

# Perception of Slovenian public administration students on the Russia-Ukraine war and comparison with selected post-communist countries

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**Abstract:** The Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 caused one of the greatest humanitarian crises in Europe. Apart from the devastating consequences for those directly affected by military action, the war has caused global turmoil and catalyzed many socioeconomic and geopolitical consequences that have not been experienced for decades and ignited a serious stir in the international community. The historical experiences reveal that armed conflicts have usually led to catastrophic impacts on the well-being of nations. All these consequences and impacts hold major implications for higher education students and their future. Namely, students are considered vulnerable, especially in difficult economic conditions, which increases their worries about various aspects of their lives.

Therefore, the paper aims to examine the perception of Slovenian public administration students on the Russia-Ukraine war by comparison with students enrolled predominantly in fields of studies related to social sciences from selected post-communist countries, i.e., Serbia, Croatia, and Romania. The data are a part of the large-scale online global student survey entitled 'Students' perception on the Russia-Ukraine war 2022', which was carried out online between 22 March 2022 and 22 May 2022, when most countries were experiencing increasing socioeconomic and geopolitical global uncertainties due to the Russia-Ukraine war 2022. The final sample covers hundreds of students from Slovenia (411), Serbia (213), Croatia (212), and Romania (307). The empirical analysis is facilitated with established statistical techniques for multiple group comparison, e.g., analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The empirical results reveal noticeable differences in the perception of students on the Russia-Ukraine war between selected post-communist countries. In general, students from Romania are the most worried about the war, followed by students from Croatia and Slovenia, while students from Serbia are the least worried about the war. Similar patterns in worries can be observed for different aspects of worries, i.e. increasing prices, economic situations, military actions, and other concerns. These worries also affect students' personal concerns related to scholarships, studying abroad and future education, especially in Romania and Slovenia, followed by Croatia and Serbia. The presented differences in worries across the countries can be explained by different perceptions on (in)tolerance to Russia and Western and international sanctions imposed against Russia. The comparative analysis between selected post-communist countries will help formulate the most useful recommendations for policymakers.

**Keywords:** Russia-Ukraine war, perception, public administration students, post-communist countries