

### Review of the Ph.D. Dissertation

Title: **Government Communication in the Czech Republic: Organisation, Perception, and New Theoretical Model**  
Author: **Štěpán Soukeník, M.A.** (Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University Prague)  
Reviewer: **PhDr. Petr Just, Ph.D.** (Department of Political Science and Humanities, Metropolitan University Prague)

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Presented dissertation focuses on the issue of government communication as one of the subfields of media and communication studies, which is candidate's study major. Author, however, stresses interdisciplinary character and thus need of interdisciplinary approach when studying this particular issue. Doctoral dissertation is follow-up of author's previous work (he is referring to) focusing on Czech Republic's government communication in the sectors of health and social care in the period 2010-2013. This fact confirms author's long-time expert focus and level of expertise in this field. His previous work has stimulated and challenged further research, the output of which is in the presented dissertation. I can definitely agree with author's statement that the field of government communication has so far stayed out of the mainstream issues studied and researched within media and communication studies. Therefore the dissertation definitely fills the academic gap existing in this particular field (subfield) of study.

Timeframe of the dissertation covers the period of 2015-2017 (although outlines the Czech Republic's government communication in general in previous periods as well). The year 2015 as a milestone in the research of government communication has rational explanation as the new Civil Service Act that *"has at least officially changed the relationship between government officers and politicians, striving for more transparent environment within all levels of government"* (p. 21) came into effect. Text's structure corresponds to its form, character and purpose. I especially would like to highlight very comprehensive and detailed heuristic analysis proving author's in-depth orientation in relevant literature and dissertation-related theoretical concepts and approaches. Author, however, does not limit his focus on just analyzing current state of study and research within the field, but also proposes modifications of some of the theoretical approaches based his own research and findings, thus provides an added value and fulfills one of the expectations of any doctoral candidate. Selected literature, scientific articles, news articles and other sources of information, both Czech and foreign, both primary and secondary, are relevant and corresponding to the content and character of the text and its objectives. Their use and system of citations and references applies to academic and ethical standards.

Dissertation's research aims to *"construct a comprehensive image of government communication in the Czech Republic in relation to its organization and specific stakeholders' perception"* (p. 22) by focusing on the organizational and perceptual characteristics of key institutional actors (government offices and ministries, selected business actors) as well as news media and the role they play in government communication, and how the government communication is managed, structured and performed. Author framed his work by one main research question and six research sub-questions whose answers he searched through

conducting interviews with almost 20 people representing both a) government and central state executive agencies and institutions, b) businesses and c) organizations working in the field of public relations. This qualitative method was supplemented by quantitative approach of analyzing frequency of using topic-related keywords in selected Czech news media in the period 2015-2017.

Comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the research findings makes up the core of the text where the conducted interviews and news media monitoring are analyzed in detail and provide appropriate foundation for follow-up conclusion and answering of research questions in the last chapter. In his research (in both its qualitative and quantitative part) author specifically focused on the perception of lobbying as one of the communication strategies, as this has been one of the most controversial issues of government-business relation in general in (not only) Czech Republic throughout almost entire post-Communist period. Author provides several evidences how the news media influence the general public's mostly negative perception of this activity.

Conclusion: Author fulfilled aim of the dissertation as stated in the introductory part and expanded in methodological section by stating research question. All formal criteria were fulfilled as well. I hereby state that doctoral candidate Štěpán Soukeník has demonstrated the ability of independent scientific work and thereby **I recommend the thesis to be accepted by the committee** and graded **"passed"** (in case the "pass / fail" grading scale is applied for Ph.D. dissertation defense) or **"A"** (in case the "A through F" grading scale applies).

In Prague, 1 November 2018

Petr Just