



Central European
Digital Media
Observatory



Dilemma: Science vs. religion

Coffee Beans

**Hugo Gloss, CEDMO-SVA researcher and COO of
the DEKK Institute**

The COVID-19 pandemic was an opportunity to highlight the level of trust the general public has in the scientific community. A large part of the public respected the anti-pandemic measures and also completed vaccination against the disease - in Slovakia, the rate of vaccination with two basic doses is 51.1% (1) and in the Czech Republic, 64.4% (2). However, in the case of a pandemic and the associated need for trust in science, the effectiveness and safety of vaccines do not have a theoretical but a very practical impact, as they are associated with endangering or protecting one's own health.

However, what attitudes do the residents of the Czech Republic and Slovakia have when, in their understanding, conflicts come not about practical matters such as vaccination with new vaccines during a pandemic but about personally highly important topics where science comes into conflict with their faith? In the case of religious beliefs, it does not have to be only traditional religions such as Christianity in the V4 region, but also various new religious movements or trends. The dilemma of faith vs. science was investigated by one of the questions of the World Values Survey, which was conducted in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 2022.

(1) Stratégia očkovania proti COVID-19 na jeseň 2023, Dostupné na <https://www.uvzsr.sk/web/uvz/strategia-ockovania-proti-covid-19-na-jesen-2023>

(2) COVID souhrnné statistiky, Dostupné na <https://ockovani.opendatalab.cz/statistiky>

Please tell us if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements: Whenever science and religion conflict, religion is always right		
	CZ	SK
Strongly agree	2.3%	8.8%
Agree	15.5%	22.4%
Disagree	41.3%	32.7%
Strongly disagree	34.5%	24.5%
Do not know / No answer	6.4%	11.6%

Table 1: Overview of attitudes on science vs. religion in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 2022 (Source: World Values Survey, Wave 7)

The research shows that in the case of a dilemma between science and faith in the Czech Republic, 17.8% of respondents prefer their religious beliefs, and in Slovakia, this value reaches the level of 31.2%. Although the Czech Republic is generally perceived as one of the most atheistic countries in Europe (3), the result of 17.8% is still several times higher than the result of the World Values Survey 7th wave in the Netherlands (5.3%).

(3) Lipka M., 10 facts about atheists, 2019, Dostupné na <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/12/06/10-facts-about-atheists/>

Further research will be required to explain these trends, as hypothesised by the CEDMO-SVA team; the results may not automatically mean that respondents do not respect the results of scientific research; rather, they may point to the fact that while religious truths are intrinsically valuable and immutable, the results of scientific research are by definition subject to criticism, correction and improvement. At the same time, it is inherent in the human psyche that it is easier for it to accept a change in some fact than a value change that would require a change in one's own identity. (4) (5)

(4) Pulverer B. When things go wrong: correcting the scientific record. EMBO J. 2015 Oct 14;34(20):2483-5. doi: 10.15252/embj.201570080. PMID: 26467018; PMCID: PMC4609179.

(5) Jamieson K. H., McNutt M., Kriermer V., Sever R., Signaling the trustworthiness of science. In: PNAS, Vol. 116, No. 39, 2019, Dostupné na: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1913039116>

Datasets:

World Value Survey Wave 7. Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & Puranen, B. et al. (Eds.) (2018). World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile. JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat.



Funded by
the European Union
NextGenerationEU



CZECH
RECOVERY
PLAN

