



**Univerzita
Karlova**

**Report on the surveys conducted as a
part of the action plan for
development of the Human Resources
Strategy for Researchers at the end of
2023**

Discussed repeatedly with the Charles University Working Group for the HR Award

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Introduction

In 2017, Charles University committed to implementing the objectives of the strategy for human resources development (Human Resources Strategy For Researchers – HRS4R). Based on an internal analysis and the first action plan, the university was awarded in 2019 the “HR Excellence in Research” (the HR Award) from the European Commission. The university has pursued two ambitious action plans in recent years. In order to obtain feedback on implementing the objectives of this strategy during the period 2021–2023, a survey of academic staff, researchers, and lecturers of Charles University was conducted at the end of 2023. The respondents were asked to provide their opinions with respect to four thematic areas. First, the respondents assessed their experience with selection procedures. Secondly, they assessed the functioning of the system of career development and the appraisal of work performance. In the third area, they assessed their experience with project support from the Research Support Office – European Centre (RSO-EC). In addition, the international academic and research staff evaluated the services of the Charles University Staff Welcome Centre (SWC).

Summary

The results of the survey on feedback relating to fulfilling the objectives of the strategy for human resources development (HRS4R) at Charles University during the period 2021–2023 can be divided into four parts.

Experience with the **newly established process for selection procedures** was evaluated only by academic staff hired during the past two years. As a result, only a very small quantity of people provided feedback in this part. Nonetheless, these respondents assessed their experience with the selection procedure process as positive overall.

The responses to the questions relating to the **system of employee career development and appraisal** indicate a need to focus more on implementing the new measures and emphasizing their benefits for the creation of a transparent working environment with clear opportunities for career advancement. The responses from the faculties where appraisal has been ongoing for a longer period of time confirm that the implementation of such measures takes time to be perceived in a positive manner. The results

showed that more than 70% of the respondents were aware that the university or the faculty has set up a system of career development and appraisal for academic staff, researchers, and lecturers. Four-fifths of them were acquainted with the criteria by which their work performance is evaluated, but only 54% of the respondents believed that their work performance was evaluated in accordance with the new measures applicable to the faculty or unit in 2022/2023. About half of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the process and settings of this appraisal. They perceive the greatest benefit to be the increased transparency of career development. On the other hand, the respondents would like to see in the future a greater degree of decentralization of the process and greater autonomy for the faculties and units, so that the criteria for career development reflect the specific needs of the various faculties and units. They would also welcome a reduction in bureaucracy and administration.

In addition, a relatively small number of respondents provided answers in the part focusing on the **evaluation of the SWC by international employees**. Here, more than half of the respondents did not know about the existence of the SWC, and of those who did know about the centre, 70% had used its services. Less than a third of the international employees had actually used the SWC. However, those who did use the services were overwhelmingly satisfied. Most often, they took advantage of assistance in arranging their stay and/or visa before and after moving to the Czech Republic and often took part in a Czech language course. There is room for improvement, for example, with respect to clarity of the SWC's web pages.

Similar results were obtained for the **evaluation of project support from the university (by the RSO-EC)**. A full 70% of the respondents stated they were unaware of such support, and of the 30% who were aware, only a quarter had used these services. The rate of use of project support from the RSO-EC is thus very low. However, those who used the services were again generally satisfied with the services provided. The respondents expressed the need to reduce the administrative burden, to streamline processes, and to improve communication, transparency, and access to information on available grants and support programmes, including actively seeking new opportunities by the administration.

Overall, the results provided a number of valuable insights and findings that will help improve the quality of the services offered. In general terms, it has become clear that the problem is not so much the quality of the individual services offered, which has been assessed positively by the majority of respondents, but rather the lack of awareness among employees of these services. An important challenge for future studies is certainly to increase the return rate of the surveys, which would allow for a more in-depth analysis of the issues and an assessment of the results also at the level of the faculties.

Methodology and data

A total of 3,544 people were contacted. The resulting sample of respondents is 617 people, so the return rate is 17.4%. Table 1 shows the numbers of respondents according to basic characteristics, such as gender, nationality, faculty where the respondent is employed, current job classification at CU according to the internal salary regulation, and the length of their research career. These characteristics were collected in the initial part of the survey, and each category listed in the table contains the options that the respondents could select in the survey.

The number of respondents varied depending on the thematic area. In the case of the system of employee career development and appraisal and evaluation of university-wide project support, the numbers of respondents are sufficient for a more detailed breakdown. In analysing and presenting the results in these areas, we use the categories listed in the table, but to provide sufficient robustness for the sample, we have grouped the categories into several analytical categories, which are also listed in the table. With respect to the evaluation of experience with the newly set process for selection procedures and the evaluation of the SWC by international employees, the numbers of respondents are lower, so we present the results for these two areas only for Charles University as a whole.

Table 1 – Number of respondents and breakdown into analytical categories

Characteristic	Category in the survey	Number of respondents	Analytical category
Gender	Male	389	Men
	Female	209	Women
Nationality	Czech Republic	534	Czech Republic
	Slovakia	19	Other
	Other	58	
Faculty focus	Faculty of Mathematics and Physics	122	Science
	Faculty of Science	101	
	First Faculty of Medicine	57	Medicine and pharmacy
	Second Faculty of Medicine	26	
	Third Faculty of Medicine	27	
	Faculty of Pharmacy in Hradec Králové	20	
	Faculty of Medicine in Hradec Králové	17	
	Faculty of Medicine in Pilsen	18	
	Protestant Theological Faculty	7	Humanities and social sciences
	Faculty of Humanities	20	
	Faculty of Social Sciences	44	
	Faculty of Physical Education and Sport	14	
	Faculty of Arts	68	
	Hussite Theological Faculty	7	
	Catholic Theological Faculty	4	
Faculty of Education	34		
Faculty of Law	16		
Job classification	Academic 1 to Academic 4	448	Academic
	Researcher 1 to Researcher 3	99	Researcher
	Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2	48	Lecturer
Length of research career	Up to 7 years after receiving Ph.D.	130	Up to 12 years after receiving Ph.D.
	7–12 years after receiving Ph.D.	132	
	More than 12 years after receiving Ph.D.	265	More than 12 years after receiving Ph.D.
Charles University, total		617	Total

Career development and selection procedures

Selection procedures

In 2019, changes were made to the selection procedures for academic positions at Charles University to make them more in line with the European standards of “open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment”. This places greater demands on the university in terms of the announcement of selection procedures, the work of the selection committee, the evaluation of candidates, and the information provided to candidates. Thus, part of the survey was devoted to the experience of new academic staff with this process.

Only academic staff who had been employed at the university for 2 years or less at the time of the survey were addressed. Unfortunately, this resulted in very few respondents capable of providing responses.

Obviously, no major conclusions can be drawn from the small sample size, but those who responded to the survey had a positive experience with the selection procedures at Charles University. When asked whether the qualifications and other prerequisites for the position were clearly formulated in the announcement of the selection procedures for their position and whether their application was evaluated by a committee of at least three members, the vast majority of respondents answered positively. Only a few of them were unwilling or unable to assess this.

The respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with two aspects of the selection procedures on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the best rating and 5 being the worst rating. Almost 80% of the respondents rated the communication during the selection procedures positively (HR staff, the committee, faculty/unit management ...), with a significant majority providing a rating of 1. About 10% expressed their dissatisfaction with a rating of 4 or 5, and another 10% did not want to rate this aspect at all. The evaluation of the selection procedure process was similar. Almost two thirds of the respondents gave a rating of 1, 10% each gave a rating of 2 and 3, and less than 16% did not rate this at all. In the end, all respondents confirmed that they had been properly informed about the outcome of the selection procedures.

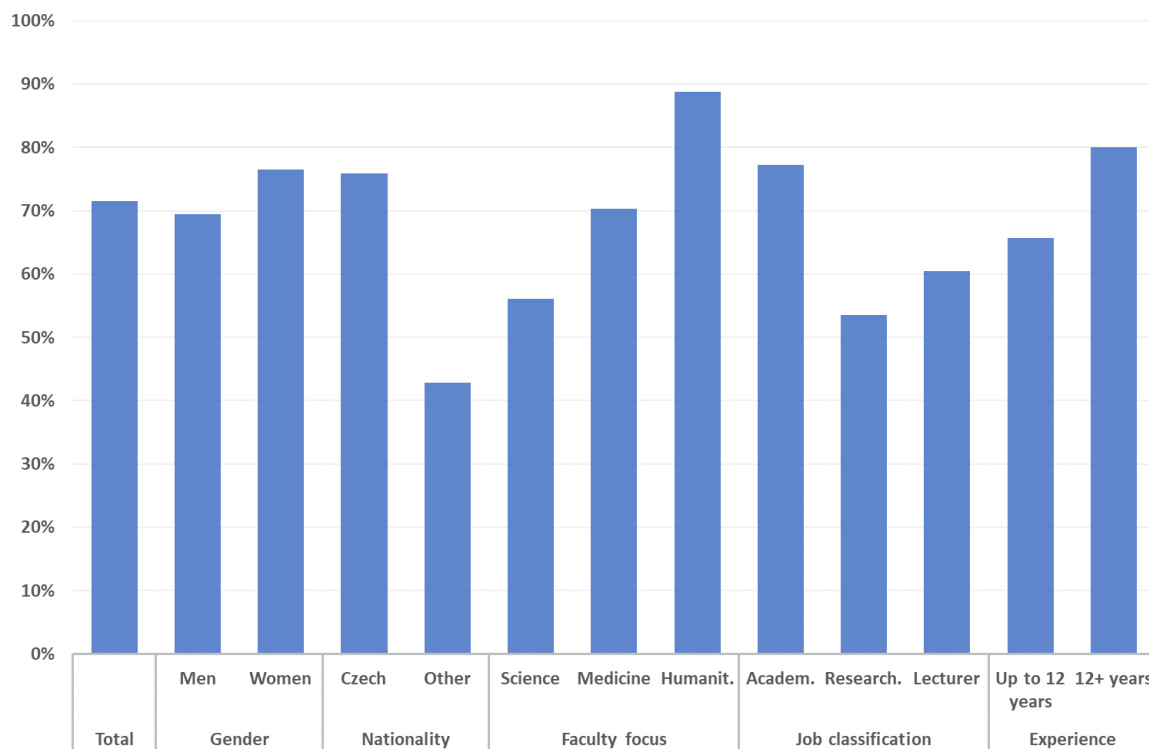
System of employee career development and appraisal

In 2021, Charles University adopted framework principles for career development and the appraisal of academic staff, researchers, and lecturers. The faculties and units subsequently issued their own measures specifying the career paths available at the faculty/unit and the specific criteria by which their employees are appraised.

The aim of these principles is to provide employees with a clear overview of their career advancement and career paths. The system should be as transparent as possible and respect the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

The survey was designed to map out the experience of CU staff up to this point with the introduction of the principles of career development and appraisal. In particular, the aim was to find out the level of awareness and the extent to which the new measures are in place, how the introduction of the career development and appraisal system has contributed to improving the functioning of the system, the level of satisfaction, and what could be improved.

Chart 1 – Percentage of affirmative responses to the question: “Did you know that the university/your faculty or unit has a system of career development and appraisal for academic staff, researchers, and lecturers?”

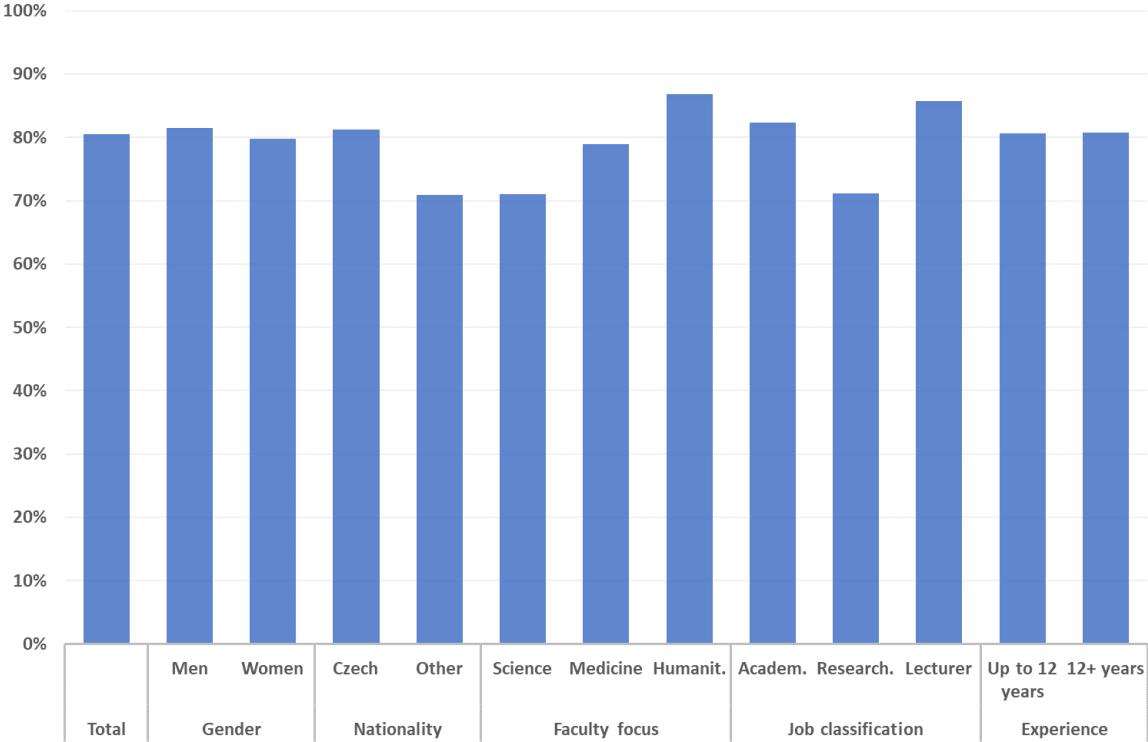


Respondents were asked first whether they were aware that the university or their faculty or unit had a system of career development and appraisal for academic staff, researchers, and lecturers. Overall, more than 70% of the respondents answered affirmatively to this question. However, awareness of the existence of a system of career development and appraisal varies widely across the various groups of respondents at CU. There is a big difference especially between Czech citizens and foreign nationals. While about 76% of the respondents from the Czech Republic are aware of it, the figure for international respondents is just over 40%. Significant differences are also found between faculties. On the one hand, employees from humanities and social science faculties were aware in almost 90% of the cases, while this is the case for only about 56% of the respondents from science faculties. In

terms of job classification, academic staff (70%) have a significantly higher awareness of the existence of career development and appraisal than lecturers (60%) and researchers (54%). More experienced staff (80%) also showed higher levels of awareness than their less experienced colleagues (66%). Relatively fewer differences can be observed between men (69%) and women (77%), but women showed a slightly higher awareness.

These results suggest that there is a need to focus on the communication of the career development and appraisal system with foreign nationals and on faculties and units where these processes have only recently been introduced. It is also evident that the issue of career development is most accentuated among academic staff members (who have also been employed longer at CU).

Chart 2 – Percentage of affirmative responses to the question: “Were you acquainted with the criteria for evaluating your work performance?”

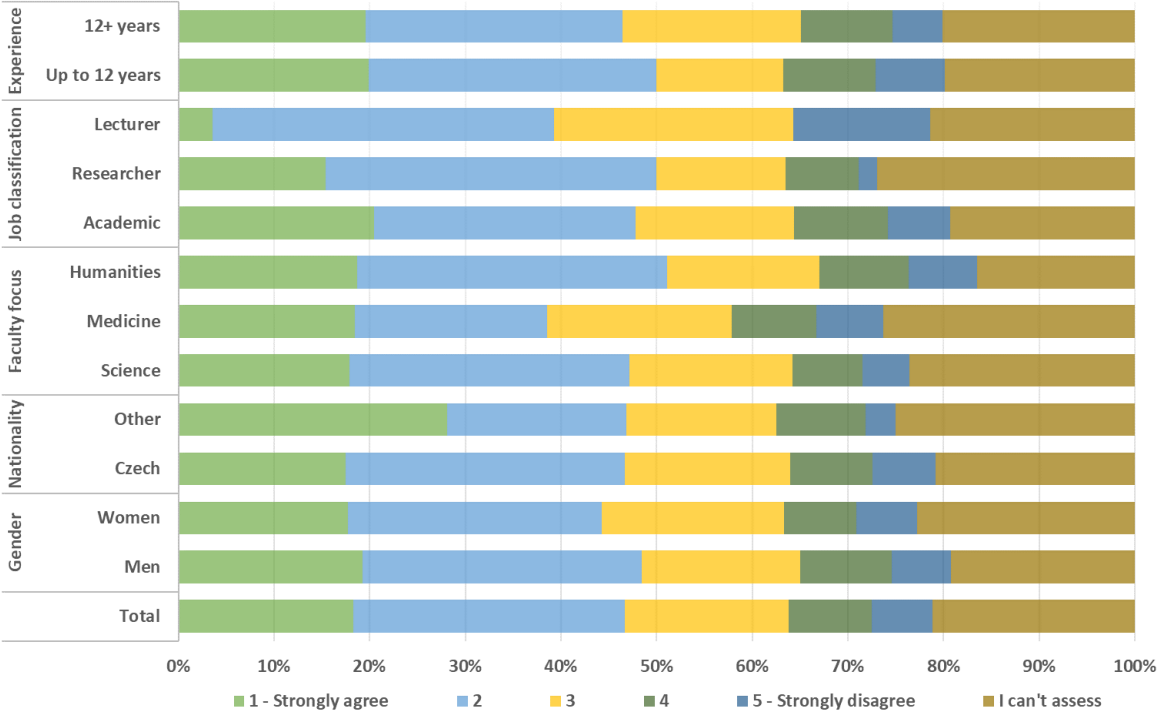


The respondents who answered affirmatively to the question about their knowledge of the existence of a system for employee career development and appraisal were further asked about their experience with the system and appraisal. First off, they were asked to comment on whether they were familiar with the criteria for evaluating their work performance. Four-fifths responded positively. There are generally not very many differences between the groups. The greatest difference can be observed in the various faculty groups. The most frequently informed respondents were employees from the humanities and social science faculties (87% of the cases). On the other hand, employees of science faculties were the least frequently informed (71% of the cases). This is the same order as for the previous question. Employees of science faculties are not only the least likely to be aware of staff appraisal, but of those who are aware, they are the least likely to be familiar with the criteria for evaluating their work performance. The opposite is true for employees of humanities and social science faculties, and employees of medical and pharmacy faculties are average in both respects. Some differences can also be observed in terms of job classification, with lecturers being the most familiar with the criteria for evaluating work performance (86%) and researchers the least familiar (71%).

Similarly, citizens of the Czech Republic (81%) are more often aware than foreign nationals (71%). Differences between genders and between less and more experienced staff are absolutely minimal.

It is clear from the above that the majority of respondents were familiar with the criteria for evaluating their work performance. Lecturers showed the greatest awareness, which is probably related to the fact that they encounter the appraisal process most often (e.g. from students). Similarly to the previous question, the science faculties again showed a lower level of awareness. This may also be influenced by the fact that one of the science faculties has not yet carried out appraisals in accordance with the new measure.

Chart 3 – Assessment of the following statement with respect to introducing the system of employee career rules and appraisals: As a result, career development is more transparent.



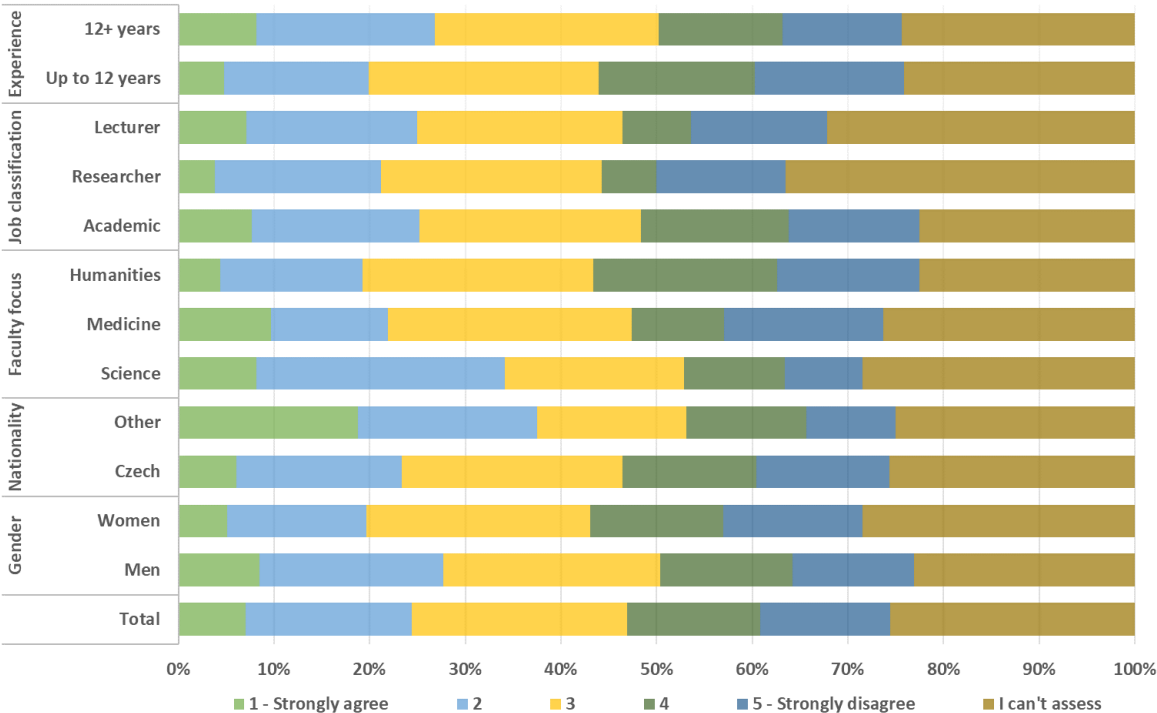
Respondents were also asked to assess three statements regarding the established system of employee career rules and appraisals. These statements were always rated on a scale of 1 – definitely yes to 5 – definitely no, or they could indicate that they were unable to assess this. They first rated whether career development is more transparent as a result of this measure. Around a fifth of the respondents were unable to assess this, 46% chose positive answers (1 and 2), and 15% chose negative answers (4 and 5). If we consider only those who were able to assess this, more than half of them (58%) believe that career development is more transparent thanks to this measure.

The differences between the various groups of employees are not significant for the most part. An exception to some extent is lecturers, who rated this aspect positively in only 39% of the cases (50% if only those who were able to assess are taken into account), which is lower than in the case of researchers (48%, 59% of those who provided an assessment) and especially academics (50%, 68% of those who provided an assessment). In a comparison of faculties, the medical and pharmacy faculties reacted negatively, with their employees believing that career development is more transparent thanks to this measure in only 39% of the cases (52% of those who provided an assessment), which is lower than for the employees of the science faculties (47%, 62% of those who provided an assessment)

and humanities and social science faculties (51%, 61% of those who provided an assessment). Foreign nationals very often chose the most positive answer, but there are practically no differences with respect to citizens of the Czech Republic in the overall rate of positive answers. There are also relatively small differences between genders and between less and more experienced employees.

The answers to the question show that about half of the respondents think that the introduction of the system of career rules and appraisals makes career paths at CU more transparent. Employees of medical faculties in particular see the least benefit in it, where the appraisal process can be perceived mainly as an additional administrative burden. In these faculties, more targeted positive communication about the benefits of the appraisal system for employees will be needed.

Chart 4 – Assessment of the following statement with respect to introducing the system of employee career rules and appraisals: The measures have a positive impact on university employees.



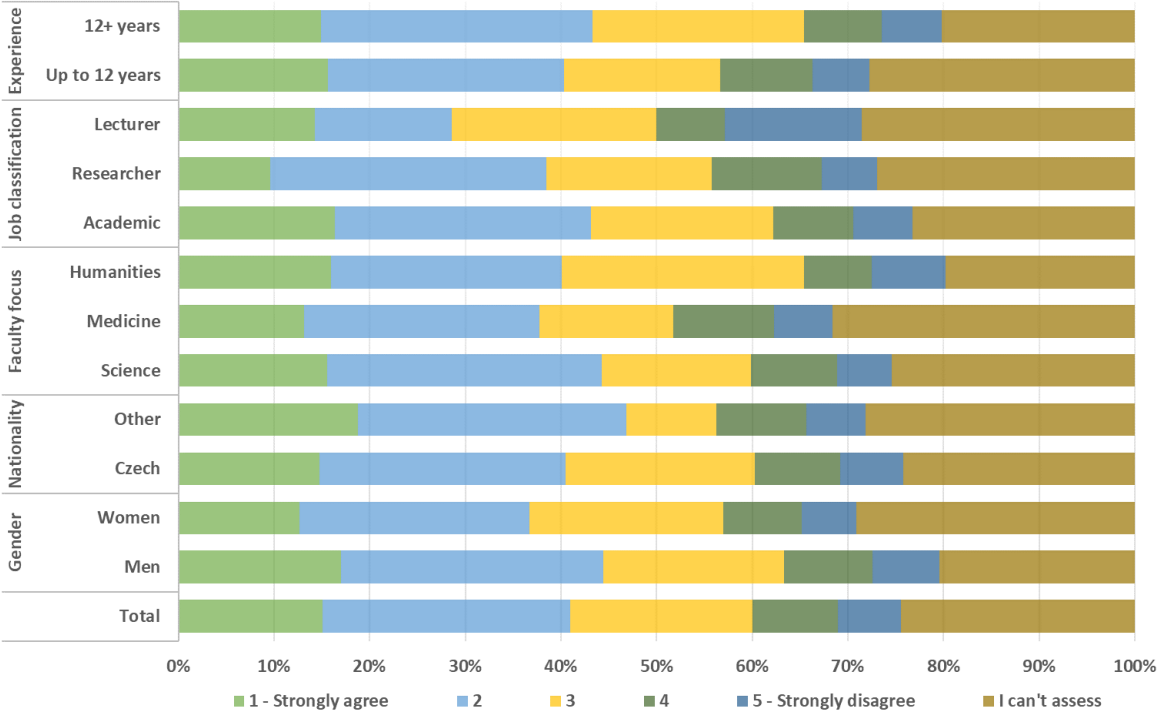
Secondly, the respondents assessed whether the measures have had a positive impact on university employees. In this case, the evaluation was significantly more negative than in the case of the assessment of the impact on career development and its transparency. More than a quarter of the respondents were unable to assess this, and more than a quarter disagreed that the measures would have a positive impact on university employees. On the contrary, just under 25% of the respondents (around 33% of those who provided an assessment) agreed with this statement.

The most significant differences can be observed between faculty groups. The most positive perception of the impact of the measures is seen by employees of the science faculties. 34% of them agreed with the statement, and with 48% of those who provided an assessment agreeing. This was considerably less the case for employees of medical and pharmacy faculties (22%, 30% of those who provided an assessment) and humanities and social science faculties of (19%, 25% of those who provided an assessment). Foreign nationals (38%, 50% of those who provided an assessment) also provided a significantly more positive rating than Czech citizens (23%, 31% of those who provided an assessment). Differences between men (28%, 36% of those who provided an assessment) and women

(20%, 27% of those who provided an assessment), as well as between less experienced staff (20%, 26% of those who provided an assessment) and more experienced staff (27%, 35% of those who provided an assessment) are also evident. On the other hand, job classification does not seem to play a very large role in this respect.

Overall, it appears that, in contrast to the perception of career development transparency, the impact on the employees themselves is rated somewhat negatively and without providing much benefit. This suggests a need in communication to focus more on the individual and the benefits for each of them.

Chart 5 – Assessment of the following statement with respect to introducing the system of employee career rules and appraisals: The measures are an important part of managing human resources at the university.



Thirdly, the respondents rated whether the measures were an important part of human resource management at the university. The respondents were significantly more likely to agree with this than with the positive impact on university employees, but not as often as with the statement that the measures made career development more transparent. Around a quarter of the respondents were unable to assess whether the measures were an important part of the university’s human resource management, with over 40% (54% of those who provided an assessment) agreeing and, conversely, just under 16% (21% of those provided an assessment) disagreeing.

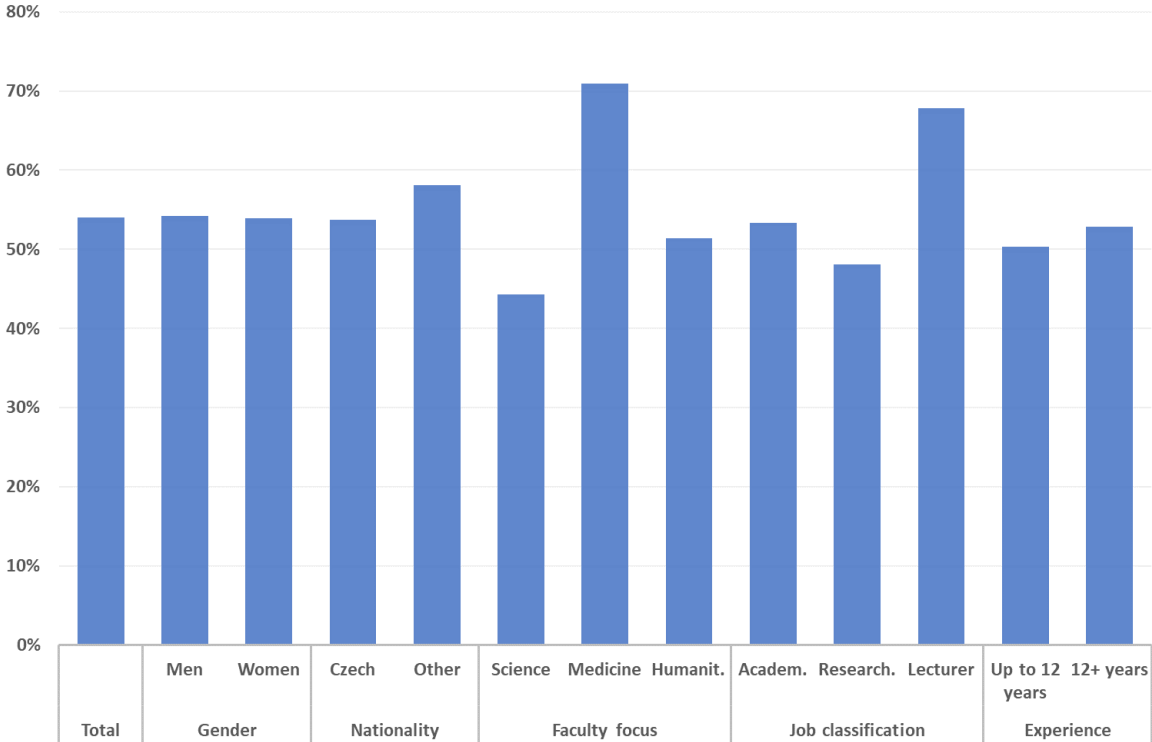
The differences between the various groups of employees are generally rather minor. Academics (43%, 56% of those who provided an assessment) and researchers (39%, 53% of those who provided an assessment) are significantly more likely to see the measures as an important part of human resources management than lecturers (29%, 40% of those who provided an assessment). A more positive rating in this respect was provided by men (44%, 56% of those who provided an assessment) in comparison with women (37%, 52% of those who provided an assessment) and foreign nationals (47%, 65% of those who provided an assessment) compared to Czech citizens (41%, 54% of those who provided an assessment). As regards faculty groups, the highest level of agreement was reported by the employees

of science faculties (44%, 59% of those who provided an assessment). Only small differences are found when differentiating the length of research careers.

Thus, once again, the career rules are generally perceived in a somewhat positive light. Lecturers have the least positive perception of appraisal as an important part of human resource management, which may be related to their limited opportunities for vertical career growth.

Overall, the introduction of a system for career rules and appraisal is perceived positively by CU employees, especially as a transparent and important part of human resources management. However, they do not think that it would have a positive impact on themselves.

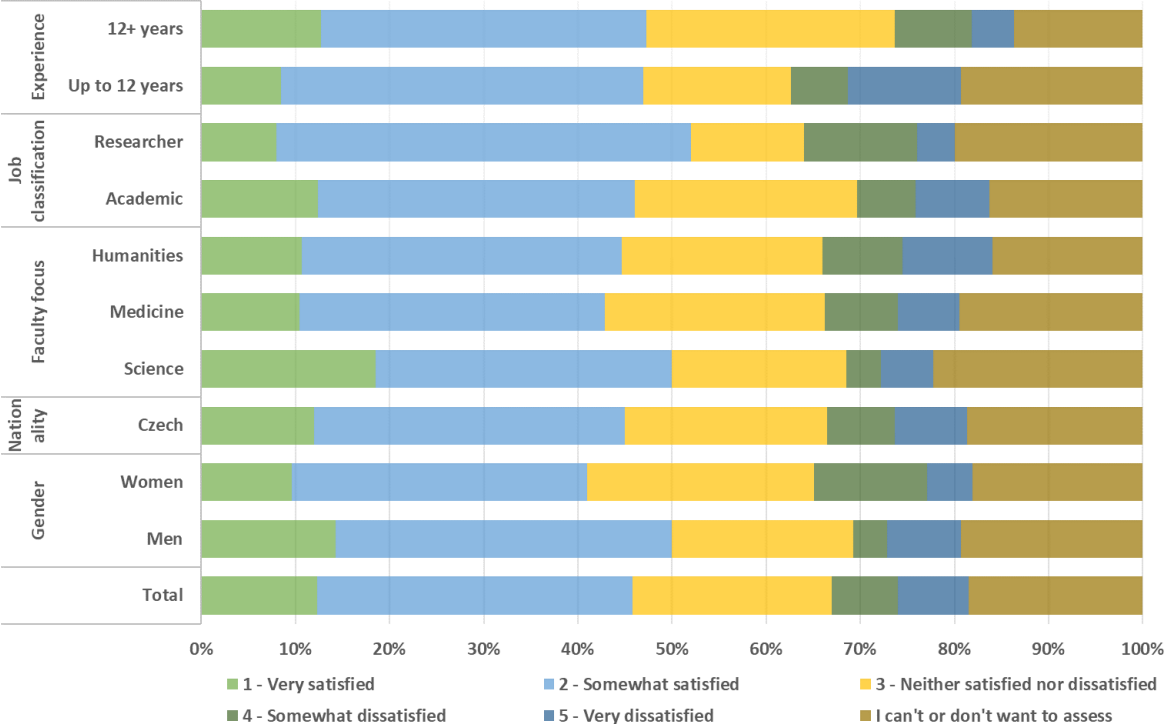
Chart 6 – Percentage of affirmative responses to the question: “Was your work performance for 2022/2023 appraised in accordance with the new measures applicable to your faculty/unit?”



The respondents were also asked whether work performance for 2022/2023 was assessed in accordance with the new measures applicable to their faculty or unit. For CU as a whole, this was the case for 54% of the respondents. The new measures were much more likely to have been applied in the appraisal of work performance in medical and pharmacy faculties (in over 70% of the cases) than in humanities and social science faculties (51%) and science faculties (44%). Lecturers (68%) were also noticeably more likely to have been appraised in accordance with the new measures than academic staff (53%) and research staff (48%). As for the length of research careers, nationality, and especially gender, the differences are essentially negligible.

It follows from the above that awareness with respect to introducing the new measures and their content needs to be raised overall, especially in science faculties and among academic and research staff. This may also be influenced by the fact that an appraisal has not yet been carried out at one of the science faculties. The higher proportion of lecturers who have been appraised in accordance with the new measures may be related to the higher frequency of appraisal for these employees compared to academic and research staff (given their more frequent fixed-term employment and the need to carry out an appraisal once every three years).

Chart 7 – Assessment of employees’ satisfaction with the process and settings of appraising work performance



Those respondents whose work performance was appraised in 2022/2023 in accordance with the new measures additionally assessed how satisfied they were with the process and settings of this appraisal. Less than 19% of the respondents were unable or unwilling to assess their level of satisfaction. 47% (55% of those who provided an assessment) were very or somewhat satisfied, while 13% (15% of those who provided an assessment) were somewhat or very dissatisfied. The percentage of respondents who perceived this negatively is thus relatively low. The differences between the groups are not substantial. Men (50%, 62% of those who provided an assessment) are more often satisfied than women (41%, 50% of those who provided an assessment), as are researchers (52%, 65% of those who provided an assessment) than academics (46%, 55% of those who provided an assessment) (we do not present the results for lecturers or for foreign nationals due to the low number of responses). Among the employees of the three faculty groups, the most satisfied are the employees of the science faculties (50%, 64% of those who provided an assessment). The share of satisfaction among less experienced staff is virtually the same as among more experienced staff, but more experienced colleagues are noticeably more likely to be very dissatisfied

Overall, it can be said that roughly half of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the process and settings of work performance appraisals across all respondent groups, with no major differences.

The survey also included two open-ended questions. The first question was “What improvements would you suggest for career development measures?”. Here, there were a number of requests for decentralization of the process and greater autonomy for faculties and units so that the criteria for career development reflect to a greater extent the specific needs of the various faculties and units. In addition, there were complaints about the excessive amount of bureaucracy and administration, as well as low salary assessments that are, moreover, not linked to the appraisal of performance. The respondents would also welcome more support in obtaining grants and in publishing and generally more awareness of career development opportunities and criteria, including criteria for appraising

work performance. They would also like to see more support in the form of mentoring or coaching programmes, especially for younger or less experienced staff. Some perceive the career rules as putting a lot of pressure on them to perform, which leaves no room for taking into account exceptions and the individual situation of employees. Moreover, there was a call for a greater balance in the appraisal of all three areas (research, teaching, and other). Appropriate, clear, and transparent communication would greatly simplify and clarify the relevance of the career rules and would reduce formalities. The transparent selection of evaluators with managerial training would improve the appraisal process. The career rules should also address late career development (age management).

Secondly, the respondents could provide their suggestions in response to the question “What improvements would you suggest for the process/procedures for the appraisal of academic staff, researchers, and lecturers?”. Topics similar to career development often emerged among the responses, demonstrating that the two areas are closely linked and perceived as such by employees. Simplification of the system and forms and better administrative support, including technical support (automatic filling in of information from CU systems, an online form) were frequent suggestions for improving the appraisal process. Here, too, there were requests for adapting the appraisal criteria for the different academic disciplines, taking into account their specificities, as well as calls for an individual approach to employees, including regular consultation with supervisors. In addition to research, teaching activities (and other aspects of work not directly related to research and publishing) should be given more weight in the appraisal of career development. More stakeholders should be involved in the appraisal to ensure that it is impartial and meets international standards (in this context, there have also been proposals to involve external experts in the assessment committees). The fact that publications that have already been assessed are being evaluated as a part of employee appraisals was also viewed unfavourably. Publications are assessed mainly on the basis of quantity, with no emphasis on content and quality. This is also linked to the selection of the committee, which may not have sufficient expertise for the appraisal. Last but not least, many respondents also pointed to low salaries and the lack of a closer link between remuneration and the appraisal of performance. In addition, those being appraised lack specific feedback on what they should improve or what is valued about their performance. The appraisal process is perceived as pressure on performance and the quantity of work at the expense of quality and motivation.

CU Staff Welcome Centre

The services of the Charles University Staff Welcome Centre (SWC), which was established in 2020, are intended for academic and research staff who are hired by Charles University (CU) from abroad. Its aim is to minimize the bureaucracy associated with moving to the Czech Republic and to provide support to international employees during their stay in the Czech Republic. The SWC's activities also have an impact on the academic and administrative staff of Charles University who come into contact with international employees, and the SWC provides methodological support to them. The SWC offers assistance to international researchers and academics and their families, e.g. with visa formalities before and after moving to the Czech Republic, finding accommodation, arranging medical care, including health insurance, finding schools for their children, orientation in the university environment, and other practical matters. Another area of focus is to support international colleagues integrate into the university environment (workshops, educational seminars, Czech language courses ...).

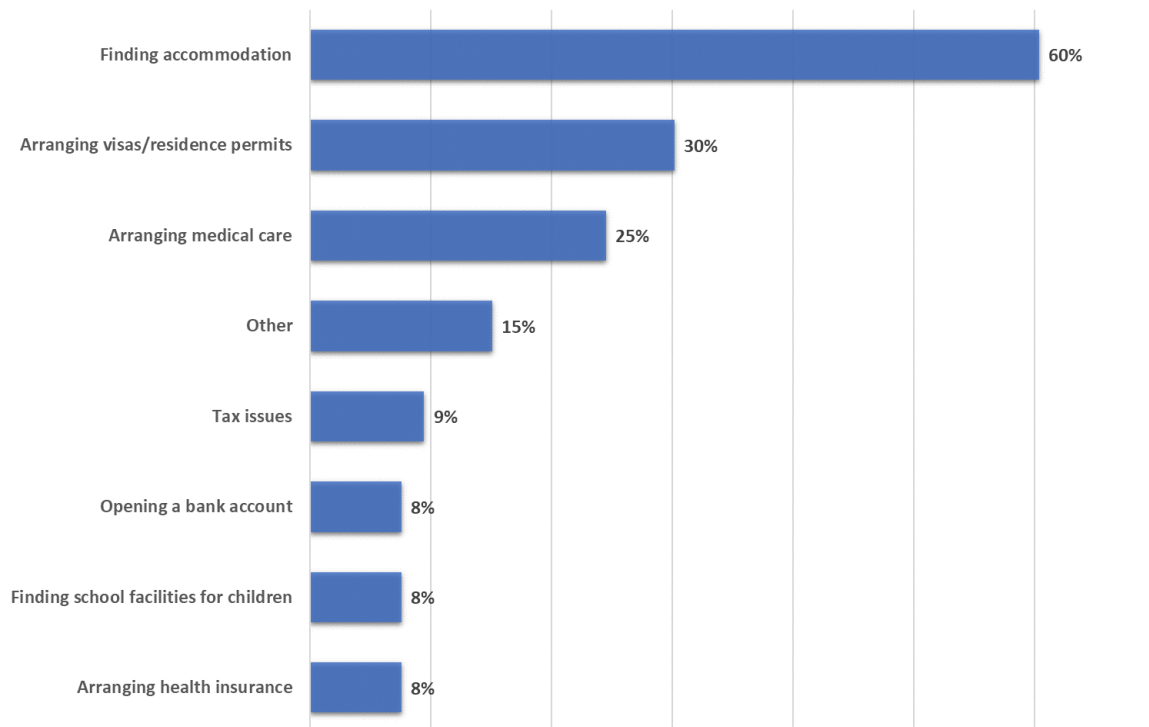
The respondents in this case were only academic staff, researchers, and lecturers who do not have Czech or Slovak citizenship. Responses to the survey were obtained from 58 CU employees of other nationalities. The aim of the survey was first to map out the situation of international employees, i.e. how long they have been working at CU, their marital status, and what problems they face in the Czech Republic. Secondly, the survey focused on obtaining feedback on the functioning of the SWC, whether the employees know about the SWC, whether they have used the services in the past, and if so, which ones, how satisfied they are with the services, which events they have attended or would like to attend, what other services the SWC could offer, etc.

In the first part of this portion of the survey, international employees were asked basic information about their stay in the Czech Republic. In our sample of respondents, just under half of them said that they have been in the Czech Republic for more than 7 years, about a quarter have been here for 4 to 6 years, and another quarter for 1 to 3 years. Less than 4% have been here for less than 1 year.

Two thirds of the respondents came to the Czech Republic alone, one third came with a spouse, and 10% with at least one child. About one in five of those who live here with children had a child born while in the Czech Republic.

Finding accommodation clearly proved to be the biggest challenge in moving to the Czech Republic. About 60% of international employees had problems with this. This issue has been discussed for a long time, and finding a solution at the university level has many constraints, especially financial ones. Just under a third (30%) had problems in arranging visas and/or residence permits, and around a quarter of the respondents had difficulties in arranging medical care. Other problems, such as tax issues, opening a bank account, finding school facilities for children, or arranging health insurance were faced by less than 10% of the respondents.

Chart 8 – What are the most difficult problems when moving to the Czech Republic



Several respondents mentioned other specific problems, which most often included the language barrier, followed in one case by a low salary for a family with a child, lack of documents in English, and not understanding income taxes.

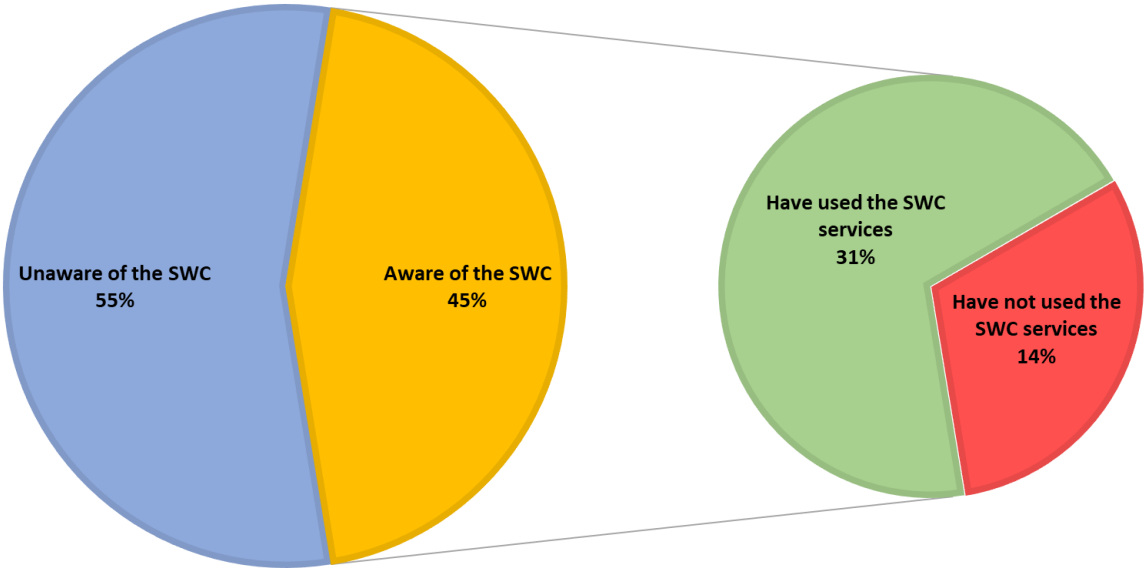
Another question dealt with accommodation. Only less than 14% of the respondents use the accommodation facilities of Charles University. Most live in commercial rentals, half rent an entire house or flat, and about 12% live with at least one other roommate. Less than a quarter use other types of accommodation, mainly their own flat or house (4 respondents in total), or a hotel, for example.

The most common way for international employees to find their first accommodation was making arrangements on their own (42%). Assistance from the relevant CU faculty or unit (26%) or a colleague or friend (19%) were also relatively common. Only 2 of the 57 respondents (i.e. around 4%) who answered the question about assistance with accommodation used the Staff Welcome Centre.

The following question was related to tax returns. The majority of international employees (57%) make arrangements with the help of the HR/payroll office of the CU faculty, and less than a third do their own taxes. Only a minimum of the respondents use the services of a tax advisor or do not deal with taxes at all.

Naturally, the most important questions in the section of the survey about the Staff Welcome Centre were those that focused on its activities.

Chart 9 – Awareness of the existence of the SWC and use of its services

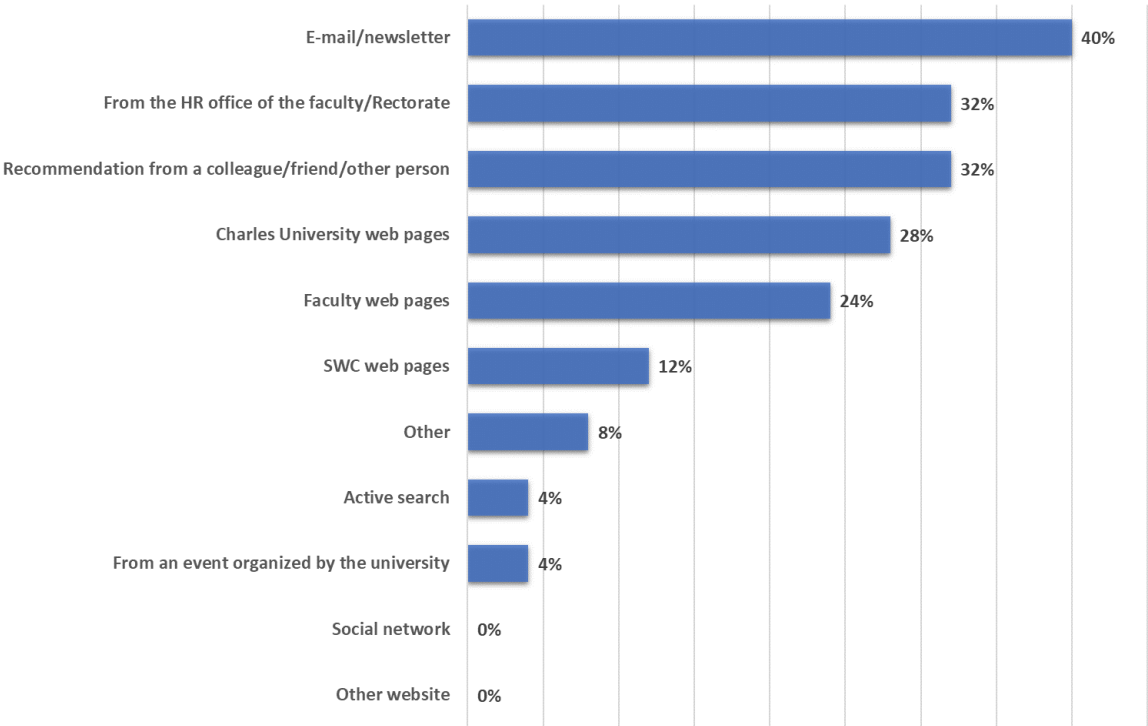


A basic question is whether international employees are even aware of the existence of the SWC. Unfortunately, the survey showed that more than half of them do not know about the SWC. Of those who are aware of the existence of the SWC, more than two thirds have used the services. However, due to a lack of overall awareness of the SWC, only 31% of all surveyed international employees have used the services of the SWC.

The respondents who said that they were aware of the SWC’s services were further asked about what was missing from the SWC’s services and where they learned about the existence of the SWC.

When asked what was missing from the SWC’s services, the following answers were given: longer-term Czech language courses, free Czech language courses for family members, volunteers (e.g. through WhatsApp groups), and more information about taxes and childbirth in the Czech Republic.

Chart 10 – Where did international employees learn about the existence of the SWC

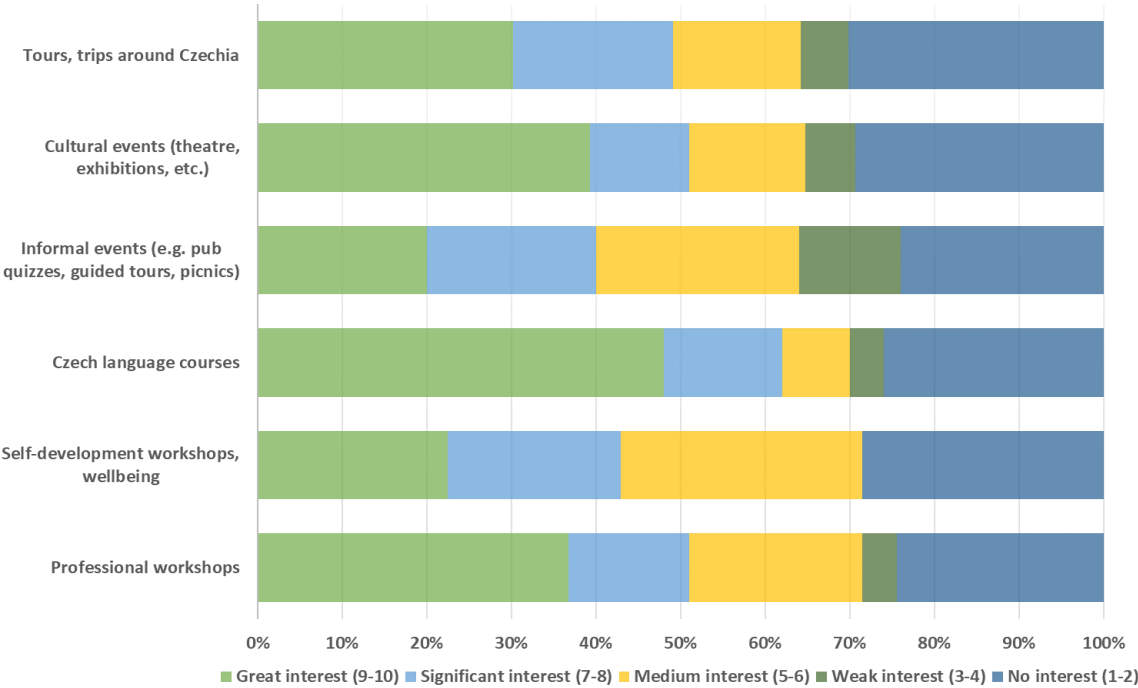


The manner in which international employees learned of the existence of the SWC proved to be quite varied. The most frequent responses were: e-mail or newsletter, recommendation from a colleague, friend, or other person, from the HR office of the faculty or Rectorate, from Charles University’s web pages, and from the faculty’s web pages.

The respondents who indicated that they had used the SWC’s services were further asked about the specific services they used. Again, they could choose multiple options from the list of responses. Most often, they needed assistance with arranging their stay and/or visa before and after moving to the Czech Republic, and they often took part in a Czech language course. Several of them had attended an event or events for international employees (seminars, events), and some needed assistance with arranging accommodation.

When asked about satisfaction with the SWC’s services, the vast majority of the respondents answered that they were very or somewhat satisfied, and no one indicated that they were not satisfied. In terms of communicating with the SWC, almost everyone was most comfortable communicating by e-mail, with only two respondents saying they preferred to communicate in person and one by phone. The next question asked respondents whether they had attended events organized by the SWC, and around 42% of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

Chart 11 – Interest in participating in events organized by the SWC for international employees



All international employees who took part in the survey were asked what events organized by the SWC they would like to attend in the future. They were given six types of events to consider, with each type rated on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicates that the respondent is not interested at all and 10 indicates that they are very interested. The results show that a significant proportion of the respondents are interested in the events offered. The share of respondents with no interest in the type of event ranged between 20% and 30%. The greatest interest is in Czech language courses, in which around 60% of respondents showed at least significant interest. About half of the respondents have the same level of interest in tours or trips around the Czech Republic, cultural events (visits to the theatre, exhibitions, etc.) and professional workshops. The lowest level of interest was expressed for self-development and wellbeing seminars and informal events (e.g. pub quizzes, guided tours, picnics). As there has not been much interest in these events from international employees even in the past, events of this type were “toned down” by the SWC last year. In this respect, the results of the survey confirmed the current practice.

In addition to the list of events offered, the respondents indicated that they would also like to take part in, for example, networking with employees from various faculties, advice on living in the Czech Republic, or sporting activities (e.g. badminton).

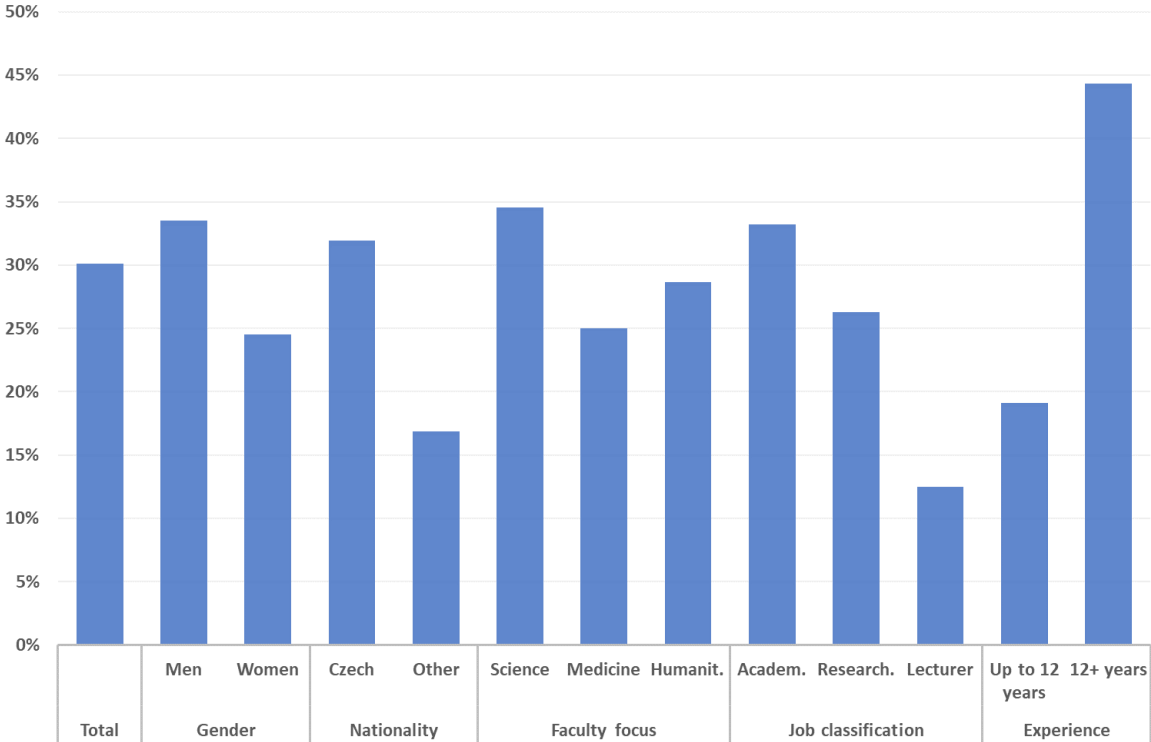
In conclusion, the respondents were asked to assess the clarity of the SWC’s web pages. They were able to do so using the same rating system used in school, i.e. from 1 – excellent to 5 – poor. On average, the SWC’s web pages received a higher three from its users. Only 12% of the respondents gave a grade of 4 or 5. Most respondents (46%) provided a grade of 3 – good. The clarity of the SWC’s web pages was rated as excellent or commendable by 42% of the respondents. Those respondents who perceived the clarity of the SWC’s web pages negatively were probably not familiar with them at all. Specifically, two respondents stated that the SWC is not visible at all within the context of university life. The SWC will, therefore, focus on this area and revise the web pages, as well as launch a university-wide campaign at CU for those who are not yet aware of its services (placing information on faculty websites, informing the international affairs offices of faculties, etc.).

Project support

The Research Support Office – European Centre (RSO-EC) offers a comprehensive grant consultancy services with the main focus on supporting applicants for ERC and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships. In addition, it provides advice for various Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ schemes (specifically Key Action 2 – KA2). Advisory services include navigation of the grant schemes and preparation of project proposals: understanding the calls, selection and justification of topics, definition of research questions and objectives, setting the budget, creating an implementation plan, formulating expected results and impact, revision of proposals, and submission of proposals. If a project is approved, the RSO-EC also assists with other steps, such as consolidating the grant agreement, navigating the SyGMA portal, etc. The RSO-EC aims to provide comprehensive support for the grant process from start to finish. It provides priority support to faculties in ERC, MSCA, ERA Chairs/Talents/Fellowships and Hop on Facility calls/schemes.

In particular, the survey sought to find out to what extent researchers, academics, and lecturers are aware of the services offered by the RSO-EC, to what extent they use them, whether they are satisfied with these services, how they perceive the faculty support in comparison, and what could be added to the services.

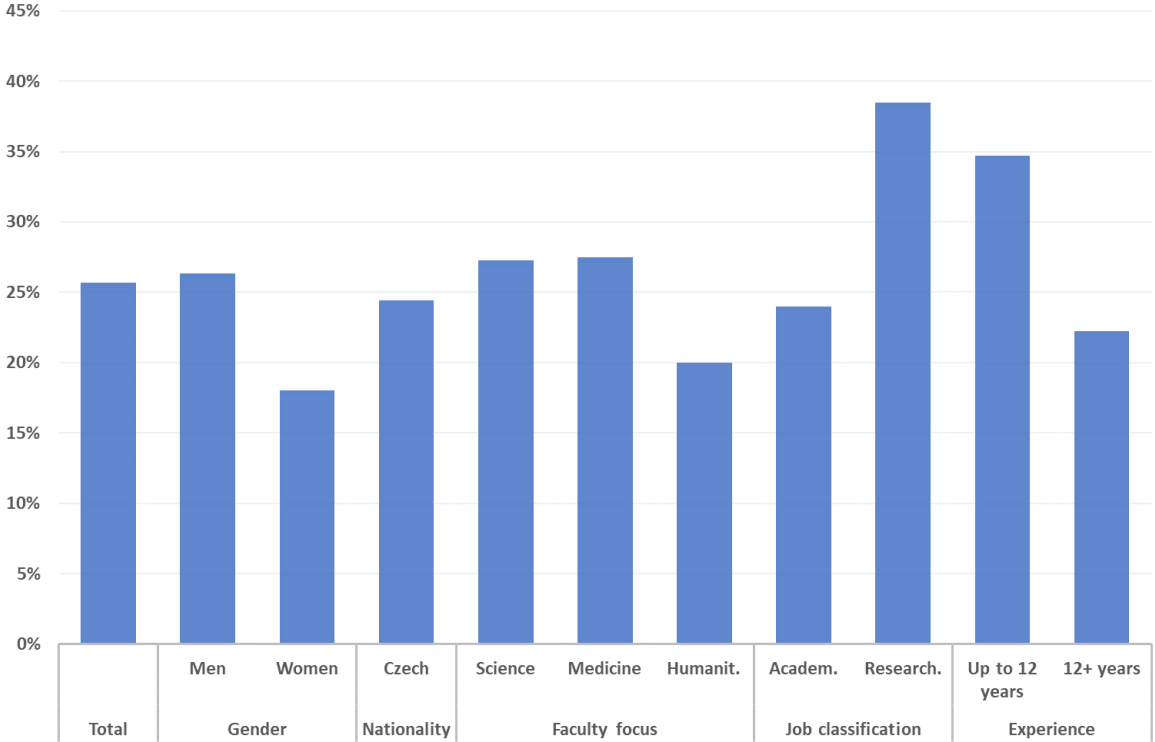
Chart 12 – Percentage of respondents who are aware of the services offered by the RSO-EC



In the first question, the respondents were asked whether they were aware that the RSO-EC offers project support services. The answers indicate that approximately 30% of the respondents are aware of these services. This proportion varies in particular according to the career stage of the participants, with more experienced staff being significantly better informed (44%) than their less experienced colleagues (19%), and nationality, with Czech citizens being significantly better informed (32%) than foreign nationals (17%). There is also a fairly significant difference between academic staff (33%) and researchers (26%) and lecturers (13%). Men (34%) also showed more awareness than women (25%). In addition, employees from science faculties (35%) are more informed than their colleagues from

humanities and social science faculties (29%) and medical and pharmacy faculties (25%), which correlates with their higher level of active participation in applying for international grants, although the difference is not significant.

Chart 13 – Percentage of international employees who use the project support services of the RSO-EC



The respondents who were aware that the RSO-EC offers project support services were asked whether they use these services. Less than 26% of respondents answered affirmatively, which means that almost three quarters of those who know about the services do not use them. If we take into account those who do not know about the services, then only less than 8% of the CU employees surveyed use the RSO-EC services. Of those who are aware of the opportunity to use these services, researchers (39%) are significantly more likely to use them than academics (24%). Similarly in terms of length of research career, less experienced staff (38%) are more likely to use the RSO-EC project support services than their more experienced colleagues (22%). The services are also more often used by men (26%) than women (18%) and by employees in medical and pharmacy faculties (28%) and science faculties (27%) than humanities and social science faculties (20%).

The respondents who had used the RSO-EC project support services also rated their satisfaction with these services. Due to the lower number of respondents who answered this question, we only present the results at a general level for the whole university. The assessment was very positive. On a five-point rating scale from 1 – very satisfied to 5 – very dissatisfied, a full three-quarters of the respondents were very or somewhat satisfied, 21% were not satisfied or dissatisfied, and 4% were somewhat dissatisfied. No one was very dissatisfied.

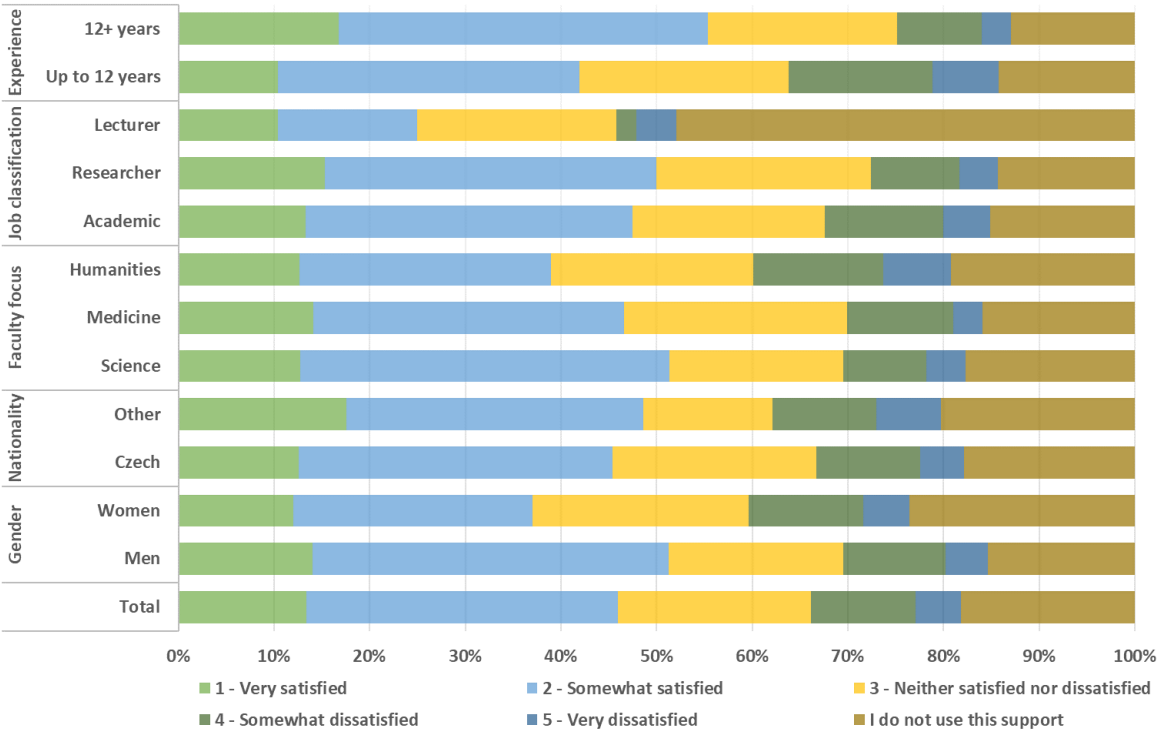
The respondents could also indicate the motivation that would lead them to apply for projects from EU programmes if they met the relevant criteria. One of the main motivations they see is the possibility of teamwork and sufficient administrative support, which would greatly simplify the implementation of projects. Faculty support is key, as some workplaces lack sufficient administrative facilities. The age

and performance of applicants is also an important motivation, which can significantly affect the chances of success of an application.

Another key element is the consistent management of applications for European grants, especially in situations where other financial resources are limited. It is recommended to start with a smaller EU grant and then to gradually expand the partnership and apply to other grants. Concerns about low success rates and the high administrative burden are often raised, which may not be justified, since the administration associated with the operational programmes tends to be much more demanding. Positive support from the university is seen as motivating, but secondary obligations at the faculty are perceived as being time consuming, making it difficult to engage in grant projects.

Knowing that the administrative burden would be taken on by a more responsible employee would greatly ease the role of academics, who often have to concentrate on administration rather than their own research work. Some of the respondents mentioned that, despite attempts to obtain support, the support did not meet expectations or that they felt they had exceeded the applicant limit for the age category. The need for a realistic chance to acquire a project, tailoring projects to the needs of the workplace, and interesting collaboration with partners were also highlighted. The respondents also indicated that they would appreciate more time for research work, suggesting that their current responsibilities do not allow them to devote themselves fully to grant projects.

Chart 14 – Satisfaction with faculty support for projects or grants



For comparison, the respondents were also asked about satisfaction with faculty support for projects or grants. Approximately 18% do not use this support, 46% (56% of those using the services) are very or somewhat satisfied, and conversely 12% (14% of users) are somewhat or very dissatisfied. Men (51%, 61% of users) are significantly more satisfied with faculty support than women (37%, 48% of users), as are more experienced staff (55%, 64% of users) than their less experienced colleagues (42%, 49% of users). In terms of job classification, it is not surprising that almost half of the lecturers do not use project support. The difference in satisfaction between academic and research staff is negligible.

In terms of the faculty focus, the highest level of satisfaction is reported by employees of science faculties (51%, 62% of users), but the differences in comparison with employees of humanities and social science faculties (47%, 55% of users) and medical and pharmacy faculties (39%, 48% of users) are not large.

Responses to the question of whether faculty support differs according to the grant programme were varied. Some respondents feel that support is sufficient and evenly distributed, while others report significant differences. Researchers identify the Czech Grant Agency as the programme with the strongest support, which may be due to its prevalence and well-established processes. Conversely, support for Horizon Europe projects is perceived as insufficient or complicated, possibly due to complexity and a lack of experience. It is also apparent from some responses that researchers are often unaware that the university provides comprehensive grant support specifically for ERC and MSCA projects.

Several respondents talked about the overloaded and undervalued grant officers, which leads to limited capacity and the inability to provide complete support. Some highlight that, while official support exists, in practice, it is rather formal and insufficient, leading them to doing things on their own or to seek support outside the faculty structure.

There is also mention of specific programmes, such as ERC grants, where faculty support is not always obvious or clearly defined, sometimes leading to successful applicants leaving the faculty for better support elsewhere. Several responses also suggest that support may depend on the individual staff members, where some provide excellent support and others do not. This variability can be a source of frustration and uncertainty for researchers seeking reliable assistance in preparing and managing grants.

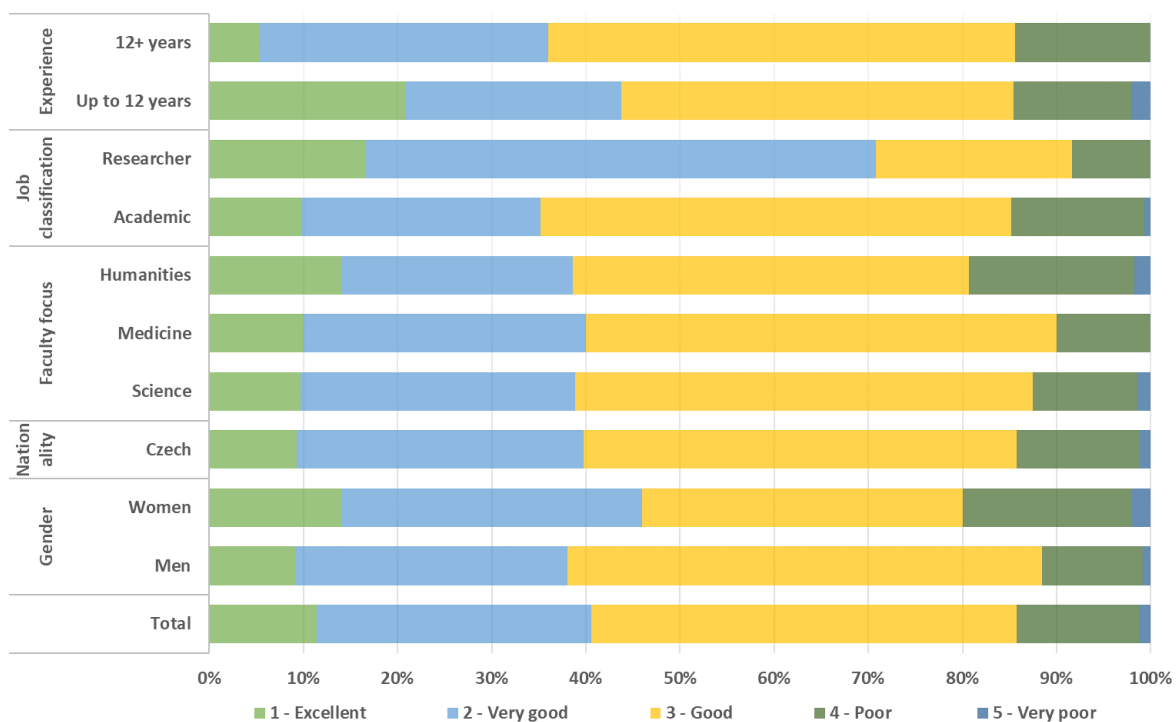
Overall, the responses suggest a need for improvements in the faculty support system, including increased capacity for grants offices and better training and mentoring for new and existing employees. There is also a need for transparency and information sharing for available resources and funding opportunities.

Responses to the question about supplementary support that respondents would welcome at the faculty or Rectorate level suggested a reduction in the administrative burden and the streamlining of processes. There is a call for improved communication, transparency, and access to information regarding available grants and support programmes. Researchers value concrete tools, such as budget planning tables to facilitate the monitoring of expenditures and project costs.

There are demands for improved search capabilities for grant opportunities and a proactive approach from the administration to assist not only with paperwork, but also to proactively seek out and inform about new opportunities. The respondents also talk about the need for clearer and more comprehensible information about funding, including what can be funded with grants, and the need for support in completing forms and managing the bureaucracy associated with projects.

Some respondents suggest that they would also welcome support for international projects, such as ERC and MSCA grants, which would include assistance with project preparation and management, both at the application stage and during implementation. There is also a request for better HR support and communication to facilitate the processes of hiring and managing the staff involved in the projects.

Chart 15 – Assessment of communication and access to information from the Rectorate on project support for EU programmes



The respondents were also asked to evaluate the communication and access to information about project support relating to EU programmes from the CU Rectorate. About 40% rated this as excellent or very good. The highest percentage (45%) considered this to be good, and 14% considered this to be poor or very poor. A significant difference is particularly evident in the ratings by researchers and academics. More than 70% of researchers, i.e. roughly twice as many as academics, rate the communication and access to information on project support for EU programmes from the Rectorate as excellent or very good. It should be noted, however, that a relatively small number of researchers (24) responded to this question, so the result should be understood in this context. The career stage also seems to play a role, with more experienced staff having more positive evaluations than their less experienced colleagues.

Overall, the results of this part of the survey indicate a need to further raise awareness of the RSO-EC's services, which had already started in early 2024 with visits to all faculties and discussions with the deans, the vice-deans for research, the heads of research departments, and the grants offices. The RSO-EC regularly updates its website in both Czech and English and communicates with the administration, faculty management, and researchers via MS Teams, where they can subscribe to news from different thematic channels according to their preferences.

Information sessions will also be organized during 2024 to introduce the various project schemes and to explain how to use our services. In addition, for such a large and decentralized university, assistance at the university-wide level cannot replace the faculty offices, so the university also wants to focus on methodological assistance for promoting facilities at the faculty level. It will also advocate for the implementation of an efficient IT tool for grant and project management, which can significantly reduce the faculty and university-wide administration so that more time can be spent on additional project support.