



SYRI NEWS

Social Sciences Bulletin

SYRI conducts first major studies

A conference of scientists in autumn, extensive new SYRI studies with a special focus on practical applicability, evaluation by the international scientific board (ISAB), first results of research conducted by scientists from this unique consortium: according to SYRI's Scientific Director Klára Šedová (pictured below), 2023 will deliver all this. "Our goal is to raise awareness about research conducted in the social sciences. The information we wish to provide should

not only be of interest to scientific journals abroad, but it should be immediately applicable in practice too," says Klára Šedová, who has been leading this consortium of scientists from Masaryk University, Charles University and the Czech Academy of Sciences since the middle of last year. The SYRI National Institute has nine research groups that address current issues such as the state of the economy, polarisation in society and disinformation. "Many of

these issues have not been adequately researched," says Šedová. "We know, for instance, that society is polarised, but we need to bring context into the public space to explain why this is happening."

The researchers are in the process of producing detailed analyses of current issues that will be published as SYRI studies. The first study focuses on why Czech companies tend to employ Ukrainians in low-skilled positions.

"Our current focus is on how Ukrainian pupils are adapting in Czech schools," says Šedová, who also leads an SYRI research group addressing matters of education. "Schools have taken different approaches, some more effective than others. School principals and teachers have been left to sink or swim. They have had to cope with a high number of these students without adequate methodological support."

SYRI researchers will collect and analyse data and make recommendations to ministries and other institutions, so helping them make better decisions. "We wish to produce rapid, high-quality scientific outcomes that will be useful," Šedová says. SYRI scientists will publish their first major studies in scientific journals abroad, and a large conference will be held in autumn. The institute's activities are being monitored by the ISAB international panel, which includes representatives from the University of Oxford.



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Czech companies afraid of Ukrainians leaving, study shows

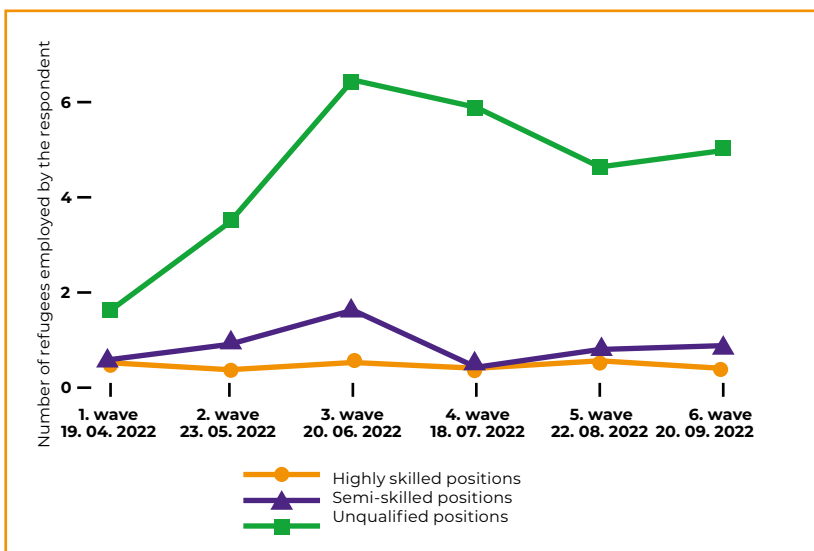
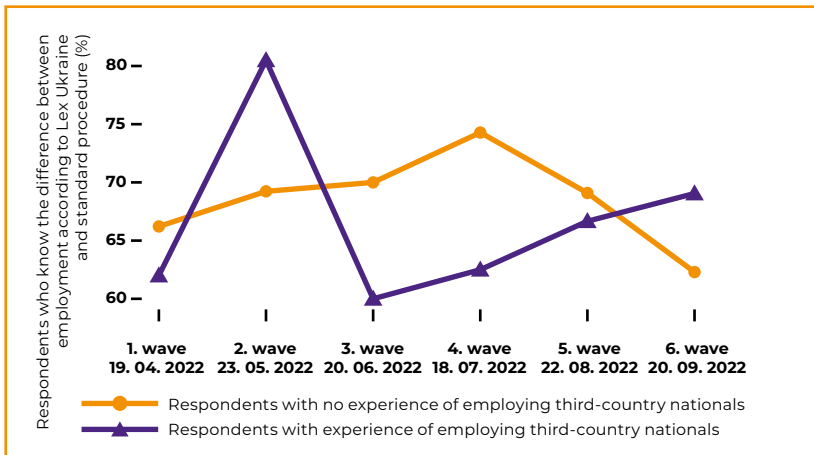
Czech companies tend to employ refugees from Ukraine mainly in low-skilled positions, such as warehouse worker, machine operator and auxiliary worker, research by experts at the SYRI National Institute shows. The main obstacle to Ukrainian refugees getting more highly skilled and better paid positions is their limited knowledge of Czech. Moreover, companies in the Czech Republic are concerned about the possible return of the refugees to Ukraine. Job applications from Czech citizens are preferred to applications from Ukrainian refugees also due to the fact that Czechs have qualifications required in the Czech Republic. SYRI researchers collected data in a questionnaire survey conducted in six waves between April and September 2022.

“The most significant barrier to employment of refugees is their knowledge of Czech,” says Štěpán Mikula of the SYRI research group focused on the labour market. “This obstacle is greater with more highly skilled occupations. Companies are also concerned about the possible return of Ukrainians to their country. More

highly skilled positions logically require greater investment in skills training, which would be completely wasted were the employees to leave the Czech Republic.” A possible return to Ukraine becomes a risk factor which, unlike easily verifiable language skills, cannot be influenced or tested by employers when they are hiring refugees.

Czechs also have an advantage over Ukrainians when applying for positions that require higher qualifications. For foreigners, the process of qualification recognition has long been problematic because it lacks transparency, requires excessive paperwork, and is very time-consuming. Lex Ukraine, a package of government bills that entered into force in March, has eased requirements in this regard, albeit only for some professions; most refugees still fail to meet the standard requirements, not least as many lack the relevant documents and have no way of acquiring them.

“In some segments of the Czech labour market there is still a shortage of workers. Therefore, it would be good to clarify the status of Ukrainian refugees currently provided with temporary protection,” Mikula explains. “The rules should show a clear path by which permanent residence status can be obtained. This would allow workers to maintain their current status in the labour market, motivate refugees to invest in their integration into Czech society, and so reduce the risk of their returning to Ukraine.” Researchers also recommend increasing the availability of language courses. Poor knowledge of Czech is most frequently mentioned by companies as a major obstacle, and adequate knowledge of the language is crucial for successful social integration.



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Knowledge of differences in legislative procedures when employing foreigners

Question: Do you know the differences between the employment of refugees from Ukraine in accordance with Lex Ukraine and the standard procedure for employing citizens of Ukraine and citizens of other non-EU countries (i.e. the Employment Permit and Employee Card system)?

Number of employed refugees

Question: How many refugees from Ukraine does your company currently employ in the following positions?



How people in Ukraine, Czechia, Estonia, Poland, Israel and Georgia cope with impacts of war

Scientists from the international research platform ResWell, in coordination with experts from Tel Aviv University, have analysed how people in different parts of the world experience the war in Ukraine. The team of experts collected data on



individual, community and national resilience directly from people living in Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Estonia and Israel.

Of all the nations, Czechs have the strongest sense of well-being while experiencing the lowest levels of hope. The Czech part of the research was coordinated by Alice Koubová of the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, who is also leading a research group at the SYRI National Institute focused on social resilience.

The results of the research study, conducted since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, were presented by Professor Shaul Kimhi of Tel Aviv University at the international event Facets of Resilience. This conference, held by the Czech Academy of Sciences in

cooperation with the SYRI National Institute, took place on 21–23 November 2022 at the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague.

The research study on resilience in relation to the war in Ukraine monitored levels of positive indicators of stress management (well-being, sense of hope, inner supports and moral principles), negative indicators of stress management (anxiety, symptoms of depression, feelings of threat, perception of specific threats), levels of support for the current government, and attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees.

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Study: Does back pain influence nurses' intention to leave the profession?

Almost one hundred percent of Czech nurses complain of back pain. Despite the shortage of nurses in the Czech Republic, this health issue receives less attention than it does in other European countries.

According to SYRI National Institute researchers, back pain is one explanation for why nurses are leaving the profession in favour of other, less strenuous work. While the overall number of nurses working in



the healthcare sector has increased slightly in recent years, there is still a significant deficit of around 1300 nursing posts in acute care and more than 500 posts in non-acute care.

SYRI researchers compared data from the Czech Republic with the situation in the UK, which – unlike Czechia – has a long-term strategy for prevention of back pain and other health issues in healthcare workers. While 84.7% (of 569 respondents) of nurses in the UK experience back pain, the number in the Czech Republic stands at an alarming 93% (of 529 respondents).

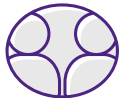
“In addition to back pain, Czech nurses reported a lack of compliance with health and safety issues in the workplace which increases the incidence of lower back pain,” said SYRI National Institute expert Andrea Pokorná, who has led the research study focused on this topic.

Although nursing staff make up the largest labour force in the healthcare sector, the Czech Republic lacks detailed datasets on them. Musculoskeletal lower back pain has yet to be recognised in Czechia as a work-related health issue. SYRI researchers seek to provide more detailed data with the aim of improving the situation.

“The study focused on nursing staff but did not include nurses who have changed their jobs because of back pain and other work-related health issues. What we have observed was only the tip of the iceberg,” Pokorná said, adding that one of the next steps is to focus on nurses who have already left the profession due to health problems.

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Causes of radicalisation in Czech society lie in past

The radicalisation of Czech society we have experienced in recent months has its origins in the 1990s, although communication errors on the part of the current government have contributed to increased numbers of dissatisfied citizens. These people do not believe in the current



political system, wishing for its complete transformation, claims Jan Charvát of the SYRI National Institute, who is an expert on the radicalisation of Czech society.

“As we look for answers for what has been happening in the Czech Republic in recent months and where the people who attend anti-government demonstrations are coming from, there is one thing we know for sure: the current situation is the result of several missteps taken by governments of the past,” Charvát says.

The first problematic moment, Charvát explains, came in the 1990s with the overlooking of a relatively large group of dissatisfied citizens. At that time, one-fifth of voters favoured anti-system parties. These people rejected political

transformation in the form it eventually took. In addition, the number of people who didn't vote was growing gradually. Currently, this group represents almost two-fifths of the Czech electorate.

“The second problem is acceptance of the disinformation scene during the migration crisis, legitimisation of disinformation by established political parties, and the subsequent inability of Czech society to effectively defend itself against disinformation narratives,” Charvát says.

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Gender pay gap still exists

The gender pay gap for equal work is still quite significant. This is also true of the Czech Republic, where the situation is actually getting worse, according to a major international analysis co-authored by researcher Alena Křížková of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the National SYRI Institute. While in Hungary the difference in average annual earnings between men and women aged between 30 and 55 is 9%, in the Czech



Republic it stands at 24%, according to a study published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*. Gender differences in earnings in the Czech Republic are related to motherhood and parental leave, the unavailability of childcare facilities for younger children and other gender stereotypes.

Experts have hitherto considered the main cause of earnings inequalities to be that women and men work in different jobs; men in better paid ones and at establishments with higher average wages. “However, we have found that differences in the ratio of women and men in the labour market and differences in pay between different occupations represent only one half of the problem,” says Křížková. “The other half concerns gender differences in earnings where women and men do the same job at the same workplace. Differences between the pay that women and men receive for the same work are still a very significant cause of the gender pay

gap, and this proved to be the case for all countries in the survey.”

An international team of researchers led by Professor Andrew Penner of the University of California, Irvine addressed differences between the total annual earnings of women and men aged 30–55 years in 15 countries. After making basic adjustments for differences of age, education and part-time status, they found that overall gender gaps in earnings were 9% in Hungary, 26% in the US and 33% in South Korea. In Czechia, in 2019 the difference between the annual earnings of the two genders was 24%.

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Integration of Ukrainian pupils somewhat haphazard in first phase

The process by which Ukrainian pupils are adapting to life in Czech schools is still somewhat haphazard, while approaches taken by schools differ in terms of effectiveness. Research by the SYRI National Institute has shown that in the first phase schools mainly focused on social adaptation of pupils, with integration into the Czech education system remaining a challenge for the next period. Overall, Ukrainian children feel comfortable in Czech schools. Ukrainian pupils and their parents perceive Czech teachers as friendly and supportive, and Czech classmates as cheerful.

The arrival of tens of thousands of Ukrainian pupils in Czech schools has presented the Czech education system with a major challenge, causing the state to focus principally on matters of legislation and necessary crisis measures. “Central methodological support was often unclear and not very specific. Schools have thus taken different approaches towards the adaptation of newly arrived Ukrainian pupils,” says SYRI’s Scientific Director Klára Šedová, who also leads a research group focused on education. While some

schools immediately established their own adaptation groups, adjusted educational content to the needs of Ukrainian pupils, created individualised timetables and provided diagnostics and psychological support, other schools did not have such well-developed adaptation mechanisms.

“The first results of the study show that the fewer problems schools identify regarding the inclusion of Ukrainian pupils, the fewer adaptation mechanisms the schools develop. It is also the case that what remains a dream in one school, such as the presence of Ukrainian assistants, is a reality in another,” says Šedová, who believes that schools should now focus on how Ukrainian pupils are adapting to Czech teaching methods and assessment so that they are able to succeed in the Czech education system.

According to another SYRI researcher, Petr Hladó, schools have focused primarily on the social integration of Ukrainian pupils, i.e. on creating positive social relationships in classes where Ukrainian pupils are involved. “School principals consider social adaptation a priority, and they believe that

it is running smoothly. However, to some extent they are seeing things through rose-tinted glasses,” says Hladó. “Our data has shown that in classes with a few Ukrainian pupils, these pupils tend to bond primarily with each other and keep their distance from Czech pupils.”

Overall, Ukrainian children feel comfortable in Czech schools. Ukrainian pupils and their parents perceive Czech teachers as friendly and supportive, and Czech classmates as cheerful. “Surprisingly, pupils report that they find Czech school less demanding than Ukrainian school. Our explanation for this is that in the first phase teachers set clearly lower educational standards for Ukrainian pupils so as to support their social adaptation,” said Šedová, who thinks schools should now focus on academic adaptation, which is problematic in many ways.

Researchers began collecting data for the survey last autumn. They conducted very thorough case studies in schools that have recently enrolled large numbers of Ukrainian refugees. The case studies included interviews with principals, teachers, pupils and their parents, as well as observation in the classroom. SYRI National Institute experts will now work on a detailed analysis of the data, which will be provided to the Czech Ministry of Education and will include a set of recommendations.

According to data from the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 50,285 children and pupils of Ukrainian refugees were enrolled at Czech kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (as of 30 September 2022). The majority of Ukrainian children were registered at primary schools, 39,478, while 6,904 Ukrainian children were enrolled at kindergartens and 3,457 at secondary schools.



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COMMUNICATION, RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

WHAT WE DO

Communication is an important part of how we deal with health crises and systemic risks in general. Using interdisciplinary approaches and exceptional datasets, SYRI experts will focus on research of the mass media and social media, production, content and reception of various messages in the process of communication, the impact of disinformation, and trust in expert knowledge and political institutions.



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LAW AND GOVERNANCE

WHAT WE DO

Systemic crises may also be caused by the rules and procedures of political institutions. The SYRI Institute will cooperate with political, legal, and administrative sciences to analyse the workings of institutions at different levels, in the Czech Republic and elsewhere in the EU. Experts will study how activities of these institutions are coordinated at both levels. By identifying examples of successful reform of legal and governance processes in the Czech Republic and at international level, researchers will formulate practical recommendations for reform in the Czech Republic.



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SOCIAL RESILIENCE

WHAT WE DO

Social resilience supports the stability of the state as well as security and cohesion of actors in periods of uncertainty and unexpected health and social risks. The relationship between the resilience of individuals, communities, institutions and the state is a key to effective responses to crises like the Covid-19 pandemic, the hurricane in southern Moravia and the war in Ukraine. The National Institute's project will support the creation of a strategy for institutional and community resilience based on conceptual analysis, ethnographic research of institutions and an experimental form of participatory research.



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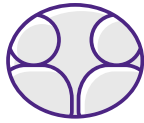
SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH

WHAT WE DO

With reference to significant socioeconomic determinants of health risk and spatial inequality in the Czech Republic, the main goal of the SYRI project is support of healthy life expectancy and reduction of health inequalities, modernization and development of research infrastructure, and building of a database and provision of research outputs for professionals and the general public. A prerequisite for achievement of this goal will be risk analysis and delivery of documentation as a basis for developing preventive measures.



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POLARISATION AND POPULISM

WHAT WE DO

Health crises pose a challenge to the strength of democracy by disrupting institutional frameworks, weakening the separation of powers, and burdening the independence of the judiciary. By quantitative and qualitative research methods, including a number of international comparisons and experimental methods, the SYRI project will analyse how populism and polarisation affect ability to govern effectively when general responsibility and legitimacy are weakened. Experts will formulate recommendations for strengthening of social cohesion and weakening of support for populism in the Czech Republic.



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HEALTHCARE SYSTEM EFFICIENCY

WHAT WE DO

Health crises reduce the availability of healthcare services, the effectiveness of the healthcare system, and public trust in the healthcare system. Using research data from the fields of public health and the health and social sciences, we identify obstacles to access to healthcare for various population groups, including foreigners. We also address issues connected with the introduction of digital technologies in all areas of the healthcare system, especially the effectiveness of new digital technologies and obstacles to their use. Another group of research sub-topics is connected to reasons for healthcare workers leaving the healthcare sector and to the preparedness of the healthcare system to react to effects of climate change.



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EDUCATION

WHAT WE DO

Educational systems aspire to maximum development of potential in all pupils. One obstacle to achievement of this goal in the Czech Republic is the existence of severe educational inequalities. At the SYRI Institute, we analyse how educational inequalities and their negative effects can be reduced, both in common and crisis situations (such as the Covid-19 pandemic, with the forced transition of schools to distance learning). We study effective support mechanisms in relation to different student groups and evaluate the efficacy of possible interventions.



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ECONOMIC IMPACTS

WHAT WE DO

Pandemic crises increase the importance of fiscal policy because of pressures on public budgets and widening inequalities of income and wealth. The project will analyse the macroeconomic consequences of crisis measures and characterise fiscal policies optimal during and after crises, taking into account the importance of inequality and heterogeneity. The main goal – and challenge – is provision of macroeconomic analyses of fiscal and monetary policy based on proven facts and modern quantitative economic theory.



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LABOUR MARKET

WHAT WE DO

An effective response to impacts of health crises on the social status of families and the labour market requires identification of groups most affected by a given crisis, including the factor of gender. The project will use extensive sources of data for empirical analysis that will evaluate possibilities for a flexible labour-market response, including involvement of foreign workers.



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