepared a textbook or a monograph, received positive evaluation of student opinion polls and read a public lecture on their research⁶.

4. Limitations of the Pandemic

The Lithuanian government adopted certain measures in the management of the pandemic since 2020. These measures had implications for education and research at the Lithuanian universities, thus affecting teaching and research in the field of political science as well. The cabinet of ministers introduced a quarantine in the country on 16 March 2020 in their ruling of March 13. This led to the halt of all face-to-face educational activities from primary schools to universities. Teaching continued in the distant-learning mode by using on-line communication platforms and tools. For instance, Vytautas Magnus University stopped teaching *in auditoria* on 13 March 2020. Furthermore, the physical access to the university premises was temporarily banned. All lectures, seminars and consultations moved on-line, and practical and laboratory-related work was postponed. Relevant information was posted on the websites of the university, faculties and the on-line Moodle teaching platform, and the university library opened up access to digital resources. All academic exchanges, conferences and project-related trips were postponed. Students communicated with the admin-

⁴ Description of the procedure for conferring pedagogical titles at Vytautas Magnus University, Senate of Vytautas Magnus University in 2019. June 26 Resolution no. 4-16 new wording, <https://www.vdu.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pedagoginiu-vardu-suteikimo-tvarka.pdf>

⁵ Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009 April 30. Nr. XI-242, Vilnius

⁶ Pedagoginių vardų suteikimo Vytauto Didžiojo universitete tvarkos aprašas <https://www.vdu.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pedagoginiu-vardu-suteikimo-tvarka.pdf>

istration and academic staff via Moodle, e-mail, the BigBlueButton platform and MS Office Teams.

Vytautas Magnus University launched the new mode of activities two weeks after the start of the quarantine: about 1,650 subjects were taught, and around 1,000 video recordings were posted online. The university assisted about 300 secondary schools and gymnasiums in their preparation for online classes. The 2020 spring semester ended online and physical contacts at the university resumed in the summer, when the pandemic subsided. The 2020 autumn semester started in a hybrid mode: classes for over 50-student groups were organised online and smaller groups were taught at the university. However, the worsening situation regarding the pandemic caused contact teaching, except laboratory and practical work-related classes, to cease and be transferred to on-line mode on 3 November, 2020. Other universities conducted very similar procedures. For instance, Vilnius University and Kaunas Technological University used VPN tools, Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius opted for the Moodle “Microphone”, Skype for Business and the BigBlueButton tools and Jonas Žemaitis Lithuanian Military Academy and Kaunas Technological University incorporated the Zoom platform for teaching and meetings.

5. Application of Digital Systems

Although the digitization of Lithuanian universities had been slowly progressing, the Covid19 pandemic situation forced an intensification of the implementation of new digital solutions and the use of existing on-line products. This section will discuss the digital tools used by Lithuanian universities, as well as political science departments, since there are no separate systems adapted to the latter. Two groups of systems can be distinguished: general systems (used by all universities) and special university systems.

Lithuania has one general admission system for admission to Bachelor and Integrated studies – abbreviated as LAMA BPO. Universities use these common digital systems, but their access differs. Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius University and Kaunas University of Technology have their own connections.

VLE Moodle is a virtual learning environment. Moodle is a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environments (Moodle 2021). In this environment, student study materials and professors’

assignments are posted. Various study-related information is provided. It is possible to consult with a professor, participate in various learning activities, etc. It is also possible to communicate in forums, chat rooms. The system provides a convenient platform for the passing for midterm and final examinations. Video lectures can also be accessed here. Professors can submit their assignments and evaluate them.

Another tool is the Microsoft Office365 environment for students and employees. It provides a set of Office 365 ProPlus programs consisting of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote and Outlook.

Eduroam (Education Roaming) is a secure, worldwide roaming access service developed for the international research and education community. Eduroam allows students, researchers and staff from participating institutions to obtain internet connectivity across campus, when visiting other participating institutions (Eduroam 2021). The internet is available in the premises of the university and other Lithuanian and foreign universities, including dormitories.

Universities usually choose systems such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business for remote video lectures. Other systems are adapted to the specific university.

5.1 Vytautas Magnus University

Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) offers university admissions for the second and the third cycle programmes. The applications for admission to the university are submitted in the information system <https://epasirasymas.vdu.lt>. A common digital information system for students is the Student Portal. In this portal, students access information related to the study process. It enables students to register for study subjects, check study results and individual study schedules, book a place in dormitories, pay tuition fees or for other university services, etc: <https://www.vdu.lt/lt/vdu-jums/vdu-studentams/studento-pri-sijungimai-prie-vdu-sistemu>. The information system for employees (www.destytojas.vdu.lt) allows professors to administer study programs, assess student progress and exams and receive information about students, study rankings, etc.

E-library encompasses VMU library databases. This system enables students to find books in the university library's electronic catalogue and reserve them for reading. *E-library* also connects to databases of electronic theses and dissertations and other electronic publications. It also allows students to access

subscribed and tested databases in the search for scholarly articles or other types of publications.

5.2 Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University

Admission to the second and the third cycle programs is carried out via the university's digital system, called VU ISAS.

There is a common digital information system at the university (VU IS). Users can access all computer programs and databases relevant to their work. In addition, each VU IS user has the opportunity to view information about themselves (self-service programs) and access information only for VU employees (VU intranet). *IS - information system for students* enables students to access plans of study programs, examination marks, ranking of the best students, as well as receive information about benefits like scholarships, to choose optional and general university study courses, make various requests, to upload written works in the Electronic Document Information System (ETD), etc. *IS - information system for employees* serves for the administration of study programs, finding information about students, ranking of studies, administration of the electronic thesis and dissertation system, plagiarism verification (EPAS), assessment of examinations, reports of session results and lists of debtors, etc. (VU IT services documentation 2018). Vilnius University has a virtual private network (VPN). This is a computer network service that allows students to securely connect to the university computer network and use the services provided on this network. For example, after connecting to the VPN at home, the information resources and services of the faculties and the electronic resources of the VU library can be used (VU IT services documentation 2019). It also offers a file storage service, where users store their documents in the cloud and can share them with other users.

Vilnius University also has an *e-library*. The virtual library contains books, magazines and manuscripts, e-books, articles (eLABA repository, subscribed and open-access databases) and bibliographic databases (VU history bibliography, Lithuanian bibliography, C series). In the institutional repository, one can find VU researchers' publications, dissertations, VU bachelor and master

degree theses, as well as the university bookshop and scientific journals (Vilnius University Library 2021).

5.3 Klaipėda University

Klaipėda University also has its own internal digital system for academic activities – the *Unified Access System* for students and lecturers. *For students* calls for a login via Mano KU - <https://fedi.ku.lt/>. In this system, email services are provided, and lecture schedules are published. There is an opportunity to study course teaching materials in a virtual learning environment and to upload completed tasks. The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) also serves lecturers who want to present the material of their courses in a high-quality way, as well as to university students who follow these courses. In this environment, students can communicate with professors, analyse course material, complete various tasks and receive feedback (Klaipėda University 2021). The Lecture Schedule Information System operates on the digital platform of Klaipėda University (KU PTIS). This is a system of booking and planning of auditoriums and conference halls. It also provides an individual schedule for each university student. The university has a separate Academic Information System, which provides information relevant to studies (tuition fees, optional subjects, etc.). There is an *e-library*, where an integrated search system allows searching for books, articles, rare documents, e-books and articles in the subscribed databases, open-access resources, scientific publications in the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library (eLABa) and the resources of other Lithuanian university libraries.

5.4 Kaunas University of Technology

Kaunas University of Technology has its own information system for admission to higher studies: master's degree – the KTU Master's degree information system MPIS; doctoral studies - (KTU) information system for admission to doctoral studies. There is also a common digital system (*Academic System (AIS)*) for students and staff. As in other universities, it is possible to see study results, lecture schedules, etc., and for professors to enter individual pedagogical work plans, exam results, etc. *E-library* provides the same services as other universities, but KTU has an e-book system (www.ebooks.ktu.lt), where e-books can be read

online from the entire KTU internal network and from any other Lithuanian or world locations using the Cisco VPN Network Application.

5.5 Mykolas Romeris University

Institutional admission at Mykolas Romeris University is conducted by sending copies of the required documents by e-mail. The university has a digitized study administration system “My Studies” (*Unified Access System*), which is accessible via the website (https://stdb.mruni.eu/menu_stud.php). It features a moodle environment, a study book, lecture schedules, and a study calendar. However, most of the activities are placed in the moodle environment, and professors also use this system. The university has an eDMS (eDVS), which is an electronic document management system that prepares, administers, submits and stores documents related to studies and academic activities. The university has its own e-books system, where e-books (published not only at the university but also by other publishers) can be found. There is also a virtual library with a search engine that allows searching for material in the resources of Mykolas Romeris University Library, the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library (eLA-Ba), the world’s academic open access resources and databases subscribed to by the university.

5.6 General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania

The digital system differs slightly from other universities. Only admission to studies takes place differently, as the specifics of the discipline require it. Applications for political science are submitted by post. The Academy has its own internal study administration system (Mano LKA), an e-library, which provides access not only to databases common to all universities but also to publications published by the MAL (scientific, educational, catalogues, journals). Observing the ongoing academic digitization in Lithuania, it can be stated that it is intensive. A variety of digital opportunities are exploited for administration

and operation: from admission to distance learning. Schedules, the choice of courses, grading, curricula descriptions, etc., are well provided.

6. Conclusions

Teaching and conducting research in political science in Lithuania has many commonalities with the other Baltic and Central European countries. The country has a diverse array of educational opportunities for students pursuing political science and combining their education with competence in related disciplines. Lithuania has different models for studying political science, which range from strong interdisciplinarity in the model of liberal arts college and with strong emphasis on area studies, to more traditionally structured training.

Students in Lithuania are quite well prepared to study political science using online and hybrid methods and instruments in all institutions, which became an asset during the Covid 19 pandemic. Nevertheless, many of our institutions counter enrolment decline, demonstrate commitment to student social mobility and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body with growing numbers of foreign students in some of the universities. Following recent international tendencies, faculties have to learn how to deliver better learning experiences for students with increasing academic opportunities in order to facilitate creativity, interdisciplinarity and competitiveness in the future.

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Political science in Poland in the time of pandemic

1. Introduction

This study is the first attempt to diagnose political science in Poland during the pandemic. The aim of the study is to present key aspects related to changes in teaching and research in political sciences in the perspective of the pandemic. The main research questions concern two aspects: a subject-matter-related and chronological description and limitations imposed by governments and universities in conducting classes and research.

The difficult period of the pandemic has largely transformed the work of some 1.2 million students and around 100,000 lecturers and researchers in Poland. All of these people associated with the higher education sector in Poland had to change their approach to teaching and research activities at a rapid pace. This study refers primarily to activities in the field of political science, especially at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn.

The analysis draws on the authors' individual experiences as research and teaching staff. Their observations were also important, due to their numerous functions in the administrative structures of the university and the Polish Political Science Association, as well as the resulting numerous conversations on solving problems connected with the functioning of didactic, scientific and organisational activities.

Structure-wise, the study consists of five parts. After the introduction discussing the research assumptions, the main themes shaping the current institutional state of political sciences in Poland will be presented. Following this, subject-matter-related and chronological description and limitations imposed by governments and universities in conducting classes and research matter will be discussed. The study will be completed with conclusions from the conducted research along with an indication of potential areas for further in-depth studies.

2. A short historical overview and the current institution-based research background in political science¹

The institutional origin of political science in Poland is quite early (Żukowski 2006: 23), because in 1902 the School of Political Sciences was founded in Lviv, and in 1911 the Polish School of Political Sciences was established at the Faculty of Law of the Jagiellonian University. In 1914, the Political Science School in Warsaw was established (renamed the Academy of Political Sciences in 1939). In the interwar period, the scientific, organizational and educational development of these three schools was noted and two political centers started taking shape: Lviv-Cracow and Warsaw.

During Second World War, activity within political science was limited to underground education and correspondence courses. A few years after the end of the war, political science became highly dependent on communist ideology. In 1950, academies of political science in Warsaw and Krakow were closed, and a year later, education in the field of political science was discontinued. However, the subject “The Basics of Marxism-Leninism” was introduced. Nevertheless, after the Second World War Poland along with Yugoslavia belonged to the only countries of the Eastern Bloc in which the subject of “Scientific Communism” was not taught. The unfavorable political climate meant that political science as a separate research discipline ceased to exist, and its representatives added to the ranks of related disciplines.

After the events of October 1956, the revival in Polish political science could be clearly felt, and actually the processes of integrating researchers dealing with political phenomena and processes in the internal as well as the external dimension began. The institutional framework in the field of science and academic education was created.

In 1957, the Polish Society of Political Science (abbreviation in Polish - PTNP) was established as a federation of specialist scientific societies dealing with research in the world of politics. PTNP was a founding member of the worldwide International Political Science Association (IPSA), within which it was very active.

Teaching “Basis of Marxism-Leninism” was abandoned in 1955, and from the academic year 1963/1964 the subject of “Basics of political science” was introduced (textbooks were prepared for this subject in larger academic cen-

¹ This section of the text represents the outcome of earlier findings (Żukowski 2006; Żukowski and Hartliński 2019).

ters). In 1982, the subject of “Political science” was introduced into the system of education.

In the second half of the 1960s, political and scientific institutes in Cracow, Poznań, Lublin and Warsaw started to be established as research and teaching units. In 1967, the Institute of Political Sciences at the University of Warsaw was established (transformed into the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science in 1975).

In the 1970s, the process of further institutionalization of Polish political science continued. In 1972, the Political Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences was established, which was an expression of the consolidation of this young discipline among other sciences. A year earlier, the Central Methodical Center for Political Science Studies was established, which initially dealt with education, and later with methodological and theoretical studies in the field of political science. In this decade, five-year MA studies in political science were launched at universities in Gdańsk, Katowice, Cracow, Poznań, Warsaw and Wrocław. In the second half of the 1970s, the first doctorates in political science were defended, and the first habilitations in political science were defended in the 1980s.

The 1980s, and especially the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, which witnessed the systemic transformation, revealed a crisis in the functioning of political science (the closing down of several political science institutes, including those in Łódź and Toruń), which was partly due to the fact that this scientific discipline had an ideological function.

The 1990s, especially its second half, and the next decade brought institutional development of political science, which was accompanied by a specific fashion for education in the field of political science, as well as international relations and European studies. Education in this area began to be carried out by smaller academic centers (including Olsztyn, Opole, Zielona Góra). New institutes and political science faculties were established, and they were granted the right to confer doctoral and postdoctoral degrees in political sciences.

At the beginning of the transformation, i.e. in the academic year 1989/1990, 3486 people studied Political Science in Poland (Krauz-Mozer, Borowiec and Ścigaj 2011: 174). In the following years, the number of students in this field grew and in the academic year 2004/2005 reached a record number of 55674 people. Political science has become a very attractive field of study – in the years 1999–2006 almost every thirtieth student in Poland was a graduate of political science (Krauz-Mozer, Borowiec and Ścigaj 2011: 175). In the following years,

the number of students dropped, especially in non-public universities (in 2008, there were 44270 people in political science in Poland, and 25054 in 2012).

The group of political science academic teachers has also been strengthened, especially in the last dozen or so years. Earlier in Poland 10 to 30 doctorates were awarded annually from political science, e.g. in 2000 – 28 doctorates, while in the following years, this number increased, for example in 2010 – 155 doctorates. The number of habilitated doctors promoted in political sciences was also growing rapidly, e.g. in 2000 – 3, and in 2012 – 33.

According to the official data, in June 2014 there were 2388 scholars with an academic degree or title in the field of political science. This number breaks down into 152 professors (including 23 women), 292 doctors with habilitation (including 67 women) and 1944 doctors (including 808 women) (Krauz-Mozer, Borowiec and Ścigaj 2015: 371).

These figures are currently difficult to update, as numerous transformations in recent years have obscured the picture. Firstly, the official name of the discipline has been changed to political science and administration. Secondly, in view of the planned evaluation of academic disciplines in 2022, the research and teaching staff had to define their own affiliation to the discipline. In many cases this was determined by the interests of the university/department/institute and their own research activity rather than by the actual subject of the research. Nevertheless, in 2022 we should know the estimated number of researchers in the discipline we are interested in.

3. Subject-matter-related and chronological description and limitations imposed by governments and universities on conducting classes and research

The first case of infection of Covid-19 was found on 4 March 2020 in a hospital in Zielona Góra, where a 66-year-old man who had travelled by bus from Germany was reported ill. A state of epidemic emergency was introduced from 14 to 20 March 2020, and from 15 March 2020, a sanitary cordon was introduced at the Polish borders, significantly limiting border traffic. According to the decree of the Minister of Health, since 20 March 2020, a state of epidemic has been in force in Poland.

Restrictions on the functioning of universities were introduced rather quickly, as early as 12 March 2020. Thus, students and lecturers barely had time to start

the new semester, and they already had to suddenly completely reorganise their plans for the next few months, although, as it later turned out, such a situation lasted for a year and a half.

Initially, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education announced the suspension of teaching activities at universities until 25 March to prevent the spread of COVID-19². However, another regulation quickly followed, extending the suspension of full-time classes until 10 April and making distance learning mandatory³. Subsequent regulations were issued periodically, with the last one appearing on 25 February 2021 concerning the temporary restriction of the operation of certain entities of the higher education and science system in connection with the prevention, counteraction and eradication of COVID-19⁴. The situation of suspension of traditional teaching activities in practice operated from March 2020 to October 2021.

During the initial period of the pandemic, the lack of systemic solutions for remote-mediated learning was evident. Each university had its own solutions for e-learning platforms, but these were not more widely known to all staff and students.

The first period of teaching by remote means was very different and lasted until the end of the semester in June/July 2020. Some staff sent lecture content via email, some uploaded them to platforms (e.g. moodle). Over time, more and more started to use Microsoft Teams or other applications (Zoom, Google Meet) for real-time lectures.

The second period was the start of the new academic year in October 2020. Everyone was already prepared that remote classes would become the main way of delivering lectures, exercises and seminars. The course programmes, format

² Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 11 March 2020 on the temporary restriction of the operation of certain entities of the higher education and science system in connection with the prevention, counteraction and eradication of COVID-19: <https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/2020/405>.

³ Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 23 March 2020 on the temporary restriction of the functioning of certain entities of the system of higher education and science in connection with the prevention, counteraction and eradication of COVID-19: <https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/2020/511>.

⁴ Regulation of the Minister of Science and Education of 25 February 2021 on the temporary restriction of the operation of certain entities of the system of higher education and science in connection with the prevention, counteraction and eradication of COVID-19: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20210000363>

and content took into account the need to use online applications for real-time teaching.

In the context of conducting scientific research, the initial legal solutions did not stop the implementation of research projects. In practice, however, participation in conferences and scientific internships was severely limited or even impossible. Travel and international scientific cooperation was frozen for many months. It should be noted, however, that efforts were made to allow grants and projects to be formally extended for the duration of the epidemic.

The academic year 2021/2022, which started on 1 October 2021, was supposed to be the first to predicate a partial return to classical classes. The general guidelines of the Ministry of Science and Education did not prescribe a specific form of classes - full-time or online⁵. The decision was left to the individual universities. Most universities opted for a hybrid mode. Lectures conducted for groups of more than 30 people are now conducted online, while exercises and seminars are conducted face-to-face. During classes, masks are required nationwide in accordance with general guidelines, as in all public buildings.

4. Shortcomings and advantages of the implemented solutions

Teaching in political science can be done without face-to-face contact as it does not require the use of specialised laboratories, tools and instruments. In this aspect, our discipline has certainly had an easier passage through the period of remote learning than technical or natural sciences majors. The same can be said about the specifics of scientific research.

The most important drawback was the lack of preparation of the staff and students to use modern online tools. Not only in terms of content but, above all, technically. In the initial period, the lack of a fast and permanent Internet connection, as well as a professional camera, microphone and headphones was common. A significant problem reported by employees was the need to use private equipment to conduct classes.

One important positive aspect in the delivery of classes and research was the assistance from colleagues in solving technical problems. There were many telephone calls and contacts between institute staff suggesting the best technical and content-related solutions to each other. No less important was

⁵ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/wytyczne-bezpiecznego-funkcjonowania-uczelni-i-innych-podmiotow-systemu-szkolnictwa-wyzszego-i-nauki-w-okresie-epidemii>

simply talking on the phone and sharing one's own experiences in the absence of face-to-face meetings.

In teaching, the biggest problem was the lack of interaction from the students. A very common inconvenience was "talking to the screen". The students, for various reasons, did not turn on their cameras and it was not possible to actually verify their presence, reaction, involvement or understanding of the content given.

A major challenge was the administration of end-of-lecture exams. A number of factors had to be taken into account, which were necessitated by remote teaching. These included: the limitation of the scope of the material; the technical way of conducting written or oral exams; ensuring a fair and honest way of passing, and the difficult mental and material situation of many students.

The defence of bachelor and master degree theses took place remotely in 2020 and 2021. The thesis preparation process had already been largely transferred to a special online system, and in this context, this did not create new barriers. The pandemic situation and the lack of direct contact did not adversely affect its course. One can only regret that the defences and final meetings with the students did not have a ceremonial character.

A major challenge was to carry out the procedures for obtaining doctoral and postdoctoral degrees as well as the title of professor. The suspension of traditional meetings and technical difficulties significantly hampered the work of committees, reviewers and the conduct of defences. The mere lengthening of the procedure seemed to be of the least importance. The real problems were caused by the formula of the on-line meeting, where an appropriate presentation of the candidate and his/her achievements, by means of an Internet connection, constituted a technical barrier, but also a stressful one for the persons applying for scientific degrees and the reviewers.

The least of the problems was the fulfilment of administrative duties related to teaching. In this aspect, electronic solutions have functioned successfully for many years. The main online tools include: IRK - Online Registration of Candidates. Its main task is to conduct the whole process of recruiting candidates for studies electronically; USOS - University Student Service System. It is the entire IT infrastructure which collects and stores all the information, mainly about the course of studies of each student, such as: registration for subjects, curriculum, grades, etc.; APD - Archives of Diploma Papers. With its help, supervisors and reviewers check and approve the thesis and issue reviews. The OSA - Open Anti-plagiarism System is used to check the authenticity of

the diploma thesis in terms of the similarity of the text to other works or the content of websites.

One aspect that did not suffer in the era of the pandemic was applying for research grants. The process of applying for research grants from public funds is carried out exclusively via the Internet. This is done through the Integrated Services System for Science / Stream Financing Services (<https://osf.opi.org.pl>). The system is designed to register and handle applications for financing science which are received by the Minister of Science and Higher Education, the National Science Center, the National Center for Research and Development.

Staff meetings, as well as various departmental and university committees or teams, were held online, and this practice continued in 2021. All of these bodies dealing with issues of teaching, research, international cooperation, etc. worked normally, although they only contacted each other remotely.

Unfortunately, national and international conference activity ceased altogether. In time, this was also transferred to the online arena. However, there was a distinct lack of free discussion and integration of national and international communities.

The possibility of organising congresses and scientific conferences with direct participation of participants in Poland emerged in September 2021. In that month (and in October, as well as in November), we had an explosion of large congresses and political science conferences, e.g. the International Scientific Conference in the series “Europe of the 21st Century” entitled “Europe and the European Union facing the challenges of 2020-2021” (Collegium Polonicum in Slubice, 16-17 September 2021) and the 8th International Asian Congress, entitled “The Limits of Politics: Realities, Strategies, Perspectives” (Toruń, 22-24 September 2021), which were attended by several hundred participants from Poland and abroad.

5. Conclusions

The period of pandemic and academic activity from March 2020 to October 2021 has created many difficulties for teaching, research and organisation. The new academic year 2021/2022 is an attempt to return to traditional classes.

Performing teaching duties in an online format has forced all researchers to rapidly improve their IT skills. Nowadays, regardless of age and seniority, eve-

ryone is proficient in using remote learning tools, teaching classes and attending meetings on teaching or organisational issues.

Certainly, numerous new areas of research issues have emerged for political scientists related to the functioning of the state in various aspects. In principle, all of the main objects of interest for political scientists have been transformed and influenced.

The difficulties related to the personal lives of the staff also cannot be forgotten. The period of online classes was associated with busy care for young children, the elderly, or loneliness and limited contact with family and friends. All of this significantly reduced the time available for research, as well as mental and physical comfort.

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Political science in Slovakia and the Covid-19 pandemics

1. Introduction

The aim of the presented chapter is to identify how the Covid-19 pandemic, which broke out in 2019, has affected the situation of political science in Slovakia, especially in terms of its teaching at universities. Within the framework of the analysis, the development of political science in Slovakia is reflected. In the former Czechoslovakia, political science could be established as a fully-fledged and independent discipline only after the political changes in 1989, including the political and social context in which it operates. The next part deals with the reaction of Slovak society and state institutions to the onset of the pandemic, which hit Slovakia for the first time in the spring of 2020. The third part deals with the implications of the pandemic for the educational process at universities, including the teaching of political science. The fourth part provides a reflection on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the social sciences environment in Slovakia.

2. Political science in Slovakia – struggle for recognition

Political science is a relatively new discipline in Slovakia. It was only established as an independent discipline after the political changes in 1989, although the first attempts at teaching and research in this field were already made during the attempted reform of the communist regime in 1968. However, Soviet intervention and the introduction of the so-called regime of “Normalization“ put an end to these attempts. Although in 1969 the oldest Slovak university - Comenius University in Bratislava - published the first textbook of political

science in Slovakia (Škaloud 1969), its author Jan Škaloud had to leave the university the following year as a result of political purges (Říchová 2013).

In a way, the precursor of political science was the subject of scientific communism, which could be taken separately or was part of the so-called “common grounds” of Marxism-Leninism courses, compulsory for students of all university disciplines. Scientific communism was introduced into the university educational system in the second half of the 1950s, and remained a part of mandatory education till the end of the communist regime in 1989 (see further Urbášek and Pulec 2012; Kopeček 2009, 2019). Although the relevant departments were located at each university (faculty), they were centrally managed by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The study of international relations was not implemented as a separate discipline in Slovakia at all, which was also a consequence of Slovakia’s peripheral position in the federative Czecho-Slovak state. The absence of institutionalized political science was partly compensated for by dissident authors such as Miroslav Kusý and Milan Šimečka, whose publications, for obvious reasons, focused mainly on the communist regime and so-called real socialism (Kusý 1991; Kusý and Šimečka 1984). The first generation of political scientists in Slovakia can thus be identified in terms of their origins as former teachers of Marxism-Leninism, as well as social scientists and historians, who were banned from working in science and publishing after the onset of “normalization” and the political purges of 1969-1970. The political changes in 1989 allowed them to return to their previous positions as part of the rehabilitation process. Finally, the third group consists of scientists who, before 1989, worked in other disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, history, legal studies, etc. However, this division is only of a purely “genealogical” nature; the inclusion of an individual in one of the groups does not predict the quality of his or her scientific output. Given the political conditions, a paradoxical situation has thus arisen in which, although political science had plenty of potential teachers in its early days, in reality it had to start, so to speak, from scratch, on a “green field”.

The Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava became the first political science department in Slovakia established in 1990. Its first head was Miroslav Kusý, a former dissident, Charter 77 signatory and philosopher. The establishment of the Slovak Political Science Association (*Slovenské združenie pre politické vedy, SZPV*) at the Slovak Academy of Sciences as an association of researchers and those interested in the knowledge of political science was a step towards the creation of a scientific

community in the field. In 1994, the International Political Science Association (IPSA) accepted SZPV as a member. In addition, SZPV was also a member of the regional branch of IPSA, the Central and Eastern European Political Science Association (CEPSA), which was officially established in April 2000 (Malová and Miháliková 2018). In later years, after 2010, the activities of this association gradually declined, and in 2021 an attempt was made to reactivate it.

Within the framework of the former Commission of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Examination of the Crisis Period 1967-1970, made up of members of all three groups from which political scientists were recruited in Slovakia after 1989, a Department of Political Science was established within the Slovak Academy of Sciences in 1990. In 2002, it was transformed into the Institute of Political Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The conflicting course of political transformation in Slovakia in the 1990s contributed to the formation of political science research also on the ground of non-state institutions, the so-called think-tanks, the most important of which are the Research Centre of the Slovak Society for Foreign Policy (RC SFPA) and the liberal-oriented Institute for Public Affairs (IVO). Both of these institutions (unlike others that have since disappeared) continue to operate to this day. In their case, however, they cannot be called scientific institutions in the full sense of the word; they are rather oriented towards analytical work, although the RC SFPA had ambitions, for example, to publish the scientific journal *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* (2000-2005). Another journal, focused on international studies, was *International Issues* (Medzinárodné otázky), established by the Slovak Institute of International Studies (SIMŠ) which was published in Slovak (1992-2005). Since 2006, both journals merged into the journal *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, published exclusively in English. Since 1999, the RC SFPA started publishing the Slovak Foreign Policy Yearbook with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. Other similar think tanks operate in Slovakia in the field of security studies, but even these cannot be described as academic political science departments. Think tanks attached to political parties or ideologically oriented think tanks are practically absent. The existing ones are generally dependent on cooperation with other, mostly academically oriented institutions.

Gradually, departments of political science or civics began to be formed at other universities, which was related to the extensive development of the university network. After 2002, private universities joined them, and some of them also established departments of political science. In the 1990s, since political

science was one of the particularly attractive fields of study, in this context we can speak of a kind of political science boom, at least in quantitative terms such as the number of departments and students. The founding of new universities during the second half of the 1990s also became part of the political struggle. After 2000, increasing the number of students at individual universities became a means of increasing their income from the state budget.

Later, departments of political science or civic education began to be formed at other universities, which was related to the extensive development of the university network. After 2002, private universities joined them, and some of them also established departments of political science.

During the 1990s and in the 2000s, departments of political science were formed at universities in Trnava (Trnava University in Trnava) as well as at the “competing” University of St. Cyril and Methodius. Other departments were established at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice and at the University of Prešov. Of great importance was the establishment of the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations at the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, whose ambition was to educate future employees of the Department of Diplomacy. Among the more important departments, mention can also be made of the Department of Political Science and Eurasian Studies (formerly the Department of Political Science and European Studies) at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, the Institute of European Studies and International Relations as well as the Institute of Public Policy at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University, and the relevant faculty of the University of Economics in Bratislava also provides studies in international relations. The Department of Political Science also operates at the Catholic University of Ružomberok. Some less important departments have since disappeared or reduced their activities, such as the Department of Political Science at the University of Žilina and the private Pan-European University in Bratislava. The University of Central Europe in Skalica, providing education in international relations, has completely disappeared. In terms of applied political science disciplines, the Faculty of Public Administration in Košice at the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice is active, but political science research is also carried out in departments and faculties oriented towards mass media communication and partly also at the Police Academy of the Slovak Republic. Of course, applied political science

research is also carried out in private polling agencies and within the expert bodies of the state institutions.

Several political science journals are published in Slovakia. Among the first was the aforementioned journal “*Medzinárodné otázky*”, whose successor - *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* - ceased publication in 2020 for financial reasons. Another is the journal “*Politické vedy*” (The Journal Political Sciences), whose publication was initiated in 1998 by the Institute of Political Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. At present, the journal is published in Slovak and English and is indexed in WOS. The Slovak Journal of Political Science (“*Slovenská politologická revue*”) has been published since 2001, its publisher is the Faculty of Social Sciences of the UCM in Trnava, and the journal is currently indexed in the SCOPUS database.

The Institute of Political Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences has been publishing the bilingual (Slovak/Czech and English) journal *Studia Politica Slovaca* since 2008. Since 2003, the journal of *Medzinárodné vzťahy* (Slovak Journal of International Relations), an open access journal, has been publishing articles mainly in Slovak and Czech languages. In 2012, the Institute of the Political Science at the University of Prešov (Faculty of Arts) launched an electronic open-access semi-annual journal *Annales Scientia Politica*. In 2007 – 2016, the Department of Political Science at the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice published a semi-annual online journal in Slovak *Sociálne a politické analýzy* (Social and Political Analyses, SaPA).

However, the journal *Sociology*, which has a longer tradition, also publishes articles in the field of political science. It has been published by the Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences since 1969 and is indexed in Current Contents: Social & Behavioural Sciences (Thomson ISI). In addition to these journals, other journals are published at some universities, but their impact is more local.

In the past, D. Malová and S. Miháliková identified several main problems of the development of political science in Slovakia - fragmentation, poor communication within the academic community, insufficiently built databases (scientific libraries) or focusing primarily on Slovakia (Malová and Miháliková 2018). In the case of the latter point, we can speak of a certain change in the situation, in terms of quality, especially in the case of the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University, the Department of Political Science of the

Faculty of Political Science of the Faculty of Arts of the Comenius University and, to a lesser extent, the Faculty of International Relations of the University of Economics. The Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences is also actively working on its internationalization, which has been helped by the introduction of studies exclusively in English (within the political science fields of study). However, there is still the problem of the lack of autonomy of this discipline, which was also noted by D. Malová and S. Miháliková (Malová and Miháliková 2018), and its interconnection with disciplines such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, legal sciences, etc. In this respect, political science has not yet fully established itself as an autonomous discipline. There is also the problem of the lack of acceptance of the need for political science research by the state and the general public. Negative statements about political science and political scientists, but also about the intellectuals in general, have been made by government officials (e.g. former Prime Minister Robert Fico) (Marušiak 2021), and in the context of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, such attacks have been made against the more broadly defined intellectual community, criticizing some of the government's actions, by another former Prime Minister, Igor Matovič (2020-2021). On the other hand, the negative image of political science in the eyes of the Slovak public often stems also from internal problems of the political science community, especially in connection with the absence of critical reflection on publications, the low quality of the peer-review process, when in the past even the SZPV refused to deal with setting and maintaining professional standards within the political science community, as pointed out, for example, by A. Školka (Školka 2003).

Unlike in Poland, where a number of research institutions outside universities or the Polish Academy of Sciences operate, and even their activities are regulated by special laws, such as the Center for Eastern Studies or the Polish Institute of International Affairs (but also the Institute of International Relations affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), in Slovakia similar institutions are absent, and although there have been sporadic attempts to build them, none of them have been completed in terms of organizational and personnel construction (for example, the Institute of Security and Defense Studies at the Ministry of Defense of Slovak Republic, besides the already-mentioned Slovak Institute for International Studies) and such institutions have ceased to exist after a short period of time.

The lack of internationalization of studies is also a problem. This situation is changing in terms of the admission of foreign students, with Slovak universities

being destinations mainly for students from Ukraine and Serbia. On the other hand, a large number of Slovak university students go abroad to study, to the Czech Republic, where they have the opportunity to study free of charge with practically zero language barrier, but in recent years also to other countries, which, together with an unfavourable demographic development, represents a serious problem in terms of the future of Slovak higher education, not only in the field of political science. From the point of view of internationalization of the teaching staff, the Institute of European Studies and International Relations at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava can be considered very successful.

3. Slovakia and the response to pandemic Covid-19

The first information on the outbreak of virus pneumonia in China (Wu-Han city) was published by the Slovak Public Health Service on 10 January 2020, and the first preventive measures against the spread of the virus were taken. The first known case of the disease was recorded in the Slovak Republic on 6 March 2020. Upon the decision of the Security Council of the Slovak Republic, a consultative body at the Government of Slovak Republic, established a crisis staff in place at the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic since 27 February 2020, meeting under the chairmanship of the Minister of the Interior, with the participation of the Chief Hygienist, representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. The universities, namely the Comenius University in Bratislava and the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, were among the first to react to the outbreak of the pandemic and jointly decided on 8 March 2020 to take precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the disease. These are the two largest universities with more than 30 thousand students, which also include a dormitory complex in Mlynská dolina (Bratislava). They decided to suspend classes, initially until 21 March, i.e. for a period of two weeks. The teaching activities were to take place in the form of self-study or by some other suitable method to be regulated by the deans of the faculties or by persons authorised by them.

On 15 March, a state of emergency was declared in Slovakia. At that time, the organization of any public events was already prohibited, affecting 22 state-run health facilities. On 16 March, all kindergartens, primary and secondary

schools and universities were closed. Originally, they were to be closed for only 14 days and students were to return to school on 30 March. All leisure facilities and venues were also closed. A compulsory 14-day quarantine was introduced for all those returning from abroad. Only people with permanent or temporary residence in Slovakia or a valid passport were allowed to enter Slovakia. Failure to comply with the regulation could result in a fine of up to €1,659. Retail sales and the sale of services were prohibited in all establishments except food stores, pharmacies and drugstores.

The first phase of the pandemic coincided with the change of government after the parliamentary elections held in Slovakia on 29 February 2020. A new government was appointed by the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová, on 21 March 2020. The government, led by Peter Pellegrini dominated by Smer-SD (Direction – Social Democracy), (which introduced the first preventive measures against the spreading the pandemic) was replaced by a centre-right government led by Igor Matovič (*Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti* – Ordinary People and Independent Personalities) with three minor coalition parties. The first phase of easing measures started on 22 April 2020, retail outlets and services were opened, but on 23 April a decision was taken to abolish the school-leaving exams in the 2019/20 school year, the school-leaving certificate was to be granted on the basis of the average of the previous grades in respective subjects. Only students who were dissatisfied with their average grade could take the school-leaving examination. The first state of emergency ended on June 14, 2020. Although the emergency measures were relatively calmly accepted by the population during the first wave of the pandemic, the consensus began to erode in the summer months of 2020, when the first anti-government protests broke out.

The start of the second wave of the pandemic was officially confirmed by the Minister of Health Marek Krajčí on 11 August 2020. The second state of emergency was declared by the government of Igor Matovič on 1 October 2020, initially for 45 days until 14 November 2020, but was gradually extended for seven months until 14 May 2021. In this context, an amendment to the Constitution was adopted, allowing the government to extend it repeatedly. It was then repealed by an amendment to the Economic Mobilisation Act, which allows the government to manage a pandemic without an emergency.

Vaccination started in Slovakia on 26 December 2020, but the process was slow, initially due to a shortage of vaccines, later due to low public interest and the fact that support for vaccination had become the subject of an internal

political conflict between the government and the opposition, but also partly within the governing coalition. After Prime Minister I. Matovič in the spring of 2021, without the knowledge of the rest of the government, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, ordered and had imported Sputnik V vaccines from the Russian Federation to the Slovak Republic (in addition to vaccines registered in the EU), a political crisis broke out, which led to a change in the post of Prime Minister, while maintaining the current government coalition. The new government of Eduard Heger (OĽaNO), appointed on 1 April, 2021, allowed vaccination with the Sputnik V vaccine, but did not continue to import it. In connection with the worsening of the pandemic situation in Slovakia, a state of emergency was declared again on 25 November 2021.

The government's handling of the pandemic has caused considerable dissatisfaction among a section of the population. However, these concern not only the restriction of personal freedoms as a result of taking preventive measures against the spread of the disease, but also the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, the decline in the standard of living of the population and, finally, the crippling of some small and medium-sized businesses. The first protests, which were not claimed by any organized groups, erupted in the summer months of 2020, and by October 2020 they were already clearly dominated by the radical right. Later, during the national holiday on 17 November 2020, a protest organized by the Smer-Social Democracy party took place in front of the building of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Another protest was organized by the radical right People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS).

In the following months, these two opposition parties were also the most involved in the protests against the pandemic measures. Representatives of the Smer-SD and ĽSNS parties have questioned the need for vaccination in their speeches, as has Peter Pellegrini, the leader of the opposition Hlas-SD (Voice-Social Democracy) party, who left Smer-SD in the summer of 2020, who has been reluctant to vaccinate. In the case of Slovakia, the attitude towards the pandemic is thus becoming a dividing line between the coalition and the opposition. The fight against the pandemic is taking place in conditions of fierce political struggle, as a number of nominees of the former ruling coalition, especially members of the Smer-SD party, are facing accusations of involvement in corruption cases. The new centre-right government has also scrapped some of the previous government's social measures. The escalation of political and socio-economic confrontation within society is also negatively reflected in trust

in political elites and, consequently, in the low level of support for preventive measures against the spread of the pandemic, including vaccination. This situation, too, makes Slovakia one of the worst in Europe in terms of vaccination rates. The share of adults who were fully vaccinated against Covid-19, is among the worst in the European Economic Area (55.4 percent, as of 9 December 2021) and only Romania (46.7 percent) and Bulgaria (31.3 percent) had lower vaccination levels.

4. The Covid-19 pandemic and the teaching of political science in Slovakia - a case study of Comenius University in Bratislava

The first measures were addressed through improvisation, the summer semester was extended, with online teaching via MS Teams, Moodle and email communication was introduced in March 2020. Similarly, e-learning-based seminars were launched and, where necessary, assessments were modified depending on the individual courses. However, the first measures were aimed at extending the semesters and postponing the date of examinations or thesis defences to a later time.

However, on 10 June 2020, the Rector of Comenius University allowed full-time educational activities, subject to hygiene rules, and the dormitories began slowly returning to normal mode, with graduation ceremonies being moved to the autumn. Depending on the individual faculties, the state final exams were either conducted in full-time form or remained with the distance learning model. Thus, by the summer semester of 2020, full-time teaching at universities had not been effectively restored.

In the winter semester 2020, in view of the rapidly deteriorating epidemic situation, the Rector of Comenius University in Bratislava, Marek Števec, decided on 28 September 2020, on the basis of the recommendation of the University's Crisis Staff, to discontinue full-time teaching altogether. A state of emergency was re-declared in Slovakia on 1 October 2020 and, subsequently, at other schools in the Slovak Republic, teaching in the school year 2020/2021 was suspended as of 12 October 2020 and did not resume until the end of the calendar year 2020; absentee teaching continued in the summer semester of 2021 and then again in the winter semester of the academic year 2021/22. In May 2021, full-time teaching was allowed for the medical faculties, while the

recommendation to continue teaching by distance learning remained in force for the other faculties.

The relevant methodological guidelines to facilitate the distance learning process were developed by Comenius University in March 2021. They are oriented towards teaching via MS Teams and Moodle, special instructions were developed for the MS Teams programme, as it was a new teaching method. A site was also set up to support university-wide distance learning. Distance learning gradually became an accepted form of education after the initial shock and often improvisation. According to a survey carried out at the university, in the summer semester of the academic year 2019/20, 4 per cent of the teachers surveyed did not use e-learning methods at all (Comenius University 2020: 3), in the summer semester of 2020/21, all of them had switched to e-learning Comenius University (Comenius University 2021a: 3).

Both surveys showed that MS Teams and Moodle were the most commonly used programs for online teaching, with respondents rating these as the most reliable options. College teachers were gradually getting used to the distance learning process. While as many as 15 percent of respondents rated their online learning competencies as rather weak in the spring months of the 2019/2020 academic year and one percent rated their online learning competencies as insufficient, 23 percent of respondents rated their online learning competencies as insufficient in the 2020/21 academic year. However, this can also be interpreted as part of a process of gradual discovery of the opportunities that e-learning provides. This is also evidenced by the students' evaluation of distance learning, who, in the summer semester of the academic year 2020/21, overwhelmingly stated that the quality of online learning had somewhat improved (37.29 percent) or improved very much (17.2 percent) compared to the previous academic year (Comenius University 2021b). On the other hand, no technical or financial assistance was offered to teachers for the transition to distance learning.

5. Covid-19 pandemic from the perspective of social sciences in Slovakia

The Covid-19 pandemic, as a new social challenge, has contributed to the increased interest of the media and, to some extent, of political elites in co-operation with science. This has been reflected in the presence of members of the scientific community in the media, although this has primarily concerned experts in the natural sciences (virology) and medicine. Gradually, however,

public interest also began to focus on the social consequences of the pandemic. The need to involve the academic community in dealing with the pandemic and its consequences was also reflected by the state-budget Slovak Research and Development Agency - the main national grant agency established to support research and development in Slovakia by granting financial means from the State Budget. In June 2020, it published a one-off call under the program "Support for research and development with a focus on coping with the coronavirus pandemic and its impacts for the period 2020-2021" (PP-Covid 2020). The call was open to all disciplines, but only two projects in the social sciences and humanities received state support. One of them was the interdisciplinary project "Will we recover from pandemic Covid19? - social, economic and legal perspectives of the pandemic crisis?" (PP-Covid-20-0026), which addresses, among other things, the issues of legislative measures, information flows in the context of the pandemic and the protection of human rights in the context of a pandemic. The project is coordinated by the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University. This faculty was also awarded the project "Public Trust, Resilience and Perceived Threat COVID-19" under the call for proposals. (PP-COVID-20-0074). The low level of support for social science projects reflects the prevailing technocratic approaches to dealing with the pandemic in Slovakia.

As part of the long-term project "How are you, Slovakia?", implemented by the Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Social Communication Research of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the research agency MNFORCE and the Seesame communication agency, monitoring of the attitudes of the population towards various situations and social phenomena related to the pandemic has been carried out since 2020. Several experts from the Institute for Research in Social Communication. Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences have addressed the social consequences of the pandemic in their media appearances and blogs, respectively (Panczová and Fülöpová, n.d.). For their activities in 2020, they were also awarded the Slovak Academy of Sciences awards (Udelili ceny SAV..., 2021). In the second half of 2020 and in 2021, other projects related to the impact of the pandemic were also launched. Among the political science aspects, the spread of conspiracy theories came into focus (Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations), as well as the issue of EU Green Recovery (Comenius University in Bratislava, Department of Political

Sciences) and the spreading of disinformation (Center for Psychological and Social Sciences, Slovak Academy of Sciences). From the point of view of social sciences and humanities, it is important that most of the above-mentioned projects are interdisciplinary in nature, thus the pandemic is also perceived as a complex phenomenon in the environment of the political science community in the Slovak Republic.

6. Conclusions

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in Slovakia was accompanied by a change of governments, when a coalition of four centre-right political parties was formed instead of a government controlled by the Smer-SD party after the parliamentary elections held in February 2020. The political situation in Slovakia is characterized not only by the internal instability of the ruling coalition, which led in April 2021 to the replacement of Prime Minister Igor Matovič (OĽaNO) by the Minister of Finance Eduard Heger from the same party. There was also a heated confrontation between the ruling coalition and the opposition, which is negatively reflected in the level of support for government measures in relation to the pandemic, as the issue of dealing with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic has become the subject of a political struggle.

The academic environment adapted to the “new normal” relatively quickly, and the transition to distance learning was without major problems. Although social scientists, including political scientists, have been present in the public debate on the pandemic since its outbreak, they have been only marginally represented in terms of support for scholarly projects focused on the issue.

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Miro Haček

Political science in Central Europe during the pandemic: the case of Slovenia

1. Introduction

In the final months of 2021, Slovenian political science will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of its existence, having been founded in the early 1960s. In the past three decades since Slovenia's independence, political science has played an important role in the processes of democratic transition and consolidation in the 1990s and accession to the European Union in the 2000s, and we can easily claim its crucial role in the state-building processes. However, in the last 18 months, political science – much like all other academic fields – is facing a completely new challenge, quite different from the previous challenges, i.e. the Bologna reform process, low student participation and internationalisation networking.

We are talking, of course, about the new coronavirus pandemic, which affects not only the way political science is taught, but also how internationalisation processes are conducted and how research projects are managed, both at the international and national levels. This serious challenge is also the focus of this paper, which analyses the reaction(s) of the Slovenian academic community, including political science, to the new coronavirus pandemic and to the new realism Covid-19 disease is bringing to the academic world. The current paper uses publicly available data to analyse the public health measures taken by Slovenian authorities to contain the spread of novel coronavirus and assesses how these measures have affected the academic community.

2. Historical overview and current institution-based research background in political science

Political science is one of the most important social science disciplines of the present day. As an instrument for the systematic treatment and study of political phenomena and politics in general, it is also one of the oldest fields of human pursuit and knowledge. It aims to identify the connections between politics and society and to compare the multitude of political, economic, demographic and other events or facts and their analysis with a certain methodology. In the recent period of intense globalization and especially economic crisis, it is becoming increasingly important. As a specialized discipline, it has developed in modern history because of the past, its beginnings date back to the period between the two world wars, and it experienced its greatest expansion after the Second World War, when it was established or institutionalized in a large number of mainly Western European countries and in the United States. At the same time, it gradually became internationalized and a global process. Within this process, we can also see the emergence and development of Slovenian political science in the 1960s.

The analysis of the development of political science in Slovenia, notwithstanding its recent emergence, is not an easy task, because it is necessary to consider several historical, economic and socio-political factors and conditions that have influenced its development, both domestically and internationally. Before the Second World War, there was no political science in Slovenia, at least not formally. We can find some origins, for example, in the 1781 program of the Academy of Opera Houses, which was founded by a group of Slovenian intellectuals and whose aims included “the study of law and political science” (Bibič 1994: 1). After World War II, Slovenia was a Yugoslav republic with many features of independent statehood, but this period was marked by a socialist system based on ideological assumptions about the dictatorship of the proletariat and a class interpretation of politics that did not allow for independence of social sciences. After the conflict with the Soviet Union in 1948, an alternative model of socialist self-government emerged in Yugoslavia that allowed for a limited pluralism of interests. The need of the political elite for knowledge of political science and the consideration of some general factors (the economic development of Western liberal democratic countries) dictated the inclusion of social sciences and the opening of opportunities for the development of political science. The new discipline was institutionalized in Slovenia in 1961

with the establishment of the School of Political Science, which was renamed the School of Sociology, Political Science and Journalism in 1968. Two years later, the school became a faculty within the University of Ljubljana. In the same year, the Slovenian Political Science Association was founded. The development of political science in Slovenia, expressed in many professional works and their perspectives, can therefore only be seen in the broader context of the development of political science in the modern world, with the beginnings of its institutionalization influenced by the situation in the former socialist Yugoslavia.

After Slovenia became an independent state, Slovenian political science experienced a great boom and new development, and its capabilities also increased (Zajc 2003: 5). Rejuvenated in terms of personnel, political science began to study political parties, the electoral process and the formation of a new political elite. Research on the transition and consolidation of democracy was compared with the transition in some other new countries in the former Yugoslavia and in the wider Central and Eastern European region. Research on fundamental new state institutions such as the parliament, the executive and public administration was carried out in conjunction with studies of the place and role of smaller countries in the world and in the European Union. New research projects were also launched in the field of international relations and defence. These research efforts took place at the Faculty of Social Sciences, where the only political science department in Slovenia is located. There are some other institutions that offer some political science courses (the School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica) or even MA programs (the University of Primorska), but they do not have political science departments. The political science department is organized into five research centres, i.e. the Centre for Political Science Research (CPR), the Centre for International Relations Research (CMO), the Défense Research Centre (ORC), the Centre for Critical Political Science (CKP) and the Centre for the Study of Administrative Policy Processes and Institutions (CPUPI).

The period of democratic transition and consolidation was also a time of restructuring the Department of Political Science, modernizing and diversifying the undergraduate political science program in the Faculty of Social Sciences, and increasing the number of employees. Four undergraduate courses in political science were created and taught within the framework of special chairs, combining the classical sub-disciplines of political science to varying degrees, i.e. analytical political science, policy analysis and public administration, defence

studies and international relations. We could also add interdisciplinary European studies to this list, mainly related to political science and international relations. In the context of integration, the functioning of European Union institutions and transnational decision-making have attracted much attention, especially the role of nation-states, their governments and parliaments in decision-making processes. There is no doctoral program exclusively dedicated to political science. In 2008, the University of Ljubljana established a new interdisciplinary program in humanities and social sciences in which students can choose several subfields, including political science or other political science sub-disciplines such as policy analysis, European studies and international relations.

In the 2000s, political science in Slovenia was involved in the reform processes triggered by the Bologna process and later influenced by the global economic crisis. Although there were no dramatic organizational changes at the Faculty of Social Sciences and in the Department of Political Science, the Bologna reform, which was planned in the early 2000s and implemented with the first generation of students in the academic year 2005/2006, triggered some changes in the organizational and didactic paradigms of political science courses. In the first reform cycle, the changes were still minor (the 4+1+3 formula was introduced for all political science, i.e. four years for undergraduate studies, one year for graduate studies, and three years for doctoral studies), but later, when the second wave of reform started (mainly triggered by the financial crisis that undermined state funding of public universities in Slovenia in the early and mid-2010s), the changes were more substantial and the formula was changed to 3+2+3, which was just introduced with the 2018/19 academic year. The second reform cycle also means that fewer political science courses are now offered, motivated mainly by financial savings, but also means that some political science subjects have had to be dropped from the curricula altogether (e.g. political leadership, federalism studies). We can clearly state that the first reform cycle in the mid-2000s had a negative impact on the financial sustainability of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and, in the case of some political science programs such as Political Theory or Policy Analysis & Public Administration, also a negative impact on student numbers.

3. Slovenian response to novel coronavirus pandemic

The unstoppable and extremely rapid spread of the novel coronavirus in the first half of 2020 presented an unprecedented challenge to all governments of the world. Looking at the timeline of events from today's perspective, we see that the first case of infection with a new, unknown disease was reported by China to the World Health Organization on December 31, 2019. The World Health Organization designated the novel coronavirus as public health emergency of international concern; on March 11, 2020, it declared a global pandemic. In the first three months of 2020 alone, the virus spread rapidly across the globe, causing severe illness among those infected and claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands. The social isolation instituted by the government's total lockdown measures served to contain the transmission and spread of the novel coronavirus but had a tremendous impact on individual and societal mental health, quality of life, as well as the economy, standard of living, and welfare.

Because the virus has spread so rapidly throughout the world, leaving deaths in its wake, along with long-term consequences for people's mental and physical health, endangering lives, altering individuals' lifestyles, affecting basic activities such as education and health, limiting human rights and affecting interpersonal relationships, affecting the psychological state of individuals as well as society, it was necessary to act and respond quickly and simultaneously. The novel coronavirus pandemic represents a universal threat that crosses physical, temporal and social boundaries and requires a joint response by countries, international and non-governmental organizations. At the outset of the pandemic, countries shared information, learned from each other, and coordinated their responses (Mintrom and O'Connor 2020: 206; Goodman et al. 2020), but this synchronicity quickly proved extremely fragile; moreover, countries quickly became competitors in procuring protective equipment.

During the first and second waves of the novel coronavirus, Slovenian policymakers, like their European counterparts, had to take various public health measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus. These measures ranged from public health measures (mandatory protective masks, mandatory social distancing, closure of non-essential businesses, restriction of public gatherings, closure of primary and secondary schools and universities) to more restrictive measures such as orders to stay at home and closures of all public life. Some measures were in place for a limited period, such as orders to stay at home,

while others, such as the requirement to wear masks indoors, were in place for a longer period of time.

Slovenia was among the EU members to introduce massive closures of educational institutions, including universities. The closures began almost immediately after the Slovenian government declared a novel coronavirus epidemic on March 12, 2020, just one day after the World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic. Several various public health measures to combat novel coronavirus, along with more restrictive measures like home stay orders, followed the proclamation the next day. All three Slovenian public universities responded by moving the educational process online, which was, of course, much easier to do in the social sciences and humanities than in the life and natural sciences. Since the mid-March period was only the fourth week of the Spring 2020 semester, much of the semester was conducted online. Even when the government eventually lifted the epidemic proclamation in mid-May 2020, just two weeks before the end of the lecture period, the universities decided to finish the spring 2020 semester online, with much of the exams being conducted online as well, using online tools like exam.net. Most of the lectures and seminars in the Spring 2020 semester were therefore conducted online, along with presentations and final defences of bachelor and master's degree works and even PhD dissertations, using internet tools such as Zoom and Skype, as most universities were not at all prepared for online teaching. This was not the case with the Faculty of Social Sciences, which already had some experience with online teaching and had already prepared and used the online lecture hall tools, although, of course, not to the extent as in the Spring 2020 semester. Especially for the PhD students, there were no constraints rewarding PhD degrees during the time of the pandemic, although there were no events (e.g. PhD seminars or defences) that could have been organized in-person at all until June 2021, and even after this time, the events had limited in-person attendance and were mostly limited just to the candidates and their PhD commissions being in-person, and the public only following the events in a virtual environment. Almost immediately after the national government declared the epidemic, students had to return home, as the student housing was closed and a national stay-at-home order was issued, restricting movement to the regions and even to the municipalities. Faculties were closed to all but essential services and all teaching was moved to virtual lecture halls.

An even worse fate awaited research projects as most of them were (temporarily) stopped, especially those that required field research. This is where the

National Research Agency came to the rescue, as most national and even some international research projects were extended.

It was clear even during summer 2020 that there will be another wave of Covid-19 disease coming in the autumn and winter of 2020 and 2021, and Slovenian universities used the summer recess to prepare for the upcoming academic year of 2020-2021, fearing the repeat of the spring 2020 distance learning. Ministry of Education prepared different models of learning for primary, secondary and tertiary education, dependent on the situation with Covid-19 disease. As Slovenian primary and secondary institutions began their academic year on September 1, 2020, the situation with Covid-19 disease started to deteriorate quite rapidly. When universities started their Fall 2020 semester on October 1, 2020, with a hybrid model of teaching, where some of the students were present in person and some were online, it was clear that this model was not sustainable in the long run. And indeed, it survived only for two weeks before the government again declared a national epidemic on October 18, 2020, and again ordered the closure of all educational institutions, prompting a renewed move to online teaching, but this time universities and instructors were much better prepared for this possibility, as most materials were readily prepared for online delivery. The second wave of Covid-19 disease hit Slovenia much harder compared to the relatively mild first wave, prompting much stricter and, above all, a longer period of closures of public life, resulting not only in most of the Fall 2020 semester being conducted online, but also the entire spring 2021 semester sharing the same fate. Although the second national epidemic period ended only on June 15, 2021, the situation with the Covid-19 disease improved significantly during spring 2021, prompting the re-opening of educational institutions, beginning with primary and secondary schools in the so-called red phase (when the number of hospitalised persons with Covid-19 fell under 1200), in March 2021. Universities were re-opened in early May 2021 in the so-called yellow phase (when the number of those hospitalised with Covid-19 fell under 500), when the spring 2021 semester was already in the last four weeks of the lectures period. Most instructors decided to end their lectures online, but some decided to meet their students for the first time with in-person classes and seminars.

4. Conclusions

The new coronavirus pandemic is a global threat because Covid-19 is a highly contagious disease, with new, even more contagious and deadly variants emerging every few months. Policymakers faced the difficult task of making decisions and taking measures to contain the unknown disease and convince citizens to consider these measures because, in many countries, health care systems are in danger of collapse due to a large number of infected patients and the spread of the coronavirus among medical staff. In Slovenia, the measures related to the Covid-19 disease were more severe and lasted longer than in most other EU member states, with many limitations and even closures of public life, including tertiary educational institutions, where most of the education process (36 out of 45 weeks) was moved to the virtual space for three consecutive semesters (spring 2020, autumn 2020 and spring 2021), using online tools such as Zoom and Skype for lectures and exam.net for conducting virtual exams.

Although the academic community succeeded in conducting the majority of the teaching process in the virtual space and the quality of this endeavour improved significantly during the process, the overall quality of academic learning was still significantly worse than prior to the Covid-19 period due to a lack of face-to-face contact with professors and TAs, opportunities to ask questions and engage in debates, dishonest practices on the part of students when submitting their seminar papers or taking online examinations. All of this most likely caused at least some damage to the quality of students' knowledge and competencies, which will be difficult, if not impossible, to repair in subsequent years and could have a negative impact on their professional careers.

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