

Remembering Professor Jan Seger (21.2.1938–9.12.2022)

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At the age of 84 years, Rector Emeritus of the Prague University of Economics and Business (VŠE) and Dean Emeritus of the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics of the same University passed away at the end



of the year 2022. He was a great educator deceased who devoted virtually his entire professional life to work in the academic milieu; he educated a long row of successful graduates and participated in the development of his alma mater.

Jan Seger was born in Prague, where he also graduated from his secondary school studies (A-level examination in the year 1956). From 1956 to 1961, he studied at the Prague University of Economics and Business (VŠE) in the field of statistics. There he experienced reforms of studies, which were frequent there at that time – he was admitted to the Faculty of Statistics yet graduated from the Faculty of Political Economy; the original denomination of “graduated economist” was changed for those who graduated in the year 1966 to the “Ing.” university degree. For two years (partly also filled with military service), he worked as a programmer

in a computer technology company called Aritma Vokovice.

In 1963, he was admitted to the Department of Statistics of the University (VŠE) as an assistant (later lecturer), and he remained faithful to that workplace almost for half a century. In professional terms, he mainly specialised in analysing economic time series and statistical prognostic methods. In 1968, he defended his dissertation called *Possibilities of Application of Exponential Seasonal Smoothing for Analysis of Seasonal Time Series of Economic Indicators*; afterwards, he paid a four-month study visit to a university in Brussels. In 1977, he was appointed senior lecturer after he defended his habilitation thesis called *Possibilities of Construction of Extrapolative Forecasting of Economic Indicators*. In 1992, he was appointed Professor of Statistics. Prof. Seger was always evaluated in surveys of students as an excellent lecturer.

The scientific and publication activities of Jan Seger are enormous. From 1960s to 1980s, they mainly focused on the aforementioned analysis methods of time series and prognostic methods. Besides numerous contributions in journals and compendia (*Statistika*, *Statistická revue*, *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia* and others, even abroad), they were didactic texts, e.g. *Introduction to Analysis of Time Series* (1970 – with Josef Kozák), *Simple statistical methods in prognostics* (1975 – with Josef Kozák), *Solved problems from statistical prognostics* (1977 – with Jiří Žvábek) and others. Since the beginning of 1980s, Jan Seger published several didactic texts for a basic course of statistics at the University (VŠE), which were popular with students for their conciseness and clarity. The first one was *Fundamentals of statistics for Business Administration Faculty* (1981, 249 pp.). Later a textbook, issued as a book, was already significantly larger – *Statistical Methods for Economists of Industry* (1988, 545 pp.). In 1990s,

Jan Seger published another series of textbooks for a modernised course of fundamentals of statistics – *Statistical Methods in Economics* (1993 – with Richard Hindls), *Statistical Methods in the Market Economy* (1995 – with Richard Hindls), and *Statistics in the Economy* (1998 – with Richard Hindls and Stanislava Hronová). In subsequent years, Prof. Seger was a co-author of a successful textbook, *Statistics for Economists*, that was issued in 8 editions in total.

Jan Seger held at the University (VŠE) many important academic posts. Already in the second half of the 1980s, he was a Deputy Head of the Department of Statistics. Soon after the department was split during the reorganisation of the University (VŠE) in 1990, he was appointed head of a newly established Department of Economic Statistics (he headed it for the whole 16 years: 1990–2006). From 1991 to 1992, he was a Vice-Dean for education at the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics. Afterwards, as a Vice-Rector for education (1992–1994), he was instrumental in finishing a system of credit hours in studies, which had not been tried at Czech universities at that time yet. In December 1993 and again three years later, he was smoothly elected Rector of the University (VŠE) by the academic senate of the University (VŠE). As the eighth rector since the foundation of the University (VŠE) and the third one after the Velvet Revolution of 1989, Prof. Seger performed the function from 1994 to 2000. During the inaugural, in February 1994, for the first time in the history of the University (VŠE), there was a lecture by a rector about the importance of statistics for economic theory and practice. As a Rector, he managed to considerably stabilise the University and create foundations for its development on the brink of the millennium. For the years 2006–2010, Prof. Seger was elected Dean of the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics.

During the whole period of his work at the University (VŠE) since the 1960s, Jan Seger co-operated with the state statistical office (the office was repeatedly re-organised and re-named during that period) and its research institute; he participated in solving many research assignments and in technical publications. He also held the position of the Vice Chairman of the Czech Statistical Council. In 2014, Prof. Jan Seger became the second laureate awarded the Prize of the President of the Czech Statistical Office and of the Rector of the Prague University of Economics and Business (VŠE) for his life-long contribution to statistics.

Professor Seger had a great sense of the personal traits of colleagues and was a smart commentator of various situations and human characters. He was famous for his fondness for spending time in his cottage, where he relaxed and gained strength. At first, he used to go to the Šumava Mountains and, since the 1970s, to the Sedlčany Area, where he was also laid to eternal rest at the cemetery in Vojkov as he wished.

Tribute to his memory!