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Obituary: Jan Kohoutek

Jan Kohoutek, Associate Professor of Public and Social Policy at Charles University, passed away on September 18, 2024, age 46.

Jan's career which was cut short at such an early age was that of a cross-disciplinary researcher. He achieved a number of notable successes crowned by his well-deserved associate professorship at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University this year. He started as a language teacher. Nevertheless, his aspiration to understand the wider context of educational systems led him to do his PhD in Public and Social Policy at the Institute of Sociological Studies. He soon became recognised for his ability to read and synthesise vast amounts of sources. Upon finishing his PhD, he had already acquired substantial experience as a researcher at the Centre for Higher Education Studies. In 2014, he joined the Department of Public and Social Policy. At our department he was teaching in the field of educational policy and public administration.

At the same time, he became an editor and later editor-in-chief of CEJPP where he left a lasting mark. His publications, both in terms of journal articles and book chapters, won him a reputation and acclaim as an accomplished expert on a number of issues. His work on various problems of higher education as well as politicisation of public administration represents an important contribution to these two distinct fields. His last book '*Policy Work and Politicisation in the Ministries of the Czech Republic: The Dilemmas of State Service*' that was published earlier this year (2024) will remain a testament to his deep knowledge and skill.

We will always remember our collaboration and conversations in which he proved to be a sharp-witted observer of the world around us. He was an exemplary professional – as a colleague he was absolutely reliable even at times when he was not in the best of health and moods. His students benefited from his devotion to subjects he taught and English style sense of humour that he used so often in his lectures. He was a very strong advocate for humanistic approach in public policy and public administration. The final paragraph of his habilitation thesis is a wonderful epitaph of his contribution:

> "*So, very finally, I have no better advice to give than that caring for people matters in the public administration, not only for them as clients but also as administrative staff internal to the civil service. While most public officials are not Einsteins, they are not Frankensteins either. And, who knows, if they are really satisfied in their jobs, some officials might share their satisfaction and achievements on social networks (it would be foolish to try to prohibit that). Thus they would slowly change the image of the civil service on the platforms that have already come to dominate the world media. This may turn out to be one of the main ways of remaking the institutional identity of modern-day bureaucracies (cf. Olsen 2006). And now, if you will excuse me, I need to give attention to my Facebook account. . . .*"

Arnošt Veselý, Petr Witz

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