

## **THE POLITICAL SCIENTIST: A PROFESSION IN DECLINE?**

*Factors co-determining the employability and  
career success of political science graduates*

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## **Abstract**

This paper is based on the assumption that the career success of political science graduates in Slovenia cannot be fully investigated without taking into account several macro-factors determining the social and political position of political science as a profession in general. Therefore, this paper will, firstly, frame the development of political science since its emergence within a communist country, taking into account four sets of literature: the literature on a professional project; modernisation; democratisation; and Europeanisation.

In order to discover what determines the career success of political science graduates in the context of Slovenia's independence and full integration into the European Union (EU) we will examine previous studies of political science developments, statistical data and surveys conducted among alumni since the end of the 1960s. The analytical framework for empirical analysis focuses on the factors co-determining the employability and the career success of political science graduates, primarily the following: a) the employability of graduates and the positions they occupy; b) the strengths and weaknesses of political science education as perceived by political science graduates in their work place; c) the position of political science as a profession compared to other competing profiles; d) the response to this feedback by the educational system.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

An examination of the determinants of graduates' career success and higher education management as they relate to the employability of graduates will not be thorough enough if it omits the broader picture of the development of a particular profession. When analysing political science in Slovenia, we can say that political science was established in Slovenia some forty years ago, as evidenced by the subject of academic research, the establishment of university training, the institutionalisation of both academic teaching and research, as well as the establishment of professional associations. However, its development as an autonomous profession has not been as straight-forward as it may appear to be from an examination of the milestones in its institutional developments. Also, the dynamically changing social and political environment has impacted all of the key aspects of political science development – including higher education and the employability of political science graduates. Put another way, the career success of political science graduates in Slovenia cannot be fully investigated without taking account of several macro-factors determining the social and political position of political science as a profession in general. Therefore, this paper will, firstly, frame the development of political science since its emergence within a communist country, and then proceed to consider the determinants of the career success of political science graduates in the context of Slovenia's independence and full integration into the European Union (EU) based on statistical data and surveys conducted among alumni since the end of the 1960s.

The main thesis of the paper is that the development of political science in Slovenia has been closely linked to three processes in the Slovenian society which have also involved the changing nature of the state as well as state-society relations. They include modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation processes. In line with the focus of the research, several theoretical lenses are combined. They include four sets of literature: the literature on a professional project; modernisation; democratisation; and Europeanisation.

The analytical framework for empirical analysis focuses on the factors co-determining the employability and career success of political science graduates, i.e. primarily the following: a) the employability of graduates and the positions they occupy; b) the strengths and weaknesses of political science education as perceived by political science graduates in their work place; c) the position of political science as a profession compared to other competing profiles; d) the response to this feedback by the educational system.

Our research is based on a range of surveys of political science graduates carried out since 1969 – a survey in 1969 by Slavko Podmenik (Research among graduates of the former College for Sociology, Political Science and Journalism – VŠSPVN, cited in Bibič, 1982<sup>1</sup>), in

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<sup>1</sup> Bibič (1982: 55) refers to the survey headed by Slavko Podmenik in 1969 and the survey results presented in a manuscript by Podmenik et.al., Informacija št. 2 (1969).

August and September 1982 by Adolf Bibič (1982), between October 2001 and January 2002 by Danica Fink Hafner and Tomaž Boh (2002)<sup>2</sup> as well as between October 2006 and January 2007 by Danica Fink-Hafner, Tomaž Deželan, Sara Slana and Simona Topolinjak (2007)<sup>3</sup>. Since the data has been gathered in several waves over approximately forty years it offers an insight into some impacts of the modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation processes on the development of political science as a profession and on political science as an academic discipline in higher education in Slovenia.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL LENSES**

The tradition of research into professions has been closely linked to the structuralist functionalist approach in sociology, starting with Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Since this approach began to lose its momentum during the pluralisation of theoretical orientations in the 1960s, the sociology of professions has also begun to fade away. Nevertheless, this paper to some extent follows the tradition taking into consideration the 'professional project', among others also tackled by Max Weber. For the purposes of our paper, we will build on Keith M. Macdonald's focus on professions/state relations (e.g. see chapter four in Macdonald, 1995) whilst also taking into account the understanding of professions as interest groups in Weberian terms.<sup>4</sup> Theoretical approaches to the investigation of professions, however, has been predominantly developed within the framework of modern Western societies. In order to fully grasp real-life circumstances in a country like Slovenia, additional theoretical/conceptual lenses need to be introduced – modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation.

### **2.1 The Professional Project**

In order to grasp the relationship between a profession and its milieu in a particular field, such as higher education, it is important to investigate the general characteristics of a particular profession's embedment in a social and political milieu. Also, the relationship between a profession and the state is crucial. For the purpose of our investigation we will take into account

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<sup>2</sup> The self-assessed postal survey was sent to 256 graduates of two programmes current at the time – the Theoretical Analytical Programme (TA) and the Policy Analysis and Public Administration Programme (APJU) – as well as the discontinued Socio-Political Programme (DPS) which dissolved into TA and APJU. The turnout was 44.5 per cent. According to Fink Hafner and Boh (2002: 40), the lower level of turnout may also be explained by Administration's out-of-date graduate databases at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

<sup>3</sup> The self-assessed hybrid (mail and e-mail) survey included 404 graduates of the Political Science – Policy Analysis and Public Administration Programme who graduated between 1997 and 2006. The turnout was 40.6 per cent, out of which 63.4 per cent returned via e-mail and 36.6 per cent via regular mail.

<sup>4</sup> Macdonald (1995: 30) stresses that professions understood as interest groups are typical of the components Weber sees as making up society. "As such, they are engaged in competition with each other and with other groups in society, up to and including the state, this forming part of the conflict that Weber sees as the inherent nature of society."

four main clusters of variables in a theoretical model on the professional project as developed by Macdonald (1995). They include the social order, the economic order, culture (specific values and norms) and the state (which needs services, grants monopolies and achieves regulation).<sup>5</sup>

The professional project includes the securing of economic and social recognition by members of a profession, including the achievement of upward social mobility (Macdonald, 1995:63). As the state has proved to act in a way, which can erode the capacity of knowledge-based occupations to act independently (Burrage, 1990; Collins, 1990; Torstendahl, 1990), the relationship between professions and the state matters. In order to determine the relationship, an analyst needs to characterise the state whilst taking into account its historical dynamics (Macdonald, 1995: 66) as well as analyse the relationship between a given profession and the state in terms of its attempts to secure for the two dimensions of professionalism – market control and social mobility. This in fact means that professions generally seek to establish a legal monopoly through licensure by the state (Parkin, 1979: 57-58; Macdonald, 1995:100-105), which could in practice help a particular profession's quest for status in a social order. In pursuing the professional project occupations do not only deal with the state, but also compete with other occupations and educational institutions (Macdonald, 1995:189). Although the social, political and cultural contexts (social values, history, legislation, tradition, technological innovations as well as power relations with other social actors) do impact on the professional work as well as the pursuit of the professional project, the occupation itself should be the main drive of the project.

## **2.2 Modernisation**

Sociologists primarily developed a theory of modernisation in order to analyse the transformation of traditional societies into modern societies.<sup>6</sup> Within this framework they link modernisation with the processes of rationalisation, functional differentiation, rational integration, democratisation, social mobilisation and participation. In addition to a broad sociological understanding of modernisation, a particular notion of political modernisation has developed that examines political developments based on the same kind of processes. According to Eisenstadt (see e.g. Eisenstadt, 1971) modernisation in a political sphere is characterised by several redefinitions of power, institutions, representation and legitimacy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See full model in "Figure 1.1. A working theory of the professions: a conceptual outline" (Macdonald (1995: 32)).

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of literature see So (1990).

<sup>7</sup> More precisely, Eisenstadt stresses that political modernisation encompasses an increasing importance of territorial aspects and the intensification of the power of central, legal, administrative and political social factors; the transition of potential power to ever broader social groups (to all adult citizens); a decrease in the traditional legitimisation of rulers, and the establishment of legitimacy on the basis of ideological and electoral institutions for the selection of rulers; greater fluidity of political support; and the formation of new symbols closely linked to the establishment of

Taking into account the most used sociological indicators of modernisation, it can be said that Slovenia (as part of the former socialist Yugoslavia) had quite rapidly modernised in many aspects after the Second World War - e.g. in terms of urbanisation, industrialisation, the decreasing proportion of GDP derived from agriculture, and the increasing levels of education. However, the political system did not allow for the development of a capitalist market economy, but rather nourished state ownership and an idiosyncratic self-management economy. Furthermore, the one-party system did not allow for a full modernisation in a political sense. As with other aspects of society, so in politics it is more precise to talk about Slovenia's 'deformed modernisation' and 'pre-modern' or 'by-modern' society (for a more detailed elaboration, see Adam, 1989; Bernik, 1989). Although political institutions and processes did mimic modern politics, in fact they were not modern. For example, although many human rights were normatively guaranteed they were seriously limited by the monopolistic power of the single party system. In spite of elections been held, candidates did not really compete but were rather confirmed. Political organisations beyond the scope of the communist party did exist, although they did not compete at elections; rather, but the selected recognised political organisations were legally granted fixed numbers of seats in the assemblies at various levels of the political system. In this way, the system generated a certain kind of legitimacy - at least by the second half of the 1980s.

Similarly, the ruling communist party tried to mimic the interest in using expertise in politics and policymaking. It was so eager to establish political science following the United Nations initiative that it put that initiative in the 1958 Yugoslav Communist Party Programme. In line with the character of the socialist system, the top-down established political science was expected to legitimise the political system of self-management. In that sense it was expected to act as one among many 'socialist forces'. Yugoslavia (and Slovenia within it) had become one of a few communist countries with early established political science, although limited by the particular ideological and political framework of the socialist self-management system. Nevertheless, Yugoslav (particularly Slovenian) openness toward the West in economic terms, in terms of academic communication and the import of political science literature did allow for the creation of a kinder milieu for political science development than in other communist countries. When analysing developments in political science in (post)communist countries joining the EU integration processes at the turn of the twenty-first century, Klingemann, Kulesza and Legutke (2002:19) estimated that political science in Slovenia had enjoyed a good opportunity for development due to the rather open former socialist system. Comparatively, within moderate socialist systems such as Hungary and Poland little chance had been given for

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civil order, in which all citizens participate and use the same central institutions. For more insights into defining political modernisation and political development see also Kabashima and White, eds. (1986).

political science to develop, and in both closed socialist system within the Soviet Union (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) and outside the Soviet Union (Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria) there was no chance for political science to develop (Ibid.).

Overall, it can be said that Slovenian society had been modernising in some social aspects, which supported the legitimacy, or at least did not directly challenge the ruling regime. What the regime clearly did not allow was a capitalist market economy in general and its functioning in the field of education in particular. It did however allow certain shifts in study programmes toward a proliferation of political science sub-fields.

### **2.3 Democratisation**

Democracy in the western notion – as initially developed in the process of modernisation in Western Europe and in North America - is based on the principles of Natural Law. Its focus on the free individual and his/her protection from the state Leviathan had particularly opposed the collectivist and statist notions of ideal political community in communist countries. This had also been the case with Yugoslavia (Slovenia as its part), which had been searching for a particular self-management model.

Democratisation processes have opened the space for political modernisation. Political modernisation first of all meant the establishment of a political system as a social subsystem as any other social subsystem – unlike its superior role in socialism, where politics dominated all other social subsystems. After a liberalisation stage in the second half of the 1980s and a rather smooth transition to democracy (the first multi-party elections were held in April 1990), Slovenia's new political system was based on the principles of polyarchy (Dahl, 1971) and parliamentary constitutional choice. In general it can be said that in principle democratisation opened a space for the development of political science as an autonomous profession (similarly was the case for the other social sciences). However, the particularities of the new political system have not had only positive impacts on the development of political science.

A rather fragmented party system has developed mirroring the ideological rainbow known in Western Europe (although without strong extremes) while maintaining the key communist-versus-anti-communist division. Party politics has impacted on the social and political status of political science at least in two aspects. Firstly, parliamentary party behaviour has facilitated anti-party sentiments and strengthened the distrust both in political parties and in politics in general. Since political science in public has often been misunderstood as politics, the anti-politics and anti-party sentiments have spilled over into the social status of political science. Secondly, the main party system division has strengthened (as is the case with other social sciences) the division between certain groups of political scientists and experts along ideological lines. This has worsened the position of political science (i.e. the distrust in politics,

anti-party sentiment and – due to its primary origin – the identification of political science with a particular part of the ideological-political party spectrum).

Since the beginning of the 1980s, it had been in the interests of a higher education institution to respond to the decrease in interest for studying political science. The orientation from political party cadre production policy had to become more clear-cut. The liberalisation and rather smooth transition to a democracy in Slovenia allowed for a thoroughly thought-through study programme reform taking into account the international comparability of the newly created political science education programmes (they started to be implemented in 1990). In terms of competition for students between the political science profession and other professions, two main aspects should be stressed. Firstly, in the process of political science's turning away from the regime, several main political science sub-fields have been established (theoretical-analytical political science; core political science combined with an emphasis on policy analysis and public administration knowledge; international relations and defence studies). These have also tended towards the development of several particular professional identities including professional associations. Secondly, with its fragmented and more or less poor resources, political science could not have very successfully competed with older professions (especially core political science in relation to legal professionals and economists) which already occupied the targeted work-places to an important extent.

## **2.4 Europeanisation Processes**

According to Olsen (2002: 923 – 924), five major aspects compose the overall processes of Europeanisation - changes to external boundaries, the development of political institutions at the EU level, central penetration of national systems of governance, exporting forms of political organisation, and a political unification project. While this definition is useful in understanding the changing institutional (particularly state) milieu of political science development, public policy aspects (particularly higher education policymaking) seem to be better encompassed by Radaelli's definition, that Europeanisation is the process of: (1) construction; (2) diffusion; and (3) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules. These include procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms, all of which are, defined at the inter-/ supranational level and afterwards incorporated within the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies (Radaelli, 2003: 30). Activities concerning the Bologna Process may be perceived in this light since the creation of the European Higher Education Area, by making academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe, was a part of the wider process of Slovenia's integration into Europe. Although the Lisbon Recognition Convention was actually prepared by the Council of Europe and members of the Europe Region of UNESCO, the European

Commission proved to be an important drive to the Bologna Process (BP 2011). Hence, a mode of conditionality was imposed on Slovenia as a young post-communist Central European democracy, which is far more evident in similar processes within the EU umbrella. Both the adoption of the whole *acquis* as well as the outcomes of soft modes of governance, such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), were mandatory for all post-communist accession states joining the EU in 2004 – including Slovenia (Halász, 2006; Alexiadou, Fink-Hafner, Lange, 2010); this was not the case for the older members joining the EU.

In fact, by increasing the institutionalisation of priorities tied to the goals of the Lisbon agenda through the OMC, new EU member states have been importing a particular paradigm into national education policies (see e.g. Gornitzka, 2006). Furthermore, Bologna has largely accepted the same education objectives and epistemic understandings of education, which had been earlier developed within the framework of international organisations such as OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe (Haskel, 2009: 279). In this framework, education has been first of all dealt with as a knowledge support to increase the global economic competitiveness of the EU as a whole as well as EU member states. In this sense, education has been expected to function primarily as a service for society (Haskel, 2009: 283).<sup>8</sup> In Slovenia, as in many other European countries (following German and Italian models) *“mass education had been superimposed on university structures, which had changed little from the time of very small elite cohorts”* (Haskel, 2009: 277). Unfortunately, in these circumstances, the OMC as a ‘tool’ of governance and thus drawing heavily on the techniques and principles of New Public Management (NPM), in fact resulted in the measuring of the quality of education policy instead of the quality of education (Halász, 2006).

From the development of political science professions in Slovenia at least three aspects of Europeanisation are of crucial importance. Firstly, Slovenia’s entering the EU political system has created not only new job opportunities in EU institutions and various organisations at the EU level, but also new EU-related job challenges and opportunities at home. Secondly, the Bologna higher education reform opened up competition not only between professions and between institutions for demographically shrinking cohorts of youngsters in Slovenia, but even between particular political science study programmes within the framework of the same higher education institution. Thirdly, the already challenged political science professional project has been additionally endangered by higher education (HE) reform without a proper financial framework, which led to survival strategy mode in case of many teachers since they became existentially vulnerable.

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<sup>8</sup> In the OMC intergovernmental collaboration process, increasing the role of the European Commission, had only been supplemented by a consultation of rectors (universities) and student organisations, but not professors (Haskel, 2009: 279-290).

### 3. GENEALOGY OF THE POLITICAL SCIENTIST AS A PROFESSION IN SLOVENIA

#### 3.1. The Institutional Development of Political Science

The development of political science as an independent study programme began in 1961 under the framework of the Higher School for Political Sciences (Bibič, 1982), which coincided with the formation of other similar schools across the republican capitals of the former Yugoslavia. The foundations of the newly established college were the accumulated continuity of knowledge gathered within related disciplines at the university-level in Slovenia as well as the development of political science as a discipline worldwide (Bibič, 1996: 425). It evolved from an initial general two-year study programme for promising cadres employed in the regime's political organisations and state apparatus to a unified four-year study programme in 1962 with a general admission. With the establishment of journalism/communications studies and sociology the school transformed into the Higher School of Sociology, Political Science and Journalism in 1968 and in 1969 into the Faculty of Social Science, Political Science and Journalism. During the 1970s, the specialisation within the political science programme introduced a division in domestic politics (socio-political programme) and international relations, while in 1975 a People's Defence Study Programme (later Defence Studies) evolved from the general framework (Bibič, 1982: 32).

The institutionalisation of political science rested on the political will of the reformed part of the political elite within the League of Communists and the involvement of the prominent social scientists in the preparation of the curriculum, teaching and research (Bibič, 1996: 426). The rationale behind the institutionalisation was the aspiration to create a new profile for the social scientist in the state with special expertise in methodological and technical tools of analysis and alteration of social relations, alongside the necessary theoretical proficiency. The inherent condition for achieving this aim was the interdisciplinary nature of the study programme, which remains one of the key features to the present day - the broad theoretical and comparative aspect – and the specialisation (Bibič, 1982: 34) which appears to have been one of the main challenges of the profession from its early beginnings. The broad theoretical foundations graduates acquired through mandatory curricular content from other disciplines nurtured at the faculty (sociology, anthropology, communication research, journalism). According to Bibič (*ibid.*), the political science programme of the late 1970s and early 1980s excelled in terms of methodology, statistics and other analytical orientations, thus making it superior to other comparable programmes in the region. Although the “applied” orientation of political sciences promoted the profession in society, the area of specialisation was somewhat staying behind. Along with the establishment of defence studies, the separation

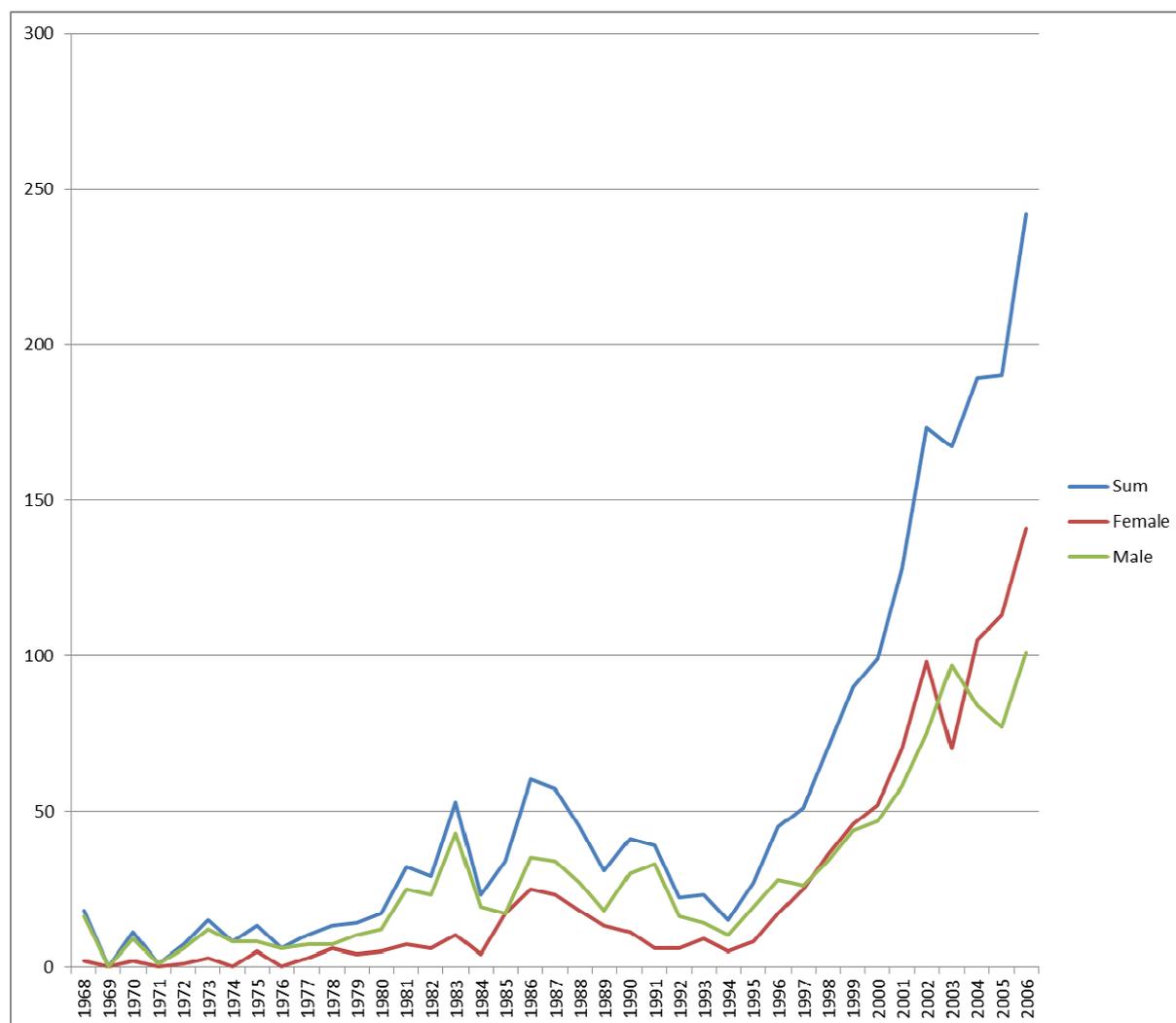
of the initial general programme into the socio-political part and into international relations enabled the study of political science to become more segmented, based round core subjects which consequently made graduates more specialised in their fields of interest.

Nevertheless, the period of dual transition (to democracy and the creation of an independent state) caught political science in Slovenia by surprise (Bibič, 1996: 430), despite the fact that a large part of the discipline supported pluralism in the last years of the old regime. The reformist orientation present in the structure of political science in Slovenia made the transition easier in spite of its beginnings tied to the regime. The orientation towards the requirements of social development that developed in the mid-1980s under various pressures brought about a reform of the study that was put into practice in the 1990/1991 academic year (Fink Hafner and Boh, 2002). The new orientation was based on the idea of transforming the old socio-political programme<sup>9</sup> into two programmes: a) policy analysis and public administration; and b) political theory and analysis. While the first in fact developed new professional subfields more adapted to the environment, the second was expected to evolve into a more theoretical study to be chosen by students planning to remain in the academic sphere or who would work in other theoretical-analytical environments. Although these expectations have not proved to be correct, the fact is that new political science programmes enjoyed an increase in interest. Both demographic trends and governmental policies also accelerated the increasing numbers of students. In fact, the 1990s were marked both by the phenomena of mass “production” of university graduates studies in general and of political science in particular (see Figure 1).

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<sup>9</sup> The International Relations Programme and Defence Studies Programme developed separately.

Figure 1: The Number of Political Science Graduates from 1968 to 2006



Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2011)

In spite of the abovementioned transformations and the availability of new jobs in Slovenia's growing independent state apparatus after 1991, political science was challenged by the massive boost in terms of enrolled students and graduates. In fact, a dilemma about the future of the profession evolved: should this trend be sustained or should the prospects of the profession be rethought? In the long run the increasing number of graduates had to be matched by the real-life demand of the labour market. In the following section this dilemma is elaborated by the screening of the labour market for political scientists.

Beside the labour market dilemma, dilemmas about the quality of political science studies in the era of mass enrolment additionally shape the image of the profession. This concern added up to the already-existing problematic public image of political scientists as rather incompetent and biased professionals (Bibič, 1982: 35). The involvement of teaching and research staff in professional politics (predominantly centre-left) has not supported the

construction of an autonomous identity or public image for political science, but has rather undermined it. The characterisation of political science programmes and the main teaching and research institution as “red” or “leftist” persists till present day.<sup>10</sup>

### **3.2. The Political Science Professional Project**

As already mentioned, the relationship between a profession and the state is crucial for the professional project. In the case of Slovenia it can be said that political science was first established top-down by the ruling Communist Party, indistinguishable from the state. Although this initiative emerged as early as the 1950s - in reference to an international organisation (UNESCO), the institutionalisation of political science education was, at first, closely tied to the needs of the ruling party in training its political cadre. For most of the period since the beginning of 1960, a single HE organisation has been developing both the education and research organisational milieu for an ever more internationally comparable political science. The rather weak and more or less cyclical development of professional association(s) (e.g. Slovenian Political Science Organization) and their related activities did not favour the consolidation of the political science profession. The official recognition of political science came as late as 1984 when the occupation was officially registered.<sup>11</sup> However, even today (2011), the occupation of political science has not been recognised in comparison to some older occupations in the field of social sciences (such as law).

The role of the state has proved to be a help and a hindrance. On the one hand, the state in the one-party system made rather difficult for the profession to act independently. On the other hand, the newly-established independent and democratic Slovenian state in the 1990s opened the space both for the autonomous development of the profession and for the employment of political scientists. In the past decade, the political science profession's response to Slovenia's implementation of the Bologna reform has presented a considerable challenge, particularly as regards its market and managerial pressures. In fact, the core of the political science profession in HE organisations adapted to the new circumstances by further fragmenting teaching programmes and their related organizational teaching units, resulting also in the fragmentation of research centres. As political science related professional associations gradually have declined or even ceased to exist, it seems that no particular professional community systematically now takes care of the political science profession in Slovenia – i.e. the

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<sup>10</sup> As an indication, in the current government, two of the prominent Professors of Political Science serve as ministers, whilst the prime minister is also a political science graduate. However, this image of lack of autonomy due to intense involvement in politics is not limited to the Department of Political Science alone, since the whole faculty is having troubles with its identity.

<sup>11</sup> In 1984, the former regime's public employment agency acknowledged the profession in its Codebook of professions and vocations (Gorše, 2011).

profession's quest for status in the social order, the securing of members' economic and social recognition, including the achieving of upward social mobility. Moreover, there is no noticeable attempt to change the old stereotypes of the political science discipline or the HE organisations that offer teaching and research in the field of political science.

### **3.3. Development of the Political Science Curricula in the Changing Social and Political Contexts**

In the quest for a professional project for political science, three main HE education responses have so far been observed. The political science study programme at the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science and Journalism – at the time the only political science HE organisation in Slovenia – taught at the end of the 1970s to early 1980s was still heavily burdened with the ideology of the ruling regime. As the study programme of the 1982/1983 academic year<sup>12</sup> shows, many of the courses were burdened with official rhetoric. At the end of the 1980 and early 1990s, political science autonomously prepared a reform considering international comparisons. The 1990/1991 reform brought about a modern political science curriculum with many new political science subfields presented in courses<sup>13</sup>, among others offering more programmes (the former socio-political programme developed into the Theoretical-Political Programme and Political Science: Policy Analysis and Public Administration Programme). The third major reform wave brought about the adaptation of the curriculum to Slovenia's integration into the political system of the European Union. In 2003 the programme prepared for accreditation represented the rich development of political science in the field of research during the 1990s – whether in terms of the internationally comparable compulsory political science courses<sup>14</sup> or in terms of the variety of optional courses.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the 1990/1991 reform,

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<sup>12</sup> According to Bibič (1982: 20-21) the following courses were offered in the 1982/1983 academic year: General Political Science Course; History of Political Science Thought; Recent History with the History of the Workers' Movement in Yugoslavia; the Social and Political History of Yugoslavia; Social and Political Anthropology; the Political and Self-Management System of the SFRY; the Theory and Practice of Self-Management; Socio-Political Organisations of the SFRY; Political Praxeology; the Theory of the Modern State; Sociology and Politology of People's Defence; International Relations I and III; the Current Problems of International Relations; Modern Socialism; Developing Countries; Modern Political Systems; the Social Doctrine of Catholicism.

<sup>13</sup> Among them were: Introduction to Political Science, Recent Political History, Political System, Policy Analysis, Public policies, History of Slovenian Political and Social Thought, History of Political Thought, International Relations, Politics of Human Rights, Legislative Decision-making, Political Parties and Interest Groups, Contemporary State, Comparative Political Systems, Policy Communities, Public Administration, Public Sector Management, Contemporary administrative systems, Local Government, Internship (Krašovec, 12 September 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Compulsory political science courses within the framework of the Political Science: Policy Analysis and Public Administration undergraduate programme sent to accreditation in 2003 were: an Introduction to Political Science; the Political System of the Republic of Slovenia; Comparative Politics in the Current World; an Introduction to Public Administration; Modern Parliamentarism and Legislative Procedure; Public Administration in Slovenia; an Introduction to Policy Analysis; Research Methods for Policy Analysis; Political Participation; Political Parties and Party Systems; Politics of Human Rights; an Introduction to the EU; Evaluation of Public Policies; Public Finances and

however, when it came to the implementation of the Bologna university reform in Slovenia teachers were pressured by competition from other social science faculties in their preparation of new study programme, and also by the short time-frame, strict administrative-technical demands, as well as the aspirations of doctoral students and young doctors to ensure themselves employment within the framework of the reformed programmes. In the framework of uncertain financial reform in Slovenia, the competition among HE institutions (in their new programmes), as well as among existing and prospective teachers, overshadowed the need to evaluate the previous study programmes systematically and to discuss the reform changes thoroughly while also taking into account socio-political changes and international comparability. Changes in the political sciences curricula had, to some extent (in the Policy Analysis and the Public Administration Programme segment) also responded to previous alumni feedback regarding the content of study, although less so in the field of teaching research methods and the development of analytical skills. In the next section we will present recent alumni surveys in more detail.

#### **4. EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

##### **4.1 Unfavourable labour market**

The employability and career success of political science graduates are determined by various interrelated factors. In our analysis, we observe political science from several different angles. The employability of graduates and the positions they occupy presents relevant information for deliberating on the success of the project across different contexts and over time. According to the official data of the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) (2011), the profession of a political scientist is a common part of the list of professions with the supply of graduates outnumbering the demand for them on the labour market (sufficitary professions), along with economists, sociologists and the prevailing social sciences and humanities profiles. The actual labour market numbers for political sciences clearly reflect this trend, but simultaneously mirror the overall economic situation as well. To be precise, the beginning of the global economic crisis is clearly visible in the downturn in available jobs for political scientists and their actual employments, while the number of registered unemployed persons is in ascendance (see Figure 2). Furthermore, we have to be aware that the numbers of political science graduates registered unemployed does not correspond to the actual situation in the labour market since a large

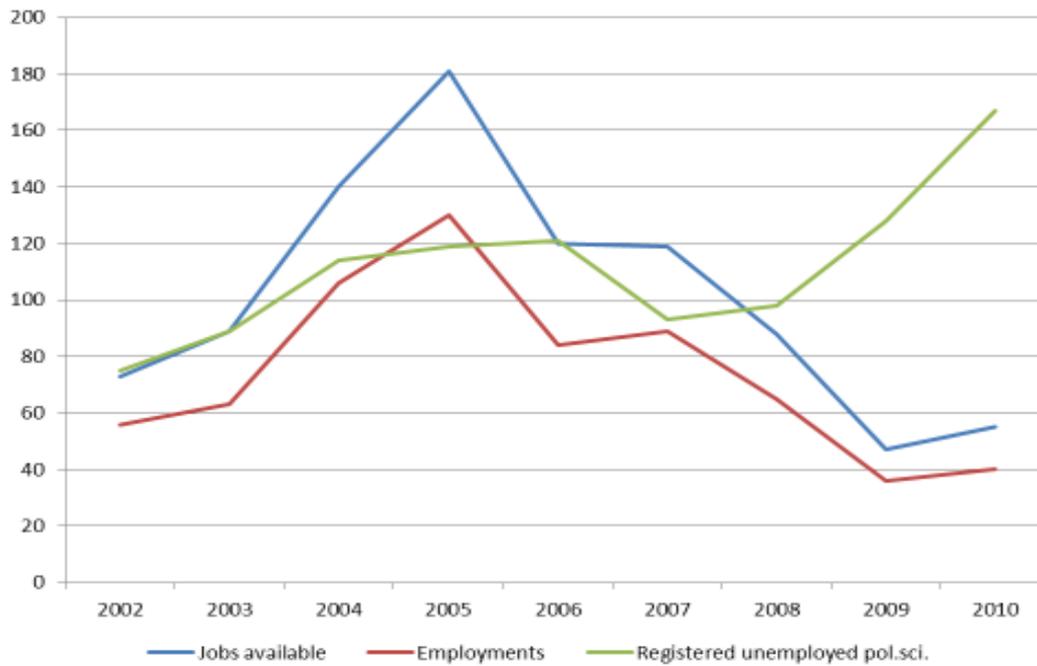
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Public Policies; Electoral Studies; International Relations; Local Self-management; Policy Networks; EU Policies; the History of Political Ideas. (Source: Administration at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana).

<sup>15</sup> Among the optional political science courses sent for accreditation in 2003 were: Methodology and the Problems of Analysis of Cultural Policies; European Public Policymaking and Implementation; Women and Politics; the Politics of Bureaucracy; Comparative Federalism and Regionalism; Politics in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia; Democratic Transitions and the Consolidation of Democracy (Source: Administration at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana).

portion of political science graduates decide to prologue their studies in order both to avoid the hostile labour market and to become more competitive in it.<sup>16</sup> To be precise, according to the 2006 survey, the hostility of the labour market was the primary reason for the prolongation of higher education for about one third of eventual MA students.

Figure 2: The Demand for Political Scientists; the Employment of Political Scientists and Their Registered Unemployment (in Individuals) Over Time



Source: ESS (2011a)

The hostility of the labour market is also reflected in our analysis of the share of non-permanent (fixed) job advertisements and the actual contracts of political science professionals since they prevail in both categories (see Table 1). Around two thirds of advertisements and signed agreements have a fixed expiry clause and thus make employed professionals much more vulnerable in the labour market as well as affect their socioeconomic status (their capacity to acquire mortgages etc.). Even a brief glance at the numbers of political science graduates indicates vast discrepancies between the number of graduates and the number of job advertisements for political science professionals (see Table 1; Fink Hafner and Boh, 2002). Nevertheless, political science graduates tend to be fairly successful in obtaining their first employment after graduation. The two surveys indicated (2002 and 2006) that about one third

<sup>16</sup> The 2006 survey (Fink Hafner et al., 2007) indicated that only about 20 per cent of graduates do not intend to continue their education to the MA (scientific Master of Arts) level. The registration of the unemployed status is especially unattractive for the first-time jobseekers since, in addition to its psychological effect, its benefits hardly match the benefits of students (e.g. free health insurance, subsidized meals etc.).

manage to get employed in the first year after graduation and about two thirds get their first job within first two years after graduating.

Table 1: The Job Market for Political Scientists over Time

	<b>Share of non-permanent job advertisements</b>	<b>Share of non-permanent employments</b>
2002	0.62	0.63
2003	0.74	0.70
2004	0.66	0.68
2005	0.69	0.71
2006	0.75	0.75
2007	0.67	0.64
2008	0.64	0.62
2009	0.68	0.67
2010	0.69	0.65

Source: ESS (2011a)

#### 4.2 Determinants of Employment

There are several relevant factors that influence the ability of political science graduates to obtain employment. The 2002 and 2006 surveys revealed four dominant modes of employment. The first is the usual mode of employment via *job advertisements* published in various media and through the official channels of the ESS. Around one third of graduates obtain their first employment in this way, while 15 percent of them obtain employment within the *organisation from which they obtained a scholarship*. However, the two remaining modes are surprising. Firstly, more than 15 percent of respondents in both surveys obtained their first employment through some sort of *nepotism*, which appears to be a common practice in the labour market as a whole. A reason for concern primarily derives from the fact that a large majority of graduates that obtained their first occupation with the help of nepotism obtained employment in the public sector. Disregarding the grave concern vis-à-vis the public sector corruption and nepotism, the fourth mode received a positive feedback from the graduates. To be precise, while one half of respondents from the 2002 survey claimed to have some sort of link with their first employer, results from both surveys indicated that around one third of the graduates obtained their first employment due to their *previous engagement with their future employer* (internships or student job). The internship proved to be one of the most valuable experiences in terms of job acquisition, and this is also indicated by respondents' attitude towards it since more than 60 percent of graduates recognise internships to be a valuable experience. There are strong ties between certain programmes, primarily Policy Analysis and Public Administration (APJU), and the most frequent employers. In turn, several employers began to value the expertise of political

science graduates, which makes them desirable within their organisational environment. Hence, employability of political science graduates is less of a problem than the positions they occupy.

### 4.3 The Occupation Hallmarks of Political Science Graduates

Due to the incongruence tilted in favour of the supply side in the job market for political scientists, graduates are compelled to take up a myriad of different occupations available on the market. According to the ESS (2011b), political science graduates occupy positions from administrators, secretaries and door-to-door salesmen to public relations counsellors, project managers, journalists and professionals in the field of policymaking. Its graduates occupy as different positions as those of the prime minister, minister, other high-level political and administrative posts on one hand and post office clerks and truck drivers on the other hand (ibid.). The lack of recognition therefore seems to be related to the ignorance of employers regarding the main traits of political scientists, but also to the readiness of political scientists to accept such a variety of occupations. There appears to be a clear-cut difference between the public and private sector employers since the former have experience with political science professionals from the former regime as well.

As a rule, public sector organisations employ a major portion of political science graduates. The results of the 2002 and 2006 surveys demonstrate a growing trend in employment in the private sector since an increasing number of political science graduates have managed to obtain employment in the private sector (around 35 per cent). However, the mobility between sectors has proved to favour the public sector since more graduates enter the public sector from the private than the other way around. The main reason for both the prevalence of employment in the public sector as well as the imbalance in mobility between sectors also appears to be the less demanding and rewarding jobs that graduates occupy in the private sector. Namely, 42 per cent of political science graduates employed in the private sector occupy positions that demand less than a university diploma, while the percentage in the public sector is only 14 (see Table 2). This result supports the assumption that public employers have a better awareness of the qualities of political science graduates.

Table 2: The Required Level of Education for an Occupied Position by Sector

	in %	private sector	public sector
below university degree		42	14
university degree or higher		58	86

Source: Fink Hafner et al. (2007)

The political scientist profile has over time proved to be a better match for the public than the private sector. But what is the rationale for this discrepancy? Firstly, the political project to introduce the profession certainly played its part, either directly through the employment of these individuals or indirectly through the recognition of their qualities. The former has a limited explanatory potential due to the old regime's ability to control the economy and the self-management system. In accordance with the conceptual toolbox presented, the competences varied according to the needs of the system over time. If we disregard the content of these variations at this point, the question as to the general competence of graduates remains relevant. On the basis of the 2002 and 2006 surveys, it can be said that political science graduates perceive the knowledge acquired through their studies as very relevant and useful for their occupational tasks. They appreciate their analytical skills the most since more than half of respondents in the 2006 survey highlighted these skills as being the most important. In addition, politico-administrative knowledge has proved to be very helpful for APJU graduates, while theoretical knowledge and a knowledge of foreign languages has proved to be an additional quality of political science graduates. Overall, political scientists are generally satisfied with their professional competences, as may be indicated by the fact that more than three quarters of respondents from 2002 survey responded that they would make the same decision on their study programme if deciding today.

#### 4.4 Competition from Competing Profiles – 2002 and 2006 Survey

A deficient demand for political science professionals on the labour market puts them in an unfavourable position compared to certain other profiles. However, this obstacle makes them much more flexible at the same time. This is indicated by the 2002 and 2006 survey data which shows that political science graduates occupy positions available to all graduates of social sciences and humanities. To be precise, in both surveys more than 60 percent of respondents confirmed this observation, while less than 10 percent of them perceived the political science profession to be the only discipline appropriate for their occupation (see Table 3).

Table 3: The Appropriateness of Profession for Occupations political science graduates occupy

in %	2002	2006
Only a political scientist	9.5	5.3
anyone with a social sciences and humanities background	67.9	62.1
anyone	22.6	32.6

Source: Fink Hafner and Boh (2002); Fink Hafner et al. (2007)

In addition to the faulty awareness of the traits of political scientists, their specialisation (expertise) therefore appears to be a major obstacle for their successful competing in the labour market. Even in terms of EU-related topics, an area in which the graduates are perceived to have a significant career advantage, the respondents in the 2002 survey indicated they did not acquire the necessary amount of EU-related knowledge to make them more competitive. Nevertheless, it is clear that political science graduates do not suffer in terms of the qualification demands of their occupation. More than two thirds of the respondents in both surveys (2002 and 2006) replied that their first occupation had demanded a university degree. However, the more recent 2006 survey indicated that the number of political science graduates occupying posts that do not require a university degree is in ascendance.

Within their working environment, political science graduates compete with a number of different profiles, primarily with social sciences and humanities background. The working environment of a political science graduate is most commonly dominated by economists. More than a third of respondent from the 2002 and 2006 surveys identified economists as the dominant players within their organisations, while the legal professionals are slowly losing dominance (see Table 4). It is primarily due to the nature of public sector organisations that the latter have traditionally dominated the working environment of political scientists, although this trend is decreasing. Overall, political science graduates work within units dominated by social scientists, which is to be expected.

Table 4: The Dominant Profiles within the Working Environment of Political Science Graduates

in %	2002	2006
economists	30	37
legal professionals	21	10
sociologists	6	2
humanism and arts graduates	11	10
public administration graduates	8	6
organisational sciences graduates	6	2
political scientists	7	14
other	11	19
Total	100	1

Source: Fink Hafner and Boh (2002); Fink Hafner et al. (2007)

A relevant concern for political science graduates is also their position *vis-à-vis* other profiles since we have established that they rarely dominate their working organisation. The surveys from 2002 and 2006 indicate that political scientists tend to work in increasingly hostile and unfavourable working environments. About a half of respondents in the 2006 survey indicated that political science graduates are placed in less favourable positions than other profiles. On the

basis of these results, complemented by the abovementioned trends in the labour market and the related economic crisis, the outlook for political science graduates is not optimistic.

The survey data presented includes the responses of political science graduates who finished their study programmes established both prior to and during the democratic transition. In order to obtain a response from the Bologna reform students, a new survey is planned in the near future as the first generations of Bologna graduates have only recently entered the job market.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In order to identify the factors co-determining the employability and career success of political science graduates in Slovenia we need to look at the bigger picture of a changing society, economy, and politics, and we also need to take into account the processes of globalisation (in this frame also Europeanisation processes). Based on an insight into several factors determining graduates' career success, we can draw some rather complex and tentative conclusions.

Political macro level factors (especially democratisation, the creation of an independent state and the related expansion of the state apparatus, Slovenia's integration into the political system of the EU and the related expansion of job opportunities) have clearly opened job and career opportunities for political scientists. However, recent social and economic macro factors seem to be increasingly unfavourable. Among the key factors have been: the marketisation of higher education; demographic trends that have initiated the policies of prolonging the active participation of older employees in the labour market; the economic and financial crisis which has reduced the number of available jobs; the trend toward the prevalence of non-permanent jobs; and an degree of increasing corruption in hiring.

When it comes to the responses of HE to the macro developments it can be said that, at the macro level (over the last fifty years or so), HE has been responding to big social and political changes by considerably reforming the curricula. However, the reform procedures take time as well as the education of one generation (around five to six years). In this way, the adaptation of HE always seems to have been delayed in relation to real-life social and political circumstances and needs. Among the particularities of this have also been a prevalent attachment to public sector employment and employment in private sector work places which demand lower levels of education and less profiled knowledge than political science graduates in fact obtain.

Examining the determinants of graduate career success at the intermediate level, the responses of HE to the requirements of the job market do seem to matter, particularly in terms of the inclusion of student work experience in the study programme. First of all, internships have proved to be extraordinarily important for the employer in hiring graduates after their

diploma. Even in circumstances of increasing nepotism and corruption in employment it matters within the public sector. Less registered has been the desire expressed by alumni, to see a more idiosyncratic political science and methodological/analytical skills that would make political scientists less replaceable by other professions, plus also the need to re-make the image of the profession, especially in the private sector.

At the micro level, several factors of employability prove important as well. According to the 2002 survey, higher graded individuals, with excellence in several key competences of the profession, had considerably enhanced their job opportunities. This observation is valid primarily in terms of employment at prestigious positions in the European institutions as well as in top domestic bureaucratic echelons.

To conclude, it is a paradox that in a society (as well as in the EU and the wider global context) in which the problems of social relations and related policy problems are key issues on the agenda, political science as an academic discipline and as a profession (like all social sciences with the partial exception of economy and law) seems to have been losing its financial and social position. However, it has been a negligence of the professional project by the profession itself that seems to have contributed to this development in Slovenia. The recent economic and financial crisis, which seem to be more or less enduring for a rather long period of time, only makes the employability problems and the career success of political science graduates - as well as problems of the embedment of political science education into a marketised HE social milieu - more profound and challenging. Although several macro, intermediate and micro factors do seem to increase the problems of employability for political science graduates, these negative trends can only be overturned and the recognition of political science as a profession can only be boosted with the initiative of the profession itself - an immediate revitalisation of the political science professional project.

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**Table 1:** Estimations of Study Programmes and Employment Circumstances by Those Surveyed in the Period 1969-2007

SURVEYS CLUSTERS OF FINDINGS	1969 (PODMENIK, 1969, as cited in Bibič, 1982)	August and September 1982 (BIBIČ, 1982)	October 2001/ January 2002 on DPS,* TA** and APJU*** graduates (FINK HAFNER and BOH)	October 2006/ January 2007 on APJU graduates (FINK HAFNER et al., 2007)
Motives for study The main character of studies	Predominantly political cadre N/A	Personal interest in social sciences interdisciplinary	N/A interdisciplinary (also according to respondents)	N/A interdisciplinary
More knowledge needed in a study programme	N/A	More methodology, economy, law; the need for better linking of theory and practice, more focus on current domestic (to some extent also on international) processes; more space for student creativeness in a study process	practical political-managerial skills, analytical skills, knowledge of EU integration, foreign languages, rhetoric and high quality internships; also economics; knowledge of information technology and law	N/A
The main employment milieus	Majority in education, people's universities, enterprises, public sector institutes, 1/7 in mass media and the least in public administration	multiple - 54.2% of the surveyed employed in four milieus: politics (16.7%); teaching (12.5%); expert work (12.5%); public administration (12.5%)	First/current employment - 78.5/73.8 % public sector - 21.5/26.2 % private sector	First/current employment - 62.0/65,3% public sector - 38.0/34,7 % private sector
Replaceability of political scientists by other professions	N/A	Replaceability by any social scientist (estimation by 64.6% of respondents) or even any other profession (14.6% of respondents)	Replaceability by any social scientist/any other profession  - 67.9/22.6 %	Replaceability by any social scientist/any other profession  - 62.1/32.6 %
Position in comparison to other professions	N/A	Political scientists in a worse position than other professions: 37.5 % of respondents	Position compared to other professions in their working environment (worse/better): 25.6/4.9 %	Position compared to other professions in their working environment (worse/better): 48.8/5.8 %
Percentage of respondents at working positions requiring lower levels of education than the achieved	N/A	40 % of respondents	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> level of education: APJU - 14.3% TA - 16.3%	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> level of education: APJU - 18.7%

\* Socio-political orientation (DPS)

\*\* Theoretical-Analytical orientation (TA)

\*\*\* Policy Analysis and Public Administration (APJU)