Ethno-cultural Aspects of National life of Young People of Slovak nationality in Croatia and Serbia (theory and empirism)

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The contribution was written as part of project VEGA supported by Slovak Academy of Sciences No.2/0035/2014. The title of the project is Verbal-communication behaviour of Slovak youth in Croatia and Serbia in a situational context of intra-ethnic use of the Slovak language on communication level.


Abstract:
Background: Ethno cultural processes belong to the most dynamic, most complicated and most important socio-cultural characteristics of each society. An ethnic definition of culture and society is at present, at a time of multiculturalism and de-ethnicity of culture, an effective and used means of description, genesis, and pursuance of political as well as economic management. The socio-cultural environment of Lower-country is an excellent setting to study the processes; in some parts it seems to be quite homogenous (Lower-country culture) whereas in others it is complex and internally differentiated.

Objective: The aim of the study is to characterize the Slovak minority living in Croatia and Serbia in the ethno-cultural background of its development, to define the main factors of ethno-cultural progress and the perspectives of their development. At the same time it aims to represent the opinions of the research participants (young Slovak people living in Croatia and Serbia). The study consists of a theoretical as well as a practical part.

Method: The theoretical part of the study includes an integrated knowledge of important aspects of the ethno-culture of the Slovak minority, which were gained by long-term ethnological research in the environment. The empirical part focuses on the data gained in field research (2015) within a grant project ‘Verbal-communication behaviour of Slovak youth in Croatia and Serbia in a situational background of intra-ethnic usage of Slovak.’ Based on the quota sampling (age and gender), 170 respondents took part in the research (49 from Croatia and 121 from Serbia).

The research sample included: People of Slovak origin, who either declared their Slovak nationality themselves or Slovak was mother tongue of at least one of their parents. People who, in their opinion, spoke Slovak language in everyday life. Two groups of students from various types of high schools and universities (with Slovak lectorship) took part in the research. The students were aged between 15 and 25 with 65 girls and 105 boys participating.

To collect the sample data we used a structured questionnaire. The purpose of the method was to study how ethno-cultural aspects influence the awareness of the respondents. We also studied different aspects in the verbal-communication behaviour of the respondents.

The role of the aspects in the verbal-communication behaviour of the respondents in Croatia (SCr) and Serbia (SSr) was also studied.

The ethno-cultural indicator applied three items and studied the opinions of young generation in regards to the development of: National culture, Slovak mother tongue, National school.

Results: In the theoretical part of the study we specified the display of ethnic identity and the functioning of the minority language, and we characterized the remaining cultural traditions of the Slovak minority living in Croatia.
and Serbia. Until the members of Slovak minorities living in their environment have a relationship to the ethnicity, language and traditions they will consider them values. While the language and the traditions represent a practical tool for the profit, they will keep, hand over or develop them. The empirical part presents opinions of Slovak youth in both countries. The opinions judged individual aspects of ethno-cultural development of their minority. A basic analysis of opinions on question 13 in the questionnaire was presented from the point of view of both language groups. Question 13 deals with the development of national culture, mother tongue and the national education system.

Each value was rated by participants on a 7-point scale (from 1= not important to 7 = very important). On a seven-point scale (1 – definitely not, 7 – definitely yes), the respondents rated each item individually. The scale enabled us to use a descriptive analysis (arithmetic mean of the whole sample M, arithmetic mean of individual subgroups MSc, Ms, average values and standard deviation SD) frequency analyses (responses in %, N=number of respondents in subgroups: SCR, SSR) which uses chi-square ($\chi^2$). After scale modification, three groups of respondents were formed – negative opinions, ambivalent opinions and positive opinions. Having done a normality test, we find out that the respondents' answers concentrated mostly in one pole of the scale which was why a nonparametric statistic (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for 2 independent groups SCR/SSR) was used.

To judge the inner structure of the three items of ethno cultural development of minority, we used the method of factor analysis (extraction method – Principal Component Analysis, rotation Varimax, Varimax normalization) which led to a distinctive 1-factor structure:

**SCr:** with eigenvalue 2.13 with saturation 71%

**SSr** with eigenvalue 2.52 with saturation 83.92%

The proportion of spread of results explained by 1-factor structure is plausible.

To determine the inner consistence of variables we used Cronbach alfa coefficient ($\alpha$).

The total value of the reliability coefficient for SCh-SSr is $\alpha_{C}=0.863$ which is considered acceptable.

Respondents’ answers to the question were highly positive; they support the three aspects of ethno cultural indicator – national culture, Slovak mother tongue and national educational system. While, on average, SCR preferred mostly national culture (M=6.08), with SSR it was the language aspect that reached the highest values (M=6.31). It results from the frequency analysis that the respondents in either group choose 7 (the top point on the scale) with all three items. With SCR, respondents supporting national culture represent the largest percentage. They are followed by items ‘mother tongue’(75.5%) and ‘national educational system’(69.4%). For SSR their Slovak mother tongue is most important (92.6%). It is followed by education (88.4%) and national culture (87.6%).

Scale modification (negative vs. positive answers) shows that Slovak youth in Croatia and Serbia choose positive variants when evaluating the progress of selected items of ethno cultural development.

As for SSR, there is a higher percentage of responses with each item. The ethno culture support with SCR is as following: 69.4% (education), 75.5% (Slovak language), and 83.6% (culture). With SSR we can observe higher percentage: 87.6% (culture), 88.4% (education), and 92.6% (Slovak language). The difference between the preferences of individual aspects is also plausible – with SCR it is the culture aspect, with SSR it is the language aspect which is ranked highest.

**Conclusion:** Slovak language and ethno culture are socio-cultural complexes and phenomena which are typical for the environment and they have been present for a long time. Studying their present shape, state, usage and applicability makes them a cultural potential. The empirical results confirm that Slovak adolescents in Croatia and Serbia express a higher rate of importance in all three selected aspects of ethnocultural development of their minority. Collected data confirm group differences in preference of individual aspects – the cultural aspect dominates with SCR, whereas with SSR it is the language aspect. These can be determined not only by various factors of ethno cultural development of each minority, but also by their specific characteristics (minority size, setting, cultural-social forwardness etc.) and by the ethnic development rate (identity rate, ability to use mother tongue at a communication level, education system, institutionalisation rate etc.) A more detailed study of the processes would offer a deeper insight into the issue.

**Keywords:**

Introduction

Ethno-cultural processes belong to the most dynamic, most complicated and most important socio-cultural characteristics of each society. An ethnic definition of culture and society is at present, at a time of multiculturalism, an effective and used means of description, genesis, and pursuance of political as well as economic management. Positive results from research up to now into ethno-cultural issues have detached from primordial and partially essential concepts of ethnicity and ethnic identity towards constructive, contextual and situational understanding. Research analyses of the results’ development, existence and perspectives contributed to this detachment. The research analyses were carried out by a sophisticated interdisciplinary method of obtaining knowledge. However, it is the interpretation, by means of multidisciplinary access, that makes it essential. The research into the issue of ethnic minorities at the turn of the 21st century is a natural reaction to the existence of multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. It results from a social, economic and political requirement which is to know how society principles work. It also results from a need to be able to predict the future more exactly; it does not deal only with problematic issues, locations and ethno-cultural societies, but discusses a complex cognition of principles of their existence as well.¹

The socio-cultural environment of Lower-country² is an excellent place to study the processes. In some parts, it seems to be relatively homogenous in other parts it is internally differentiated. The ethno-cultural traditions and the identity of minorities exist here within a public (political, cultural and institutional) as well as a family environment. Language, identity and culture in Lower-country are the most significant ethno-differential factors. Education and family life offer an inter-generational transition in the mother tongue. Education and the public involvement of minorities initiate a modification of the educational system and results in a varying rate of acculturation; with (inevitable) bilingualism playing an important role.

In 2015, empirical research into the verbal communication behaviour of the Slovak youth in Croatia and Serbia was done in Croatia and Serbia.³ The research studied the issue of the ethno-cultural development of the Slovak minority. An ethno-cultural indicator, which studied young people’s opinions on the development of national culture, mother tongue and national education as fundamental attributes of ethno-cultural development of either minority, was used in the method.

The aim of the article is to briefly characterize the Slovak minority living in Croatia and Serbia in the ethno-cultural context of its development, to specify main factors of ethno-cultural development and prospective of its development and, finally, to present our opinions on these findings.

¹ On ethno-cultural research on Slovaks in Serbia, Croatia and Rumania see Lenovsky 2015.
² Original historic-geographic assumption of Lower-country (15th – 17th century) as Great Ugrian Plain in river basin and interflues of the Danube and Tisa (Alföld) which together with mountainous northern part (Felföld) formed Hungary, was in 18th – 19th century under the influence of new colonisation of the territory extended by Zatisie, Banat, Vojvodina, Slavonia, Blhov, by parts of Hungary along the river Danube, in the north it was extended by ethnically mixed parts of Hontiansky, Novohradsky and Abov region. (EĽKS I. – Lower country, 1995:100)
³ It is follow-up research into the Slovak youth living in Slovakia and in Hungary. The research was part of project VEGA supported by Slovak Academy of Science No. 2/0093/2009, for the results see Homišinová, M., Slančová, D., Výrost, J.& Ondrejovič, S. (2011). Research into the spoken Slovak Language of Slovak Youth in Slovakia and Hungary, Košice: SvU Slovak Academy of Sciences, CD ROM. The concept of both project see: M. Homisínová – J. Výrost: http://www.clovekaspolocnost.sk/sk/rocnik-18-rok-2015/2/studie-a-clanky/rec-slovenskej/mladeze-zijucej-na-slovensku-v-madarsku-chorvatsku-a-srbsku-v-reflexii-vyskumu/
Ethno-cultural characteristics of Slovaks in Slovakia and Serbia

Slovaks currently in Croatia and Serbia form, more or less, strong communities based on an ethnic principle. They are active, strong-minded, coordinated, with clear strategies of how to maintain their communities. The current status of Slovak minorities in Serbia and Croatia is a result of a sophisticated, conscious and systematic stimulation of ethnicity in the form of ethno-cultural identification and manifestation. Specific features of the environment of the Slovaks in Croatia and Serbia present an important determinant of general and particular (local or regional) developing trends and perspectives of their existence as a Lower country enclave or as individual Lower country Slovak communities. Ethno-cultural research should consider regional and area backgrounds regarding:

- Identity of the Slovaks (their beginnings, maintenance and transmission and manifestation)
- Minority language and its usage
- Cultural traditions focused on their present form

The present culture of Slovak minorities in Croatia and Serbia consists not only of all transmitted, modified and adopted identification marks and elements but also of foreign marks which are adopted and integrated into their own socio-cultural system. From the point of view of the existence of the minorities, it is effective to perceive their culture as cultural heritage and values, to interpret it as a cultural potential which may become a cultural capital. The existence of subject minorities is a dynamic process of endogenous intergenerational transmission of their own culture and a systematic interaction surrounded by a foreign environment. The environment is influenced by strong, transcultural, European and global trends.

Ethnic identity

Every ethno-cultural minority exists in a territory and its identity is always connected with a particular area. It results in a local identity. Its most significant displays are geographical, local names and names of local areas and local identification of the minority members with a town/village. Translocal relationships with inhabitants of neighbouring villages are formed. The relationships are sometimes inter-ethnic. Local identity is mostly inert, unchanging even in the case of the changing place of living (because of a job, studies or a partner). Intra-local relationships within a location can present an important factor. Generation characteristics (newcomers and local people, old and young people) social and professional characteristics (rich and poor, farmers, craftsmen and workers) ethnic and religious characteristics come to the fore. Local identity plays a primary role in case of the need to identify oneself within a region, state or with members of the same minority from other locations.

Ethnic identity is a key factor in ethno-cultural research of minorities. It requires a membership to a particular ethnic group, which can be defined either by form of auto identification or by identification by other people. An important indicator is ethnicity, including the frequency of the minority language usage and the level of the language skill, implementation of ethno culture and the manifestation of ethnic identity. Not all surveyed Slovak people live in an environment

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4. The majority, a primary assimilation element, should focus on transcultural active media, new identities, deethnic, delocated, demythologised or deantropomorphised world literature. The reason for the descending number of minority members is not primarily the majority; it is the result of globalization of culture and identity.

5. For more information on the issue of ethnicity see Botík 1991:18-24.
with equally required, expected and perceived ethnic manifestation. The situation varies from enclaves with cultural and economic self-sufficiency to locations with fewer numbers of Slovaks, where there is a lack of cultural life, low potential of endogamy and low self-confidence. A rural and urban environment offer and require a specific demonstration of ethnicity. The situation is made unclear by members of mixed families whose ethnic identity is not obvious.

A characteristic feature of Slovaks in Croatia and Serbia is their religious difference from the majority (in Croatia only partially).

Confessional identity which expresses belonging to a religious group has no determining relationship to a minority. Interrelationships may be very strong. Historiography and ethnological study of the culture of the members of the oldest generation prove their close interrelationships. There is no doubt about the role of religion and church not only in the life but also in the existence of minor communities.

Socio-professional identity determines the shape of minority culture and influences the existential questions of Slovaks as minority members. Traditional sources of making one’s living initiate the pursuance of other traditional complexes of minority culture, such as family habits, usage of job terminology in the minority language and location of work execution in the minority environment. It is followed by the maintenance of the traditional social community stratification including the elites, which is a key factor for the minority existence, especially in the creative and representative sphere. An agricultural way of life provides Slovak people with quite a high rate of freedom and independence compared to state and other employment. The ethno-culture of Slovaks is inherently bound to the agrarian year. In the case of commuting to work and returning to the minority environment, we use the term adaptation rather than assimilation. Industrialization, collectivization and automation of the rural environment in the second half of the 20th century and the market liberalization at the turn of the millennium are important present factors of ethno-cultural development of the minorities.6

Belonging to a culture is expressed by the cultural identity. Minority members are not only cultural bearers. They also represent the local culture which is important, especially in the case of ethnically-mixed places. The way of life of the inhabitants of mixed places is identical with non-mixed places. Everyday creation of groups based on the ethnic principle is becoming rare. At the same time, members of all minorities are patriots, proud members of the state they live in. All of them co-create the culture of the state. Protection of the culture and identity is part of politics, legislation and institutional safety in so far as the state, home state and EU is concerned. The culture of Slovak minorities in the surveyed environment appears to be syncretic from all points of view. An effective tool for identification of cultural identity of minority members is the study of cultural tradition where, by decoding local and ethnic provincializing, it is possible to define, almost exactly, the new and original, the local and the foreign, the Slovak and non-Slovak.7

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6 For more information on the issue of the influence of non-farmer jobs on the ethnic identity and the minority language see Čukan 2001.
7 For more information on syncretic culture of Lower-country Slovaks and its position in a wider cultural system see Botík 2002 and Divičanová 2002.
Minority language

The most significant, traditional, ethno-identification feature of Slovaks in Croatia and Serbia is the mother tongue. Its presence is still obvious in the environment of families, in local communities, the church, schools, cultural organizations and social institutions.

The presence of the language in individual institutions is variable and dynamic. The research carried out in particular locations reveals time as well as territory diversity of the state and the usage of the Slovak language.

In almost all communities the Slovak language is used as an exclusive language within a family, which is determined by endogamy. The state is considered automatic. In case of mixed families which are at present more and more spread out, the Slovak language recedes into the background or it is used only by the oldest and middle generation or it is used by all generations in communication with the oldest generation. Children, who tend to use the language of the majority even at home, are encouraged by other family members to use Slovak. This situation is spread in varied intensity over the whole studied area.

Slovak has the most stable positions in the church environment. It is still the only liturgical language of Slovak evangelical believers, who represent a substantial majority of Slovaks in Croatia and Serbia. Slovak catholic communities in Croatia are the exception, as Croatian is used here. In general, the influence of the church applies to the oldest generation.

The school environment is very diverse as well. In Serbia there are primary and secondary schools which use Slovak as the exclusive educational language. In Croatia there are no more such schools and the presence of the Slovak language is taught as another foreign language. The trend has been observed in some originally national schools in Serbia. It is caused by the lack of teachers who are able to teach in Slovak and also by the decision of parents to enrol their children at a Serbian class. In spite of it, education in the Slovak language in Serbia continues to exist in all grades, especially in the environment of bigger, economic and demographic conscious communities or in small, conservative communities which have no other choice. It is caused not only by traditional values and stereotypes in making decisions, but also the practical advantages of education in the minority language in a national school. The present state of members of Slovak minorities, especially those of middle and younger generation, (who use the Slovak language, consider it a mother tongue, have an ethnic consciousness and represent the whole minority) results from decisions made by their parents and grandparents. The future of the minorities depends on their attitude to the education and upbringing of their descendants.

Cultural institutions, along with the family, school and church are also of diverse significance. In some communities, they are the most significant factor for the preservation of the culture, whereas in other communities, they are one of several factors. Especially in communities with smaller number of members, with more intense inter-ethnic contacts, mixed marriages, without Slovak classes (optional education in Slovak), the use of Slovak is limited to communication with the oldest Slovak relatives or parents and to the institutional environment (theatre, folklore ensemble etc.). It may not be true in a formal group as well; especially when the members come from mixed families or majorities (which is becoming a more frequent feature) and it is subsequently more effective and natural to use the majority language. In other locations, the

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8 For more information on transgeneration connections of verbal communication in the minority environment see Homišinová 2002.
minority institution is attended only by minority members. There is a minimal number of members of other ethnic groups. They find the possibility of their self-fulfilment in their own ethnic group.

Traditions are a favourite and popular activity of Slovak minority members in Croatia and Serbia. They are a tool for gathering based on an ethnic principle; for social generation interaction as well as for socialization of children and youth within the minority. They are a unique, specific and irreplaceable opportunity to use the Slovak language, because a lot of them are directly determined through the specific language idiom and can only be used within the minority. A switch to the majority language is simply not possible or there is no such tradition in the majority, thus there is no equivalent expression in the majority language. If there was a tradition in the majority group, and if the language of the majority was used, it would weaken the authenticity and minority exclusiveness of the tradition. The traditions reflect ethnic, religious, cultural and sometimes a social-professional difference of the local Slovaks from other people.

The role of school, as an environment where the minority language is used, was taken over by cultural and social institution in some communities. The role of the family and the local society as a primary environment for the execution of traditions was assumed by the school, church and cultural-social institutions. Institutionalization of the minority language and ethno-culture is becoming more widespread in the environment of the Slovaks in Croatia and Serbia.\(^9\) It is possible to study and interpret the issue of the level and the use of the Slovak language and its real present position only by considering the above mentioned connections and specifics.

**Cultural traditions**

Cultural value expresses the relationship of the person/society to their cultural elements, backgrounds and phenomena. A value can be considered something that the person can have a relationship with. If there is no relationship, the value cannot be established. Perspective of the position of the Slovak language as a minority communication language of the Slovaks in Croatia and Serbia depends on the following:

1. Will it be understood as a value by the people and their descendants?
2. Will there be a practical importance of the skill and the use of the language in real everyday life and traditions?

The first can be reached by education at school and within the family. The education should focus on building a relationship between the children and the Slovak language. The relationship formation is a long-term phenomenon which must be built both formally and informally, in a conscious and unconscious way, i.e. by means of particular situations, personal experience, relationships and role models. Social networks formed by family, relatives, community, inter-local contacts, church, school and culture-social institutions contribute an important role in the relationship formation. Each member is active in a lot of interactions which in minorities are much more intense in comparison to the Slovaks in Slovakia. Local and inter-local structures based on affinity, ethnic and religious identity are maintained.\(^10\) Young members of the minorities know one another well within the villages, towns and countries. They meet at various occasions – folklore ensemble, theatre and sport clubs, religious

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\(^10\) For more information on the influence and significance of translocal contacts in the environment of Slovak minorities see Čukan 2013 and Čukan 2014.
and educational events, family gatherings, dancing parties and virtual communities. To be a Slovak means to be a member of a lot of these communities, to attend the events, have friends, a partner from the same minority. They have a chance to study or work in Slovakia or the EU. It is interesting for young people from Slovak minorities to study in Slovakia, as they can get a compatriotic scholarship. Slovak students in Serbia who finish their secondary high school are motivated by their friends on social networks, they are well informed and they stick to stereotypes in their decision-making. Slovakia is considered a better starting point for life after graduation. Slovakia is for them either the final or a start destination towards Western Europe.

**Results**

Ethno cultural index offers three items: national culture, Slovak mother tongue and national education system, which can be analysed individually as well as in mutual dependency. The question was as follows: Do you think it is necessary for the members of your minority (Slovaks in Croatia and Serbia) to develop in the future:

- National (Slovak) culture
- Slovak language as their mother tongue
- National (Slovak) education.

A reference frame of the article contains a basic analyses of opinions on question 13 in the questionnaire, which refers to the development of national (Croatian/Serbian or Slovak) culture (DVLP13a), mother tongue (Slovak language DVLP 13b) and national education (DVLP 13c), which are interpreted from the point of view of both language groups. A descriptive analysis of the results helps us to get a general overview of the results. Fig. 1 demonstrates an average score of the three aspects of an ethno cultural index from the point of view of individual groups as well as of the whole sample (N=170).

**Figure 1:** Average score of answers of SCr and SSr to three aspects of ethno cultural indicator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slovak youth</th>
<th>DVLP13A</th>
<th>DVLP13B</th>
<th>DVLP13C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCr Mean</td>
<td>6.0816</td>
<td>5.6735</td>
<td>5.5510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.35149</td>
<td>1.32897</td>
<td>1.41512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSr Mean</td>
<td>6.0992</td>
<td><strong>6.3058</strong></td>
<td>6.2397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.12846</td>
<td>1.07891</td>
<td>1.10321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean</td>
<td>6.0941</td>
<td>6.1235</td>
<td>6.0412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.19291</td>
<td>1.18772</td>
<td>1.23727</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As fig 1 illustrates, it is obvious that in general all three aspects express, from the point of view of the whole sample, a high average of positive answers – above point 6 on the scale. From the point of view of subgroups, we find that SCr prefer national culture (M=6.08), with SSr it is the language aspect (M=6.31) which is preferred mostly. Respondents’ answers to the questions are highly positive. What emerges clearly from the findings is the respondents support for national culture, language and education. Frequency analysis helps us to get a more detailed insight into the issue. It results from the analysis that the respondents choose point 7 to evaluate all three items. With SCr, the support for cultural development represent the highest percentage (55.1%; N=27). It is followed by high

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11 For more information on the issue of association activities of Slovaks in Serbia, Rumania and Croatia see Michalík 2013.
support for Slovak language and education (point 7 was selected in either groups by 36.7% of respondents; N=18). With SSr the results are slightly different referring to the rated aspects as well as percentage representation of respondents who chose a highly positive opinion (point 7). As many as 58.7% (N=71) young people from Serbia chose point 7 to evaluate the support for the language aspect. These young people assume it is especially mother tongue that helps to develop their minority. More than half of them (54.5%; N=66) support the education and for less than a half of the respondents national culture is most important (47.1%; N=57). Quite significant differences between groups were observed in evaluating Slovak mother tongue (p=0.021; $\chi^2=14.86$) and national education system (p=0.003; $\chi^2=17.82$).

To give the results better transparency, we modified the scale. Three groups of respondents were formed. The first group presents more or less negative opinions (addition of variants 1+2+3=1 negative opinions), the second group shows an ambivalent answer (variant 4=2 ambivalence); the third group tends to give positive answers (5+6+7=3 positive answers). In this way we can tell the difference between negatively and positively orientated answers. The results are presented in figure as well as a graph form.

**Figure 2: Cultural aspect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slovak youth</th>
<th>Do you think, it is necessary for the members of your minority to develop national culture in the future</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-neg.</td>
<td>2-amb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCr</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSr</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Language aspect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slovak youth</th>
<th>Do you think it is necessary for the members of your minority to develop Slovak language as mother tongue in the future?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-neg.</td>
<td>2-amb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCr</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSr</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4: Educational aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slovak youth</th>
<th>Do you think it is necessary for the members of your minority to develop national education in the future?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-neg.</td>
<td>2-amb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCr</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSr</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 1 illustrates the results.

Graph1:

Slovak youth in Croatia and Serbia chose positive answers to evaluate the development of selected items of ethno-cultural development. With SSr there is a higher percentage in all answers. With SCr the support for education rises to 69.4%, the language reaches 75.5% and culture 83.6%, with SSr the answers reach 87.6% (culture), 88.4% (education) and 92.6% (language). At the same time the graph illustrates differences between groups in their preference of individual aspects – SCr prefer cultural aspect and SSr the language aspect.

The results can be determined not only by various factors of the ethno-cultural development of each minority, but also by their specific characteristics (size of the minority, setting, culture-
social forwardness, etc.) and by the ethnic development rate (identity rate, ability to use the minority/Slovak language at a communication level, education system, institutionalisation rate, etc.).

Ambivalent answers are more frequent with SCr in all three aspects of evaluating. They are most ambivalent in the question of educational development (almost a third of the respondents). It may result from the long-term unfavorable state of the national education system in Croatia and a sceptical opinion on its recovery.

Both groups of young people show a minimal rate of negative attitude in all three studied ethno-cultural aspects.

**Summary and conclusion**

The structure of the article consists of two parts – a theoretical and a practical one. In the theoretical part we focused our attention on characteristics of the Slovak minority living in Croatia and Serbia. We briefly clarified formation factors of Slovak minority in the Lower-country, we pointed out important factors of ethno-cultural development and other perspectives of its development.

In the research part we present research findings from the field research in Croatia and Serbia in 2015 as part of grant research project (35/2014). These focus on the results of a research indicator included in the research method which studied respondents’ opinions on the ethno-cultural development of minorities. In the analyses we compared the opinions of two subgroups: a young generation of Slovaks in Croatia and young generation of Slovaks in Serbia.

In both subgroups (SCr and SSr) dominates the need to develop all three important items of ethno cultural development as it results from the ethno-cultural indicator. We find that the analyses confirmed statistically significant differences in preferences of items of the ethno-cultural indicator between the surveyed Slovak youth in Croatia and Serbia. The results confirm our thoughts that young Slovaks in Serbia support ethno-cultural development of their minority more intensely than Slovak youth in Croatia.
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