

The Institute for Sociology  
of Slovak Academy of Sciences

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*Ladislav Macháček*  
*Youth in Slovakia*  
*and*  
*European Identity*

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## INTRODUCTION

The geographical position of Slovakia evokes in the Slovaks the exalted emotions that they are anchored in the very heart of Europe. This anchorage is not perceived in a symbolic geo-cultural sense, as in the case of the Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Austrians or other ethnic groups who consider themselves to be Central Europeans. There are many Slovaks who will argue with the stubbornness of a geographer that the point of intersection of the "x"-axis connecting the European coast of the Atlantic with the Russian Ural Mountains from the West to the East, and of the "y"-axis connecting the Baltic Sea with the Mediterranean Sea from the North to the South, lies exactly in Slovakia. They are even ready to swear solemnly that the point in question is almost identical with the region Krahule.

Slovakia is a small country with territory of some 49,000 square kilometres and is populated by fewer than five and a half million people. Five countries border it: Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Austria, and the Czech Republic. One third of the population lives in communities of fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. Slovak communities are typically small because of the mountainous terrain of much of the country; Slovak society is therefore traditionally rural. Indeed, significant industrialisation and urbanisation have taken place only very recently (and especially under socialism in the 1960s -1980s).

This is also the current context where young people build their European identity. At the same time there are some circumstances specific to Slovakia. The rapid changes since November 1989 have opened up many new opportunities for young people, which have been welcomed. On the other hand, especially since 1991 the restructuring of the economy has led to a high degree of youth unemployment, a phenomenon that was unknown in previous times.

Regardless of which Slovak issue we talk about, we have to admit that we live in a country full of paradoxes. This description is also appropriate when we talk about young people and social change.

The paradox dwells in the fact that the political influence of youth movements after 1989-even though the role of youth in the Velvet Revolution was highly appreciated - has remained so weak that none of the relevant political parties or coalitions considered it useful to push ahead demands of young people more vigorously.

On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that there was not much to push ahead, because youth representatives after 1990 were dealing with problems too remote from the actual problems of young people, namely the division of federal youth organisations' property between the Czech and Slovak Republic, a headlong and reckless privatisation of this property in Slovakia, a permanent need for appeasement between non-governmental associations, at first between old and new associations, then between coalition and opposition groups, and after 1998 even between coalition youth organisations. It is very difficult to imagine the amount of intellectual

capacity and time individual associations invested in order to get more money from gradually decreasing portions of state financial support for youth activities.

However, the situation changed a bit in 1998. Thanks to the role it played in the parliamentary election in 1998, the Slovak Council of Youth -was involved in defining the new governmental policy. It helped to promote a real institutional change. New Governmental Council for issues of children and youth has been established. Preconditions for coordination of governmental youth policy have been set, thus enabling youth representatives to take part in decision-making processes of national importance.

I must emphasize that this development is in compliance with the youth policy of the European Union. All EU countries are working on the so-called White book of youth policy. Youth activists in Europe emphasize the fact that national Youth Councils should be formally recognized as a social and civil partner for defining state youth policy in the EU member countries. This civil dialogue is expected to have an institutional base in the state as well as at the local levels.

Let us summarize briefly the developments after 1998. We have the Governmental Council for Issues of Children and Youth, National Youth Conference, Parliamentary Day; there are youth active organisations in many cities and villages. We as research workers did not remain indifferent either, and for the first time since 1989 a report about the situation of youth in the Slovak Republic has been compiled and published.

The institutional conditions for youth policy have never been better. The paradox is that the social situation of youth has deteriorated.

There has always been discussion about youth issues. We have started considering the protection of young people against negative phenomena, we have been interested in the juvenile crime problem and the race intolerance – these have been the most topical issues in the developed EU countries as well. Still, we underestimated the fact that youth unemployment and the aging of our society are transferring all our youth problems from criminal law and educational perspectives to the social-political realm.

Not long ago, the President of one of Germany's federal republics learnt about this fact. During his visit students presented a poster with the provocative inscription: *Here are sitting those who will refuse to pay for your pensions in the future...*

As further discussion revealed, they will refuse to pay not because they will not be willing to do so. More likely, the students are very well aware of the fact that *if the state does not create conditions for quality education and professional training, they will not be able to produce enough sources to support the social welfare system of the state.*

Similar to the students in Germany, our youth representatives finally realized the complete social welfare system reform would probably be paid by the present young generation. That is why they are saying: *We are going to pay twice: for our parents in the same way as they were paying, but also in advance, for ourselves.* There are not many people with a deeper interest in understanding the

complexity of social problems among representatives of various non-governmental associations of children and youth. Still, these representatives were bitterly outraged by experts from the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues who stated at their collective meeting: *What is the point in discussing these issues with youth representatives? We cannot solve anything here; the people responsible for these issues sit somewhere else.*

The public in Slovakia usually perceives youth issues as important for society. But the representatives in the Parliament or in local government councils do not always support demands and projects of young people.

To the surprise of older electorate members, the present political elite is not able to divide its attention properly. The members of the elite are unable to take a decision about how much attention they can pay to their own problems and how much of it they must pay to the problems of citizens. The old as well as the young start to call the governing middle-aged generation with a derisive --although not standard--term: scum. To the surprise of young first-time voters from the year 1998, the political elite, who won their support in the 1998 parliamentary election, is not even able to define for themselves the conflict between the investments into new human sources (the young) and the necessary care of human sources retreating from productive life (the old).

A German sociologist expresses the deepest feelings of the first-time voters: Recently he mentioned the fact that the governing middle-aged generation subconsciously and arrogantly creates better conditions for the old, since there is no chance for them to be young again, but there is a high probability that they will themselves become old.

We assume the only right thing is to invest extensively into young people's education and professional training (i.e., formal education), but also into their capacity to work and overcome the difficulties of real life. We want young people in the future not only to be able to produce enough sources for all generations, but also to be willing to share the sources compassionately with others.

Now let us ask another question: is the present political elite working in a direction that will enable the present generation of young people to repay us at least the penny symbolically borrowed from us?

At last first steps were taken to solve the high youth unemployment rate this year. National youth policies are understood to be comprehensive and complex only when they also deal with the problems of rising costs of living, unemployment, the shortage of flats, poverty, mobility difficulties, insufficient education support, restrictions in freedom of speech, and discrimination.

The outcomes of the European summit on employment held in the year 1997 were reconfirmed at the Prime Ministers' Conference in Lisbon in 2000 and have emphasized that the efficiency of EU members' youth policies will be heavily dependent on the ease with which young people can enter the labour force market. This issue will be one of the crucial criteria in judging whether the policies are successful or not.

Sociologists have recently reminded us that the intergenerational social agreement -which is the inner spirit of the youth policy- can be understood as the

readiness of the young to fulfil their obligations towards the society of adults on condition that the society (the state and local government authorities) will help them and support them in realizing their life aspirations. We usually understand the above-mentioned agreement in this way: The older generation will give the coming generation a chance to react appropriately to the main challenges of modernization in three sectors of the new literacy, including language, computer and civil life. I would add one more challenge: the ability to work for results either as an individual or as a member of a cooperative team.

What have we completed successfully in the youth policy so far? We have approved INFOVEK, a generously designed program promoting computer literacy. Many elementary and secondary schools in Slovakia are enjoying new well-equipped computer classrooms, the teachers are coming through training, and new education programs are being prepared.

Since 1992 we have had a program for supporting civil associations of children and youth – this program is unfortunately receiving less financial support, even though the activities of children's and youth associations have become an inseparable part of developing free-time activities.

There is not a robust and consistent national program to promote the development of language training for children and adolescents in all types of schools. Are we aware of the fact that the fundamentals of the Irish „miracle“ are based on the ability of not only university-educated people, but also small entrepreneurs and workers to speak English?

We need to develop a new program of transition for young people from school to work. The program should mobilize and encourage parents to engage their children in household and local community work. Next, the program should offer a wide range of short-term summer jobs for students. It should finally result in reintroduction of well-proven graduate mobility within the united European territory. This program of profession-discovering journeys (not tourism) of young people might be the best choice for the Slovak Republic in case the proposed 5- or 7-year moratorium is imposed on freedom of labour force movement within EU boundaries.

The process of transition for a young person into maturity anticipates getting experience and skills in the labour process and in civil life, in those sectors where the effectiveness of received qualifications in formal and non-formal education is being tested: languages, the capacity to use information technology, the spirit of entrepreneurship, and social-communicative skills. The youth unemployment conference has clearly stated that it is impossible to reach these goals without the participation and financial support of trade unions, employers and the representatives of civil society.

We need to improve the financial support and system relations between schools and subjects Youthwork, between teachers and youth education workers, between formal and non-formal education. Work with young people in the nongovernmental sector is not, as it used to be understood, only playing with adolescents in their free time. Interconnection of formal with non-formal education

is giving us a chance to introduce a new quality into the personality formation of young people as citizens.

In conclusion, I asked myself: what is the main purpose of complex comprehensive youth policy as a tool for social change, which was intensively discussed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of the Youth in Slovakia (2001)?

My answer: it is something that cannot be expressed just in terms of money. Every young person wants to have equal access to opportunities and freedom of choice, the chance for a fair assessment in the competitive struggle for positions in the market for education opportunities and in the labour force market. Social justice constitutes the crucial condition for integration of the young generation into society.

*Ladislav Macháček*

*CIVIL SOCIETY*  
*AND*  
*CITIZENSHIP*

## YOUTH IN THE PROCESSES OF TRANSITION AND MODERNIZATION IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

### **Introduction**

Sociological youth research in Europe has recorded new stimuli for the development. It appears that especially political, economic and social changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe present a new opportunity to verify K. Mannheim's thesis on the inevitable link of generations with the dynamics of social reproduction and change. What determines our approach to youth issues as generation issues must be an unusual --to use hyperbole-- historically unique dynamics and the extent of social change [Machonin 1996]. Particularly in applying the generation approach in sociological research in the post-communist countries of Europe one can see that historical change has enabled individualization of all members of the homogeneous age group, where traditional social differences have become objectively visible and personally experienced.

According to international sociological research projects in post-communist countries, the characteristic of transformation and processes of individualisation of the first postcommunist generation of youth [Roberts, Jung 1995: 11] represents, according to the authors, an important signal for the future of the new Europe.

Transition in the political and economic systems of Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland is only a part of the birth of "new Europe" which opens up new perspectives for a broad process of economic, political, social and cultural integration. "Nobody can predict the direction of these changes. One is, however, certain: they will deeply influence human lives, above all of those of children and young people to date." [Chisholm 1995: 1]. The arising European youth policy sensitively articulates fears that the present and future generations of children and youth in a new Europe will be more subjected to segregation and marginalization and their life perspectives will be determined by structural inequalities from very early in their lives.

### **1. Individualisation of Youth and Modernization Theory**

Not all Slovak sociologists in the field of youth issues linked transformation processes in the sphere of political life (pluralism tendencies) and economic life (market tendencies) with such a typical element of modernization as information technology. In the introduction to his text *The Situation of Youth in Transformation of Slovakia* delivered in a lecture as early as fall 1992, J. Such complained that information technology entered the life of Slovak society in a rather inconspicuous way and too much in the shadow of democratization and privatization [Such 1992: 8].

In a society of the classic type the transformation process, along with its attributes of democratisation and market economy (or, of late, processes of European and trans-Atlantic integration with modernization strategies such as information

technology, rationalization, mobilization and secularization [Martin 1996]), brings not only the inevitable social risks and social problems of cumulating youth unemployment but they also open an unprecedented development opportunity to use the unleashed creativity of individual personalities as an inexhaustible source of social prosperity.

The theory of Ulrich Beck, the author of the monograph *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne (Society of Risk. On the Way to Some Other Modernity)* [Beck 1986] is an inspiring work for developing the issues of the relationship of social context and individualisation of the first post-communist generation of youth, and the contradictions between the production of economic resources (wealth) and production of social risk in developed Western industrialized countries.

A new image of youth started to appear in the eighties in the interpretations of youth sociologists in Germany (e.g., Th. Ziehe and J. Zinnecker), which was based on Beck's thesis of individualization. U. Beck defined it as a social individualization shift of an unknown impact and dynamics, which took up with the valorization of modernization results after World War II. Social situations in all rich Western industrialized countries, especially Germany, appeared as relatively high material living standard and far-reaching securities. As a consequence of all this, according to U. Beck, a historic discontinuity arose through which people were uprooted "...from traditional class conditions and family care and their dependency on the labour market with all the risks, chances and controversies of an individual destiny increased"[Beck 1986].

A decade later, I. Richter in his brief thesis [Richter 1995: 64] could outline this concept of youth:

Family--marriage at a later age, increase in young people living by themselves, transformation of marriage into partnership.

Education--diversification of education and career, prolongation of the phase of education, democratization of pedagogic approach.

Job--new bonds of education, unemployment, life-long education, accent on individual self-realization at one's job.

Culture--a peer group life for youth of religious, sporting, political nature is influenced by multidimensional relations mediated through mass media and network systems which simultaneously bring approximation and separation.

Politics--individualization in this sphere is demonstrated through lower participation in forming political will.

Everyday existence--in fashion, sexuality and communication, forms of behaviour often described as hedonistic that are presented through mass media or mediated through mate groups peer groups.

Polemics over the issue of whether such an image holds even at present have been going on until now, including whether it is scientifically correct in this case to apply Mannheim's terminology [1928] of a "generation form" and to speak about the

generation of the eighties as an environmentalist generation [Richter 1995]. K. Roberts queried an interpretation of the concept of individualization as destructure of young people's situations in which prolonged transition into the world of labor and adulthood creates a "moratorium" during which they may escape from old determinants of their life chances, such as gender, social class origins and achievements during secondary education. "In practice, however, the old social predictors remain still significant and effective. Young people's situations and future prospects continue to be governed by their family origins, school records, gender and places of residence" [Roberts 1995].

L. Siuralla has recently responded to a popular topic of verifying post-modern changes by a question: are traditional background variables losing their power to explain these changes? [Siuralla 1996: 63]. Empirical verification of the modernization theory in Finland indicated that the process of breaking loose from traditions and collective guidance is a slow one: "...the social-class background, regional background and separate male and female cultures seem to have maintained their strong position as guiding forces in the socialization process and in mediating traditions. Similarly, educational, consumption and leisure choices are still largely made in accordance with these background factors" [Lahtenmaa, Siuralla 1992: 128]. It is, however, beyond dispute that some changes in the way of life with contemporary youth in Finland can be well explained by the modernization theory. Individualization processes do not hold generally, but according to Finnish experts they can be related with metropolitan regions, where there is some cumulating of modernization changes creating a wider selection of life chances to choose from.

The fact that disintegration of family, neighbourhoods and religious communities should increase young people's sense of personal responsibility for their own conditions of living and for shaping their own future, constitutes an important factor of the times, be it designated as modern or post-modern. O. Stafseng believes that a program of getting free from conventions and traditions as well as from any mechanical form of collectivism--that is, a program of the modern individual, through which young people themselves determine their own life-- has older sources. Those who named it a post-modern trend, according to T. Ziehe, created a vague theory by which the just attempt to disguise that citizenship as a legislative and political basis for modern individuality in terms of personality was originally defined for men and persons belonging to "well-to-do" classes of society [Stafseng 1995].

In spite of these doubts, it is necessary to admit that a tendency to individualization in modern Western societies and also in transforming European societies is a consequence of partial subversion of traditional class distinctions based on an ascriptive status and a traditional lifestyle. Individual performance has growing importance and diversification and individualization of lifestyles in transition where conditions arose for such a shift through modernization (industrialization, urbanization, information technology, secularization). This development reflects the rise of new chances and freedom of choice, but also of new forms of threats and

pressures.

The fact that patterns of youth transitions from childhood into adulthood are more pluralist-like and life experience of young people confirm a shift from traditional normative expectations, this becomes the main hypothesis of youth research in Europe at present. This change occurs in the major building blocks of youth transitions: school education and occupational training, separation from the family of origin, friendship and partnership, entry in the labor market, leisure, consumer activities, civil and political participation [Chisholm, Hurrelman 1995: 133].

In the course of the past century, the increasing significance of education and vocational training became more important than having a job and thus accelerated the process of integration of a larger part of youth into the youth culture and partner patterns. And as the process of physical maturity likewise accelerates (in the opposite direction, however) more space will be created for youngsters to remain young for a longer time compared to the previous period.

An important fact for understanding individualization is that in some areas young people acquire a high standard of autonomy, and the possibility to choose from alternatives or individual forming of everyday existence (fashion, music, leisure activities, the culture of speech, political articulation). All that, however, takes place in an unstable social context in which the social position of an "adolescent" or of a "young adult" is temporary and uncertain especially because the certainty of materializing life plans in the future does not exist. Young people, therefore, can gain autonomy and take over responsibility in areas where it is typical of adults (for example in consumption or in partnership) but they have not yet acquired the status of adults for good.

Above all, sequencing and inconsistency of the transition process from adolescence into adulthood represent fundamental risk factors. All young people, irrespective of their social origin, are on the way to adulthood thrown "into structural contradictions. The fact is that they have the possibility to optimize their life chances. However, it is important that "...where personal competence and social resources are available and sufficient, young people can and do find productive ways of negotiating youth transitions successfully and thereby establishing healthy adult personality . Where competence and resources are insufficient, the results may be transiting into poor well-being" [Chisholm, Hurrelman 1995: 152].

Causes and effects of youth individualization become a cardinal issue of the current youth research also in countries that are transforming their political and economic system. That is why in Slovakia people are also interested in critical changes that are going on in the social structure of youth, which specific groups of youth are influenced by this development and in what ways.

## **2. Sociological Contexts of Youth Individualization in the Slovak Republic**

The group of 20- to 24-year-olds that was studied in the empirical sociological research (sociological institutes of Academy of Sciences in Slovakia, the Czech

Republic and Poland in 1995) is characterized by several differences in the socialization context.

*From a demographic viewpoint*, especially in the case of Slovakia, it is a generation group whose potential has recorded no historical parallel yet. L. Pisca claimed that the 1970 census indicated exactly the social consequences of the lower birth rate in the period after 1953 in the Czech Republic and after 1957 in Slovakia [Pisca 1980: 23].

The system of social precautions brought a change in birth rate in 1970`s, whereby a decrease in families with one child in favor of families with two or even three children occurred, along with increased qualification and employment of women. In 1980 negative effects of the renewed population vitality were also registered [Pisca 1980: 524].

All these difficulties accompanied children throughout their life cycles, especially in the first five years of children born between 1971 and 1975. Because material infrastructure which should meet their basic needs of life was introduced into life with minimum three to five years delay. They were born into families that were got a better position on the social urgency lists for state-owned or co-operative flats far later than families with two or three children. As children of working parents, they experienced much stress due to lack of vacancies in crèches and kindergardens. They attended school in afternoon shifts, especially in housing estates of large towns, and they receptively responded to endless efforts of the whole family clan (that is, of a social network) in seeking opportunities to get to a secondary school or a university.

*From a sociological viewpoint*, a generally extended feeling of social security about basic needs was typical of children and adolescents in the period before 1989, especially regarding the possibility for education and a job that came from an interaction of mutually intertwined systems of paternalism, state care and support and protection by parents. This system presented itself in the extreme dependency of young people on the state and family, especially in their attempts to get a flat, establish a family or even to gain a higher social status. W. Adamski [1987: 37] reminds us that, as a result of the dominating ideology of equal chances, the aspirations of youth in the socialist countries were formed a great deal less on the structural background than was true in Western Europe. In the socialist countries the state influenced production relationships, systems of social class promotion and professional careers. This created societal socialization context for dealing with contradictions between aspirations of youth and possibilities of their materialization and thus determined the course of socialization processes.

A great number of young people, even in the planned market of education in Slovakia, created unique competition and a enlarged the contradiction between increasing subjective aspirations and objective chances. Barriers of youth individualization included restricted chances to be admitted to grammar schools (especially to secondary technical or commercial schools with a general certificate of education), pressure to prepare for worker's professions at secondary apprentice

training centers, passed with the general certificate of education; and a restricted number of vacancies in the most attractive branches of study at universities or technological institutes. This generation, with atypical tension between aspirations and their satisfaction in the sphere of education, represented, together with their families, a detonator for a strong background of social resistance against totalitarian political power in the period before and in 1989.

The first post-communist generation of youth in Slovakia has started its societal pilgrimage by making decisions on professional orientation (1985 -- 1990) at the age when an experiences and experience are perceived, according to A. Melluci [1996: 3], as an important and controversial dimension of one's own *personality*. Its second phase, decision making on social breakthroughs into the labor market, has been shifted in *another civilization time-space* through transformation of real socialism into real capitalism.

We have not thought of the core and variety of chances endangering young people, which resulted from a breach with the vision of "socialist modernity". C. Wallace describes it rather unflatteringly as an antiquity of "modern" society based on intense industrialization typical of the end of the nineteenth century and the collectivization that produced huge enterprises with high concentration of employees in large housing estates. People were divided into large groupings based on "classes" and "age" that were rigorously institutionalized and aimed to support their collective identity through celebrations with rituals, slogans and gatherings. *"The type of subjectivity which was encouraged was one of a passive individual dependent on external institution; who led a stable life and was neither geographically nor professionally mobile. Critical thinking was strongly discouraged"* [Wallace 1996: 4]. This is the complete reverse of "reflexive individualization" that takes place in late capitalism. Here such external institutions determining, for example how, where and when to start one's job, when to enter a marriage and have children, and where and with whom to spend one's leisure are mostly absent. All this is replaced by the necessity to make one's own choices among various alternatives and thus to form one's own individualized style of life, to cope critically with self-evaluation and even to develop a sceptical approach to one's environment in which old values and certainties lose their influence.

We agree with C. Wallace, an English sociologist having a deeper knowledge of the situation in the Czech and Slovak Republics acquired during her stay at the Central European University in Prague, a credit that she does not deny existing elements of individualization tendencies and some maneuvering space for individualization in this "gigantic apotheosis of modernism and fordism". How then could such sociologically reflected phenomena of "the household working scheme" (R. Roško), or other known forms of the grey economy extending into the sphere of the lifestyle arise (gardening, weekend houses) that were widely common but were not considered to be self-destructing for the system? They (e.g., the household working scheme) were tolerated or even supported (e.g., weekend houses) as suitable instruments for expression of individualization tendencies. It does not change anything in the justifiable argument that the insufficiency of flexibility of the old

system and its resistance to "reflexive individualization" is considered by C. Wallace as the cause of its collapse. In a comment on the changes of 1989 V. Mináč, a keen observer and commentator of the same reality from within, spoke to support a collapse of the state paternalist system by the management and technocratic layer of the party nomenclature that was fed up with obscuring and concealing the source of its wealth and strove to make its élite position apparent. Simultaneously, it opened up a possibility of new individual expansion that did not oppose the ideology of socialism, but became compliant with the ethical code of meritocratic capitalist society.

Then it may be assumed that the first post-communist generation of youth was socialized in two qualitatively different social contexts. It is therefore not only a generation intensely endangered, but simultaneously one of immense, historically unique chance for life careers with many possibilities for social and geographical mobility. At the same time, it represents a generation that must overcome old values and get used to a value hierarchy suitable for a different system of social structure. It makes us think how excellent everything used to be in the recent past, without problems or conflicts, because it was stable and contained no risk once one learnt the ropes and the ways to get around the rules.

For verifying transiting structures of adulthood with the post-communist youth generation, we have at our disposal data from the survey *Transformation and Modernization 1995*, which clarify decisive moments of transition, especially *the entry in the labor market*.

### 3. Challenge of the Market Economy

Among the most important results from empirical surveys of the youth value orientations before 1989 is the intensive awareness that especially two values-- development of science and technology and exploitation of human ideas --had their specific place in its structure. *"Prevailing opinion says that in these values capitalism is commensurate with socialism or even that there are quite a number of people who believe that capitalism ensures an even more successfully materialization of these values. The comparison of the past ten years allows saying that critical attitudes of youth have been broadened in the above area."* [Macháček 1988: 136-137].

Even in this period it was already apparent that the image of bringing together advantages of two faces of the coin-- that is, creative application of ideas and the minimum social risk in life--was a typical schizophrenic characteristic of the then-socialist generation of youth. With an analogical vision of the "human face" on both sides of the coin, young people were entering the transition phase after 1989; now it was, however, capitalism [Macháček 1991: 37]. That explains the surprising and complicated reactions over unemployment as a first visible systemic social consequence of the liberal economic reform with that side of a transformation and modernization coin which presents Januŝ's face of "risk and threat".

This happened in spite of the fact that measures supporting the employment of university graduates, technological institutes and all sorts of secondary schools were put in effect on the basis of decrees of the Government of the Slovak Republic and adequately turned down the unemployment "shock" of young people and their parents. These legal precautions were generally considered too social and less compatible with market economy principles.

The Government Decree No. 275/1990 allowed 2,500 graduates of universities and technological institutes to withdraw from the labor market and receive an additional specific term of study with a scholarship amounting to CSK 1,400. This made it possible for this group of young people to create better conditions for finding jobs in the labour market, and it helped to give a signal that the political representation would not admit "beating our revolutionary young generation from universities" with instruments of the market economy either. From a pragmatic viewpoint, extending the time limit was done in order to absorb the first graduates from universities by the arising market economy.

The Government Decree No. 428/1990 aimed at helping graduates of all types of secondary schools, universities and technological institutes to find jobs through better coordination in requalifying (an inter-ministerial board for requalification and further education of youth and adults was founded) and measures stimulating employers to engage graduates. The employers were motivated by remission of income tax payments, social insurance tax, by a possibility to exceed the limits of finances for salaries in the budgetary and contributing organizations, by granting tariff payments to graduates or of their part to employers for a period of six months. According to the relevant analysis of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, these supporting measures were exploited by 3,800 graduates in the period concerned out of the total 30,220 graduates. About CSK 34 million were paid out in salaries and the compensation of salaries.

In 1991 the Government of the Slovak Republic issued Decree No. 361, on the basis of which tariff payments were compensated to employers through labor agencies from the state budget for an active policy of employing graduates for the period of 12 months from the moment when young people took up their jobs (CSK 3,500 per university graduate and CSK 2,650 per secondary school graduate). The total of these means amounted to CSK 97.8 million, which represented 2.6 % of the volume of financial means drawn on the active employment policy.

In our paper on the consequences of development of market economy on youth behavior in the case of unemployment [Macháček 1994], we formulated our expectation that young people would begin to design their professional and employment strategies in a flexible way and that parents and the public would accept this strategy. What we had in mind was acceptance of unemployment and drawing of unemployment benefits as well as exploiting chances of vocational requalification courses, of various forms of language and professional education and their interfacing with short-time jobs as a "normal" event of their individual way of life. This group was characterized also by the highest preference from among all age groups to include the tactical alternative "to draw on unemployment

benefits and hope that the situation will be solved somehow" in their standard behavior in the labour market for a period of at least the first six months. The first post-communist young generation simply reflects unemployment as a new attractive element of the lifestyle by which a free citizen may solve his/her situation in the labour market. All the more that their parents still remember the notorious mechanism of the planned economy for regulation of the labor force in the "labor market" when people were "allocated" to particular enterprises or organizations. It confirms that unemployment is a social experience that is acquired differently by age in this historically unique time-space in the transformation of the economic system in the Slovak Republic. Even according to statistical tests, this experience occurs much more frequently with the youngest generation (CC -.24 in 0000\*1). In the age group over 44 years, 13 % admitted they were unemployed for at least two months; in the age group between 30 and 44 years, they made 25 %; in the age group 25 to 29 years, they were 35 % and in the age of 18 to 24 years, they represented 44 %. Likewise, in Slovakia the loss of one's job is least expected by persons over age 44 (34.5 %). In 1995 groups under 24 years (50 %) and from 25 to 29 years (62 %) expected the loss of their jobs to a considerably larger degree.

Table 1: Strategy of Solving Unemployment in the SR and in the CR: 1993-1995

Attitudes of various groups		18 – 24		W	
		SR N = 134	CR N = 316	SR N = 956	CR N = 120
<b>I shall requalify</b>	1993	72.7	63.4	68.3	58.8
	1995	73.0	69.0	55.0	54.7
<b>I shall seek a temporary job</b>	1993	66.7	48.3	65.2	44.1
	1995	52.6	40.6	49.1	36.7
<b>I shall apply for an unemployment benefit</b>	1993	67.5	27.4	58.3	31.9
	1995	34.0	38.0	28.8	33.8
<b>I shall attempt business activities</b>	1993	30.7	47.5	33.1	40.3
	1995	37.2	36.6	29.6	30.7
<b>I shall live on other income</b>	1993	8.6	5.5	10.2	7.7
	1995	8.9	11.7	9.3	9.7

**Table 2: Strategy for Seeking a Job and Locality**

Tactical variants		18 - 24		W	
		SR N = 134	CR N = 316	SR N = 956	CR N = 120
I seek a job in my specialty and locality of residence	1993	45.2	43.1	51.7	42.9
	1995	90.0	88.6	88.0	86.1
I seek a job in my specialty anywhere	1993	71.3	44.6	51.7	50.5
	1995	62.4	46.2	88.0	52.0
I seek any job in the locality of my residence	1993	50.0	46.3	48.1	37.8
	1995	68.9	37.8	57.2	31.8
I will take any job anywhere	1993	58.8	25.7	48.5	28.1
	1995	44.0	16.6	31.4	15.6

Comparing data from our empirical research 1993 and 1995 shows some change in the strategies for solving unemployment. In Slovakia we recorded a sharp decrease in reliance upon the state unemployment benefits. From the former 67.5 % of those ready to accept unemployment benefits there remained in 1995 only 34 % of young people. In Czechia young people began relying on the unemployment benefit much more frequently in 1995 (38 %) than in 1993 (27 %). The results we obtained indicated that readiness to solve unemployment through private business activities may be expected, especially with young people aged 18 to 24. A similar change between 1993 and 1995 occurred in the attitude toward business activities (entrepreneurial activities) which are considered to be modernization life strategies under conditions of a market economy. In Czechia there has been recorded a decline in preferring this strategy of solving unemployment both with the whole population (from 40 % to 30 %) as well as with young people (from 47 % to 36 %). In Slovakia this strategy is less popular with the total of the population (33 - 30 %); however, young people under age 24 strengthened their orientation toward business activities (from 31 % to 37 %).

The most remarkable change found in comparing data from surveys in 1993 and 1995 is the return to the most rigid variant of seeking a job in the place of residence: *I prefer a job in my specialty and in the locality of my residence.*

It appears that a shock from the unexpected consequences of unemployment is overcome. This was confirmed by the return to a variant, which prefers all advantages of jobs utilizing regularly obtained qualifications and professions and that reduces to a minimum expenses related with the change of one's residence. There is still another preference for locality of residence over qualification and specialty with the total of the population (10 %) and with young people (18 %). High transport expenses and difficulty with finding accommodation probably

eliminate all advantages of a job in one's specialty outside the parents' residence. This tendency of *entrenching Slovak youth in the locality of their residence* is also confirmed by the fall in preference to seek a job in a specialty anywhere: from 71 % in 1993 to 62 % in 1995. In the end, there is a variant of seeking *any job anywhere*, which loses its attraction both in Slovakia and in Czechia. Older (31 %) but especially younger Slovaks (44 %) will realize, however, that competition in the labour market in our country will require acceptance of this least popular strategy after all.

Comparison of solving strategies of life situations in the case of unemployment in 1993 and 1995 shows that changes have been going on in this area. The objective of Government Decree No.666/1993 was to motivate employers so that they could create socially purposeful and publicly useful jobs for graduates who were registered with the employment agencies as unemployed people. An employer received a financial subsidy for a period of 12 months if the graduate got a newly created job or for 18 months if the job was free due to the retirement of an employee. The employer was obliged to employ a graduate in a qualified vacancy and to give him/her a salary not in the amount of the subsidy but in the higher amount, that is, in compliance with his/her job assignment. In 1995 an amount of SKK 3,797,066 thousand were used for active employment policy, of which SKK 2,698,649 thousand were used for socially purposeful jobs. According to the data from employment agencies, a further 6,935 purposeful jobs were created for graduates and adolescents through an irretrievable contribution which represented SKK 65,992,830.

There was a possibility to obtain a contribution from an employment agency amounting to SKK 200 thousand for creating a self-employment job, or starting an own business activity. This contribution could have been used for acquiring tangible or intangible assets necessary for the activity or for settling the rent for leased premises or for land, or for paying up interest or loans. The condition for granting such a contribution was to carry out an independent activity for a period of two years. A whole range of forms to activate young people to engage in socially purposeful and publicly useful jobs, a contribution for self-employment, re-qualification, and protected workshops and so forth was included in the new Act on Employment that was passed by the National Council of the SR in December 1996.

In Slovakia as a result of improving the quality of the instruments of the state employment policy, passive reliance on the care of employment agencies and social care departments has decreased, orientation to business activities successively acquires its adequate share, especially with the young generation. We could, therefore, state that the trend for a change in life strategies has obtained a modernization dimension during the recent period and is adequate to the exacting

character of the market economy under conditions of integration into the EU market.

The overall absence of linkage between economic transformation in the sense of market principles and the housing market is the biggest obstacle to the effectiveness of all other measures of active employment policy. In a nutshell: Slovak youth are entrenching in the locality of their residence and their readiness for mobility has been recently reduced, and seeking self-realization through their jobs has paradoxically decreased in the past period. It must, therefore, be stressed that this trend in life strategies has no necessary modernization dimension and under the given conditions it can scarcely have any. The change of attitudes of young people to include in their flexible life strategies a variant to seek a job outside their residence probably cannot be achieved only through instruments of the state employment policy.

We believe that a really effective instrument for changing life strategies of young people in Slovakia will be achieved only when the labor market of the European Union is opened for the accession countries.

### Conclusion

The challenge to transform a planned economy into a market economy and totalitarian political system into pluralist democracy means for the first post-communist generation of youth a thorough-going social change that is demonstrated by a differently structured transition to adulthood in the most important sphere - entering the labor market.

Contrary to the planned economy under real socialism, where, after the education process was over a phase of finding one's place in the labor sector easily followed, in taking over the status of an adult even in the most important sphere, the transformation-modernization process brings uncertainty in materializing life plans. Unemployment and, within its framework re-qualification with partial contractual work engagements, puts discontinuity into this process and inconsistency: that is, transition becomes individualized.

The first post-communist generation of youth included new strategies into their transition; they experienced the phenomenon of prolonged school holidays, a phase of several months seeking a job with the help of the state, attempts at studying or short-term employment abroad, and attempts to start running their own business **as far as falling through into the social network of** state and non-governmental charity organizations. **Pokuste sa to preložiť takto:** využívať sociálnu podporu štátu a obce, prípadne využívať podporu alebo dary rozličných charitatívnych organizácií. In order to understand the social behavior of youth in the Slovak Republic, it is necessary to know the rules of the state employment policy. Graduates did not take up jobs immediately after finishing their studies mainly because until 1996 it was possible for them to draw a state benefit during the time they sought jobs immediately after they were registered. Since 1 January 1997 it has been possible to

obtain a state benefit on a job search only after 6 months.

Unemployment as a social threat and as a life experience is an element of youth individualization that is demonstrated through acceptance of flexible solutions, including readiness for changes in residence and professional qualification. The comparison of surveys in 1993 and 1995 indicates that the initial shock from unemployment has been overcome. It is confirmed by a growing tendency to draw unemployment benefits in the Czech Republic, by an increased preparedness to engage in business activities in Slovakia, as well as in the preference to look for a job in one's line and in the place of one's residence for an even longer period rather than to take any job anywhere.

On the whole, it may be stated that the transition into adulthood for the first post-communist generation is a specific process that paves the way for better understanding of the problems of subsequent generations of youth. Analysis of citizen's behavior in the labor market as well as preferences for modernization strategies intensify the overall impression that all generations are confronted with the transition in "adulthood". It appears that even the older and the oldest generations square up well to the "transition". Acceptance of social change brought by transformation is more intensive with younger generations. However, in the case of important dimensions such as privatization, democratisation and integration into Europe, we could scarcely find statistical bonds of importance among age groups.

Transformation and modernization apparently represent a civilizational-cultural process whose breakthrough is reflected in the attitudes and opinions of all generations in a relatively similar way. If we come back to the beginning of our essay on understanding transformation and modernization as a certain historical dividing line with a generational dimension, in summary it can be said that social changes are of such importance that practically all generations have to cope with them jointly. A hypothesis for future research may be inferred from what has been said: that the mere shifting of the first post-communist generation of youth into the stages of adulthood and old age will not bring any principal or substantial change neither in the civil potential nor in the economic prosperity of our society.

***EUROPEAN INTEGRATION***

### *SLOVAKIA AND AUSTRIA: EUROPEAN CHALLENGES (2000)*

An important factor affecting activities of civic society in Slovakia has been the affiliation of the Slovak Republic with the European Union, and its membership in the Council of Europe. For young people, this means that the activities of the youth associations, and notably the Youth Council of Slovakia, are of considerable importance in relation to Slovakia's integration into the new Europe, and all the more so since many initiatives encouraging this process are implemented precisely through the help of the emerging European youth policy and its current emphasis on education for citizenship. The development of civil society in Slovakia was greatly influenced by the civic youth associations and movements, especially in the uniting of national councils and international youth organisations in Europe under the recently created Youth Forum.

It is not only in youth movements, but also in the activities of other social movements (e.g., environmental, peace, human and civil rights, women, etc.) where young members become important. One might say that the highly developed modernised societies tend to become "movement societies". Youth movements that appear in this context tend to take the form of the organised and continuous collective efforts of co-operating individuals, groups and organisations aimed at supporting and sustaining social change by means of public protest activities. Therefore, it is not enough to create a state of affluence as a material base to introduce citizenship and modern individuality to everyone. Young people become citizens through organised effort, or through initiatives of people with equal standing and common interests who, within the legal framework, join forces to achieve a social change.

The further modernisation of Slovakia will depend as much upon the creation of an active civil society as on the process of political and economic reform. That is, it will depend on the forming of self-aware and active citizens (R.Roško 1996). In recent years we have seen a remarkable institutionalisation of civil society through the creation of a variety of third sector organisations. This has been greatly assisted by massive financial support from the program PHARE in the European Union and in the USA by the program Democratic Network. This support can be regarded in the context of the urgent need to strengthen the transformation of European post-communist countries and their development towards a pluralistic democracy. This is a prerequisite for their integration into the community of European democracies associated in the European Union and NATO. We should bear in mind that in the context of transitional societies, where civil society is not well established and civic participation is low, state sponsorship still plays an important role.

The volunteer and non-governmental sectors of civil society and its development between 1993-1998 have been considered important factors in

transformation and modernisation of the Slovak Republic. However, the maintenance and development of citizenship will depend upon the active continuation of these non-state organisations in a situation where many of their leaders have become members of the government or state administration, or have left the country.

The problem is of how to establish a framework in which the state does not interfere, despite considerable state sponsorship, and where different political regimes will not influence the shape of civil society. As we could see during the 1998 elections, the empowerment of young people as voters and as social actors can have important consequences for political change. The challenge for the future will be to create and encourage a civil society in which young people will play an active part and which can help to sustain the progress towards democratisation and the development of a market economy in this new member country of the enlarged European Union. Thanks to the role it played in the parliamentary election in 1998, the Slovak Council of Youth - was involved in defining the new governmental policy. It helped to promote a real institutional change. Governmental Council for Issues of Children and Youth has been established. Preconditions for co-ordination of governmental youth policy have been set, thus enabling youth representatives to take part in decision-making processes of nationwide importance. I must emphasise that this development is in compliance with youth policy of the European Union. All EU countries are working on the White Paper on Youth. Youth activists in Europe put emphasis on the fact that national Youth Councils should be formally recognised as social and civil partners for defining state youth policy in the EU member countries. This civil dialogue is expected to have an institutional base at the state as well as the local level. To summarise briefly the developments after 1998: There is the Council for Issues of Children and Youth, National Youth Conference and parliaments of children and youth, which are active in many cities and villages. The researchers did not remain indifferent, and for the first time since 1989 a report about the situation of youth in the Slovak Republic has been elaborated. The institutional conditions for youth policy have never been better.

### **Slovakia and Europe**

Living conditions in Slovakia have changed substantially since 1989. One of the main factors influencing the way people (and especially young people) feel about life is the freedom to travel. Members of the older generation still have deep-seated sub-conscious images of barbed wire fences (especially of the fence built along the Slovak-Austrian border near Devín and Petržalka).

With reference to the information we obtained, young people consider this opening of the borders with Western countries and the destruction of the "dead border" as an advantage (62.2%). At the same time we have to consider that people are starting to perceive more intensely the discrepancy between civil freedoms and the economic opportunities available to realise them.

On the other hand, the opening-up of the borders to Western countries that has taken place during the past ten years is not only a general process of

democratisation allowing citizens to move freely. This process is also taking on the dimension of European integration, and thus has not only a civil dimension but also political, economic and social dimensions.

In our survey<sup>1</sup>, young people were given the opportunity to assess the development of Slovakia after its entry into the EU using eight criteria: economic development of all members of the EU, economic development of cross-border regions, labour market and unemployment, development of tourism, feeling of self-confidence and knowledge of the country, security and crime rate (delinquency), development of road traffic and the quality of life.

Different aspects of social life in Slovakia are evaluated positively with regard to integration into the EU. However, integration into the EU is also perceived as a danger. Primary school pupils in particular have the feeling that they do not have enough information to judge certain aspects and they refused to take a clear position.

To demonstrate the young people's contradicting views in their understanding of the integration into the EU, we offer two examples:

## **1. The crime rate in the EU is perceived as a danger by 48% respondents**

Young people between the ages of 21 and 24 years feel relatively more endangered by the rise of crime and the decline of security (48.0%) than people between 15 and 20 years. This situation is to a certain extent illustrated by the answer "I do not know" which was the most frequent in the group of primary school pupils (40.7%). With respect to individual cities, the greatest feeling of risk is among young people from Nitra, B. Bystrica and Bratislava, where the rates are between 53 and 56%.

## **2. 48% think that membership in the EU will have a positive effect on the unemployment rate in Slovakia**

The development of the labour market and the rate of unemployment are perceived as largely positive in connection with integration into the EU. University students (65.1%) and young people in Trenčín (58.8%) are the most optimistic in their expectations about this issue. Surprisingly, the opinions of both the unemployed and the employed as well as students of vocational and secondary schools (45-49%) differ only slightly. All this means that there is still a prevailing hope among the majority of young people (including those who are currently unemployed) that the integration into the EU labour force market, elimination of obstacles to free movement of the labour force, or possibly inflow of capital and investments will facilitate the improvement of the general employment situation in Slovakia. (Figure No. 1: Advantages and disadvantages of integration into the EU).

More detailed analysis confirms that young employed people who have a university degree or a full secondary school education, or who are currently university or secondary school students see the most advantages. Apprentices (vocational school students) and young housewives, however, can see only a few advantages of the

integration into the EU. The young people from Prešov have the most pessimistic attitude towards the advantages of integration.

Despite some worries about negative effects of EU membership the advantages prevail (72.1%). EU membership is even seen favourably, as more than just the opening of the borders to Western countries after 1989 (62.2%).

### **Slovakia and Austria**

Our cooperation with Austria has its unquestionable priorities. We do not refer here to our cultural affinity and historical tradition. Austria is the only one of Slovakia's direct neighbours that has been a member of Western countries with a social market economy and working democracy. Moreover, Slovakia and Austria shared a common history after 1989. The content of this common history is the process of Austrian integration into the EU and the Slovak process of becoming an independent state. These processes were frequently mirrored in various stages of mutual cooperation as the bilateral relations were being intensified or becoming more detached. Austrian membership in the EU also substantially influenced its opportunities in the field of youth policy and youth activity programmes.

Our analysis starts from the most basic fact about the rate of visits to Austria and how young people assess their visits. The most popular Austrian destination for Slovak visitors is Vienna (more than one visit 23.7%, one visit 28.8%). It means that approximately 52.5 % of young Slovak citizens have visited the capital of the neighbouring country. The rate of visits to Lower Austria (more than one visit 15.1% and one visit 14.7%) as well as to other federal states of Austria is somewhat lower, i.e., 30% and 23.8% (Figure No. 2: Visits.)

Most visitors to Vienna are young people coming from Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín and Nitra. The origins of visitors to Lower Austria are similar: Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín. Visitors to other federal states of Austria come mostly from Bratislava, but Nitra caught up in this category of visitors. Prešov, Žilina, B.Bystrica and also Košice have significantly fewer contacts with Austria.

The evaluation of these contacts is generally either very positive or positive. Occasionally, there are negative attitudes. It would surely be very interesting to obtain and compare similar information from young Austrians about their visits to Slovakia and their evaluation of these visits.

Austria has shown its positive attitude towards the transformation of Slovakia into a country with a market economy and pluralistic democracy during the recent years, regardless of whether Slovakia was a part of Czechoslovakia or an independent state after 1993.

Our respondents gave answers to our question of whether Austria (especially Vienna) and Lower Austria should be initiators of the mutual cooperation. The prevailing type of answer is "they should be initiators" (51.2%), but a large part of respondents said "yes, definitely"(19.7%). Agreement is most frequently expressed by secondary school and university students, by young people from Nitra, Trnava, and also from Bratislava.

Table 1

**If we compare advantages and disadvantages generally arising from the entry of these countries into the EU and opening-up of boundaries related to this situation, what will prevail?**

Disadvantages rather than advantages	27.9
Advantages rather than disadvantages	72.1

Table 2:

**Have you been to Austria recently?**

	Yes, often	Yes, once
Vienna	23.6	28.9
Lower Austria	15.1	14.8
Other part of Austria	7.6	16.3

We inquired further as to how important the youth activities are in the cooperation between Slovakia and Austria. Youth activities such as cooperation between schools, youth festivals, and programmes of student exchange are seen as very important indeed.

In two cases (cooperation between schools and student exchanges), there is a clear support from young housewives, pupils and students, and the unemployed. Youth festivals elicited a positive reaction mainly among university students, whereas there was average support from the rest of the groups.

### **Austria, Slovakia and the EU**

The bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and Austria has changed since Austria became a member state of the EU and Slovakia a potential accession country.

During our visit to the youth department of the Lower Austrian Government in 1999, we got to know a political slogan: Austria is the heart of the EU without boundaries. This nice association was used by the political leaders of the country in their effort to win the support of Austrian citizens for the idea that Austria (especially Lower Austria) should no longer have frozen borders with the former Communist Czechoslovakia and post-Communist Slovakia—the borders that used to be a no-man's-land.

As a country belonging to the EU, Austria has a good chance to change from being a border country of the EU to a country belonging to the heart of the EU without boundaries. We asked our young people from eight main regional centres what this will mean for Austria.

The prevailing opinion is that for Austria it will be very good (14.6%) and good (35.4%) if the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia become members of the EU. A significant number answered, "I do not know" (32.3%).

A certain number of respondents think, however, that for Austria it will be worse rather than better (15.2%) and only a very small group of respondents thinks it will be very bad (2.5%).

Table 3

**Slovakia wants to enter the EU as soon as possible. If this happens, border controls will disappear. What attitude will Austria take?**

Will be very supportive	17.5
Will be rather hesitant	67.7
Will probably oppose Slovakia's entry into the EU	14.8

Young people from Prešov and Košice (Eastern Slovakia) often answered, "I do not know". The remaining cities have negative expectations (18-20%) for Austria and its situation after its neighbours entered the EU.

Young citizens of Trnava (West Slovakia) showed the most faith in Austria's good future: the evaluation "It will be positive for Austria" is shared by 53.3% (with 22.2% of responses "very good").

Slovakia's effort not to miss the process of integration will not depend solely on its actions (as it is often one-sidedly emphasised) – the support and cooperation from its neighbours will be equally important; Austria has a unique position and importance for Slovakia.

Our survey was carried out before the new coalition government came into power in Austria and the fierce reaction of the EU member states against the participation of J. Haider and his Freedom Party in the new government. Despite this, there is a remarkable observation that our young fellow citizens carefully follow our complicated situation and make differentiated assessments of our neighbours' attitudes.

Answers to the question "What is the most probable attitude of Austria towards Slovakia's effort to enter the EU?" were clearly divided into three groups: will be very supportive 17.6%, will be rather hesitant 67.8%, will probably oppose Slovakia's entry into the EU 14.6%.

The young people having the closest contacts with Lower Austria (Trnava) expressed the highest optimism and the lowest pessimism: the expectation of active support (26%), the expectation of opposition (8%)

Table 4:

How do you assess the development of Slovakia in the following fields when it is a member of the EU?

	Positively	Negatively	No response	I do not know
Economic development of all members	43.0	8.4	27.0	22.6
Economic development of cross-border regions	45.0	8.1	25.0	22.4
Labour market-unemployment	48.0	16.5	21.0	14.6
Development of tourism	65.0	3.5	22.0	8.8
Feeling of self-confidence and knowledge	41.0	6.9	37.0	14.8
Security, crime rate (delinquency)	12.0	48.0	25.0	15.1
Development of road traffic	38.0	18.5	29.0	14.0
Quality of life	40.0	9.8	29.0	20.4

From the above (see table No. 4) we can infer that it is necessary to intensify all existing forms of youth cooperation in the regions of Bratislava and western Slovakia (Záhorie, Malé Karpaty). Apart from the traditional forms of development in the near-border regions, it would be strategically useful to look for new possibilities of cooperation also for Prešov and Žilina cities where the cooperation (economic or cultural) is not less developed.

## Conclusion

Young people living in the eight main regional centres of Slovakia have shown their positive attitudes and opinions towards the opening of Slovakia to the European integration process in which they see good prospects for economic development not only for Slovakia itself, but also of all EU member countries. They perceive the process of opening Slovak boundaries to Europe to be internally contradictory: on the one hand it promises solutions to the difficult problem of unemployment, but on the other hand, it presents a certain danger to the security of inhabitants.

Among our neighbours, Austria is a partner who has become a relatively well-known partner by our young citizens during the last 10 years. They frequently visit Austria, especially its capital Vienna and the towns in Lower Austria. There are many forms of civil cooperation, predominantly with the above-mentioned cities and regions.

Youth projects of cooperation have an honest place here thanks to the Regional Youth Departments of Lower Austria and Municipality of Vienna City. Young citizens of Slovakia have positive experience with these contacts and the quality of the contacts has been reflected in higher expectations regarding Austria's attitude of support towards Slovakia's effort to become a member of the EU.

Even today - step-by-step - we are reinforcing the positive attitude of young people in Slovakia towards the European integration by developing cooperation between the young people in both countries.

There are pragmatic reasons for not neglecting this area: in a few years' time, these now 15- to 18-year-old people will be a decisive group in the ratification plebiscite concerning Slovakia's entry into the EU. The reform of the civil service will probably be helpful in this process, too. Increased decision-making powers of local authorities, or possibly of new regional units, should at last stabilise the partnership relations between youth departments of the Austrian Regional Governments and their counterparts in Slovakia.

There have been many generous offers for cooperation, especially from the Regional Youth Departments of Vienna, Lower Austria, Burgenland, and Salzburg, but unfortunately there have been no reliable or competent partners for this cooperation on the Slovak side. Now the local governments possess authorization for youth work in leisure time, we have a chance to improve and extend cooperation in Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Prešov and Žilina.

In this way we can readily see the close relation between national youth policy and other strategic programmes for modernisation and prosperity of Slovakia. Youth mobility programmes are predominantly associated with processes of European integration. These processes are nothing other than a reaction of the continental European community to the challenge of globalisation.

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## *Young People in Bratislava and Prague: National and Supra-National Identities*<sup>ii</sup>

### Introduction

Though the split of the Czechoslovak federation occurred without giving the people a chance to express their opinion about the planned act (in the end this decision was taken by two political leaders), the mutual emancipation of these new nations could be a positive outcome of a long struggle between Slovaks and Czechs for their national sovereignty and a dignified position among European nations. One can even say that the relationships between the two nations have gradually improved since the dissociation. This point of view seems to be common in the both publics now.

### **Project Methodology and Sample: Bratislava - Prague**

As Jamieson notes, “Since the 1970s, the idea of European citizenship and a ‘People’s Europe’ has been promoted by politicians, intellectuals and bureaucrats of the European Community (2002, p. 508). She emphasizes that it can be “useful to distinguish the possibility of a European identity as a type of supra-national identity from a sense of European citizenship, a citizenship identity rather than a national identity... Unpacking the distinction between ‘national-identity’ and ‘citizenship-identity’, however, requires a review of debates about nationalism and citizenship on the one hand<sup>iii</sup> and deeper scrutiny of the concept of ‘identity’ on the other” (Jamieson, L. 2002, p. 509).

The research project ‘Orientations of Young Men and Young Women to Citizenship and European Identity’ provides a new insight into the orientations of young people toward 'being European' and to European citizenship, including better insight into the possible sources of differences between and within nations and regions: In the case of this article, those between Bratislava and Prague in the Slovak and Czech Republic.

There were two groups in both countries, comprising young people aged 18-24: a random sample drawn from all social backgrounds, and a highly educated group with pro-European career orientations, e.g. European Law or studying multiple European languages. This sampling allows us to compare 'ordinary' young people with those who have particular reasons for feeling pro-European. In both cases, we recruited equal number of young men and young women and only those who have grown up in the region and the country. Our random samples consist of young people aged 18 - 24 years old: Prague n = 396 and Bratislava, n = 397. Our target group is made up of young people from Prague (n=89) and Bratislava (n=98), aged 18-24 years old.<sup>iv</sup>

The Prague and Bratislava random samples are similar in almost all important socio-demographic indicators (see tables). This is especially true for the proportion

of men and women in the samples from both cities. In the case of the age structure, the proportion of young people aged 18-21 in the Prague random sample (43.8%) is slightly higher than in the Bratislava random sample (39.3%). It is also higher than the proportion of the 18-21 age group in the Prague group. When looking at the educational qualifications among participants, in the Prague random sample there are more people with the general high school qualification (31.8%) than in the Bratislava random sample (22.7%). The proportion of young people from the Bratislava random sample with a vocational qualification is slightly greater than in Prague, especially those with the lower vocational qualification (23.4% in Bratislava vs. 15.7% in Prague). In the Bratislava random sample there is a higher proportion of young people with at least one parent in a managerial or senior official position (18.3%) than in Prague (10.0%).

Both random and target samples from both cities have a very high proportion of young people born in that city or elsewhere in the respective countries. There is also a very high proportion of single people with no children. A large proportion of the participants' parents were born in the cities where the participants live now. The overwhelming majority of parents, both of the random and target samples, were born in the respective country.

Both samples contain only a small proportion of ethnic minorities or people with a non-Czech/Slovak background. In the Prague and Bratislava random samples, 91.3% and 93.0% of participants respectively report not having a parent of a different ethnicity/nationality<sup>v</sup>. In the Prague and Bratislava target groups it is 94.3% and 82.0%, respectively. The most represented "different" nationality in both the Prague random and target samples is Slovak (about 2%) and in both the Bratislava random and target samples group, it is Czech and Hungarian (about 2% each). Traditionally, Bratislava has a relatively high proportion of inhabitants of Hungarian nationality. Those parents with Czech nationality in the Bratislava samples and those parents with Slovak nationality in the Prague samples are probably people who came to Prague/Bratislava to work during the existence of Czechoslovakia or those who later married a local national.

A structured questionnaire was used to explore the meaning of 'being European' and respondents' ideals and active citizenship involvement. The questionnaire explores understandings and experience involved in constructions of self in relation to others, social obligation to others, and sense of social inclusion and exclusion. This could indicate whether respondents incline to racism or tolerance, civic or ethnic citizenship. The questionnaire includes keys to analysis of how personal, familial and locally based understandings and experiences are connected to orientations of being 'European' and European citizenship.

Table 1: **Socio-demographic structure of Prague and Bratislava samples** (in %)

	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
Men	47.5	40.4	49.6	49.0

Women	52.5	59.6	50.4	51.0
Aged 18-21	57.1	38.2	53.4	46.9
Aged 22-24	42.9	61.8	46.6	53.1
Born in the city	81.6	78.2	79.6	80.6
Born in the country (CR/SR)	99.0	97.8	97.7	100.0

Table 2: **Highest educational qualification of participants (in %)**

	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
Basic education	46.0	65.2	54.2	68.5
General high school	31.8	52.8	22.7	65.3
Lower vocational/basic initial apprenticeship qualification	15.7	0.0	23.4	2.0
Higher vocational/basic initial apprenticeship qualification <sup>vi</sup>	29.5	23.6	33.2	17.3
First University degree (BA)	9.1	14.6	6.3	5.1
Higher postgraduate/university degree (PhD, MA)	4.5	5.6	6.0	1.0

### The Czech, Slovak and “Czechoslovak” Identity

Our data enables us to compare the strength of attachment to territory, country and Europe (Table 3). As already mentioned, a high proportion of participants (overall about 80%) contacted in Prague and Bratislava were also born there.

In both random samples, the participants feel slightly more attached to their native country than to their hometown. Different result came up in the target groups, yet still more pronounced in Bratislava than in Prague.

The Slovak and Czech Republic were, until 1993, parts of a common state (Machonin, P., 2002) we also wanted to know whether the participants felt any attachment to the territory of “the other republic” (the Slovak Republic for Czech and the Czech Republic for Slovak participants). This attachment is relatively low across all the groups. It might be due to the fact that we asked, in this particular case, about the attachment to the territory of the actual Czech/Slovak Republic. In fact we do not know how people understand the concept of attachment. For instance, attachment to his/her hometown might be associated with an emotional attachment to a family or friends who live there, not with the territory itself. If we had asked, for example, about “Czech/Slovak culture”, the attachment would have been likely higher, especially in the case of young people from Bratislava, who are still very much in contact with Czech literature, music and cinematography.

Overall, the attachment to Europe is higher than the attachment to “the other republic”. There is no statistically significant difference between the attachment to Europe expressed by the target groups and random samples of both countries.

**Table 3: Percentage of people with ‘strong’ or ‘complete’ attachment to city, nation (the Czech Republic or the Slovak Republic), the other nation within former Czechoslovakia (the Czech Republic for Slovaks and the Slovak Republic for Czechs), and to Europe**

	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
To your hometown	70.3	75.0	67.5	75.3
To your native country	77.5	70.4	71.8	66.2
To the Czech Republic	-	-	14.8	20.0
To Slovakia	15.4	17.3	-	-
To Europe	41.6	50.6	43.5	47.7

We also asked the participants to what extent ‘being from Prague/Bratislava’ and ‘being from the Czech Republic/Slovak Republic’ was important for them as a source of their overall identity. As table 4 illustrates, these items are considered important by a relatively high proportion of participants, but are not considered the most important aspect of self. Participants got a list of items and answered the question: ‘How would you rate the importance of the following in terms of who you are, that is, how you feel or think about yourself as a person?’

The table shows the percentage of interviewees in Prague and Bratislava rating items on the highest two points on a five-point scale of importance. Friends, family, partner, professional career and education are clearly rated as the most important sources of their identity (Macháček, L. – Lášticová, B., 2003). More young women than young men in Prague samples consider family relationships important for their overall identity.

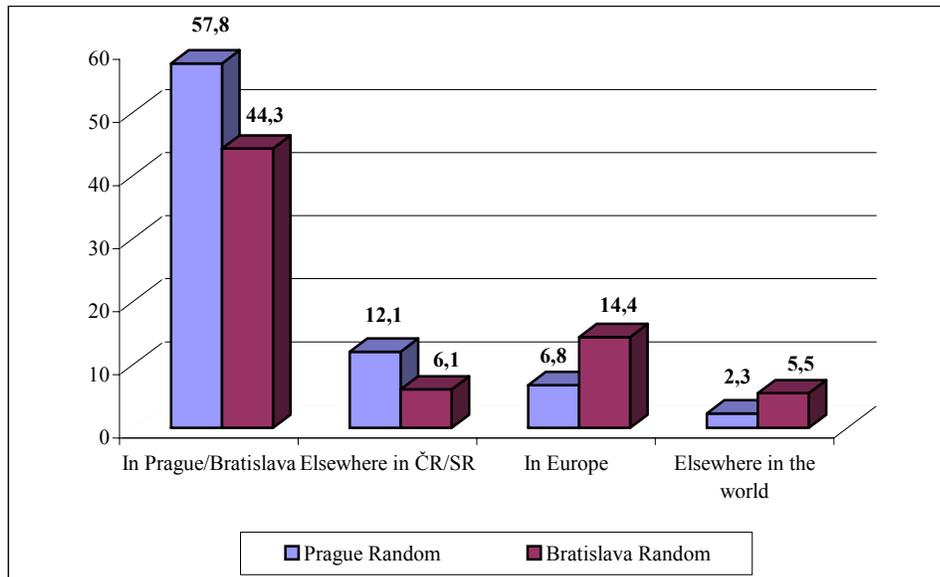
The above-mentioned sources are more important than ‘being from’ the Czech Republic/Slovakia and ‘the place of birth’. Bratislava target group participants rate ‘being from the country’ as less important than other items. Being from Slovakia is more important for young people from the Bratislava random sample than for the young people from the target group.

**Table 4: Percentage of interviewees rating items as “important” or “very important” for their overall identity,**

	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
Place of birth	46.2	48.3	47.7	47.9
Being from Prague/Bratislava	67.5	71.9	65.0	58.8

Being from CR/SR	68.1	68.2	60.0	48.4
Being a future EU citizen	44.0	68.5	59.5	69.5

Graph 1: **Where do you plan to live when you are 30?**



We can observe the same pattern for the Bratislava random sample and target groups, but the differences are not statistically significant. The high preference for their own cities in the random sample could be partially explained by the fact, that Prague and Bratislava are the capitals offering relatively many opportunities for work, education and entertainment. In Slovakia, in particular, the cultural and educational life is still very much concentrated in Bratislava.

The proportion of those who plan to stay in their own city is higher in the Prague random sample, Prague being probably considered 'an attractive place to live in'. In contrast to Bratislava, Prague is a metropolis of European or even world caliber. For the young citizens of Bratislava, it may be one of the primary destinations on their way to (14.4%) (Graph 1).

### **The Czechoslovak: from national feeling to feeling of reciprocity**

In our study we asked about the 'strength of attachment to' particular geographical entities, and about the 'strength of feeling' about particular nationalities. These questions show a similar pattern of variation in terms of people's feelings about their country and their nationality.

Despite the existence of two separate countries, our participants were asked to express the strength of their feeling about being "Czechoslovak" (Graph 2). It should be noted that recognition of Czechoslovakia by the victorious great powers as an independent state in 1918 was associated with the concept of a "unified

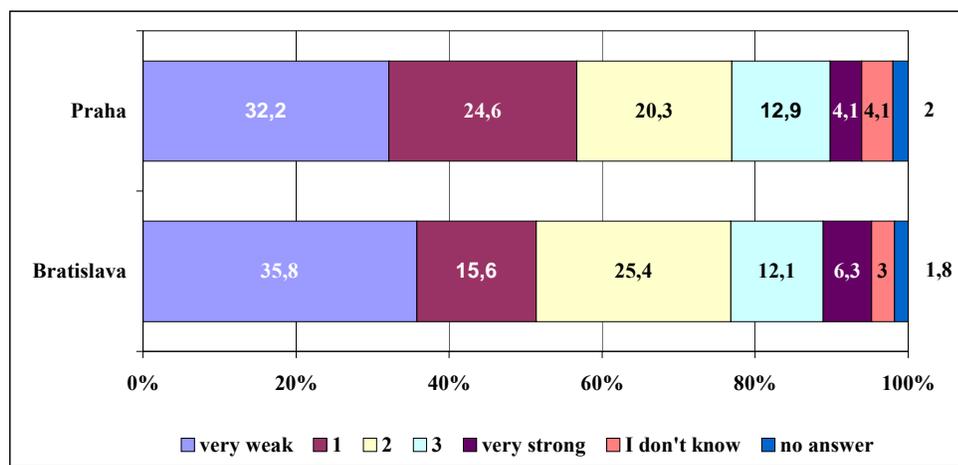
Czechoslovak nation”. Political negotiators after the fall of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire fought against its dominant non-Slav Austrian and Hungarian government and the argument of cultural and language closeness (identity) was not only tactical but also truthful. Nevertheless, there are different and meanings for the Czechs and Slovaks. “The first Czechoslovak Republic represented for majority of the Czechs the success of the national emancipation movement. ... The integration of “the Slovak national segment” was an extension of the Czech historical statehood towards the east rather than its new definition” (Pauer, J., 2003, p. 23).

The strong assimilation pressure after the Austrian-Hungarian compensation (1867) and the situation at the end of the World War I manifested the fact that the concept of unified state-forming Czechoslovak nation<sup>vii</sup> gained a decisive political support. For the Slovaks, it was primarily protection against Hungarian assimilation. Nevertheless it was also a chance for national emancipation and the first major experience of a functioning parliamentary democracy. Democratic experience was especially important because it was rather a unique case than the norm of the day in the region of Central Europe. At the same time the countries bordering Czechoslovakia struggled with fascist and authoritarian rule (Germany, Poland, Hungary and Soviet Russia). However, the Slovak national emancipation was not going to be further developed under the conditions of parliamentary democracy. This was signalled by World War II events (the establishment of the war-time Slovak Republic<sup>viii</sup> in 1939) and by the course of the democratisation process in Czechoslovakia (federalisation in 1968).

Czechoslovakism has been for the Czechs a significant component of the national identity even after 1990: they have kept the state flag, and still commemorate the day when Czechoslovakia was established as a national holiday.

Even after 1993, the concept of “Czechoslovak reciprocity” still has its followers among the Slovak cultural elite and the public. It does not contain only the traditional historical and cultural (language), but also many social-structural (mixed marriages of Slovaks and Czechs and their children in Bratislava and Prague) and economic-political (a pillar in the processes of European integration and the advantageous interconnection with the economic market) sources and causes.

Graph 2 **Intensity of feeling like a Czechoslovak**



As shown in the scale above (Graph 2) as many as two-thirds of the young generation we interviewed perceive the reciprocity and solidarity of the Czechs and Slovaks to some degree. This is demonstrated in various positive phenomena of cooperation between independent republics and in European institutions.

If we compare the strength of feeling about the "Czechoslovak" nationality with the strength of attachment to the partner republics within former Czechoslovakia, we can see that the patterns of responses to these questions are similar among young people from both cities in all groups.

The feeling of his/her nationality is equally strong in all the groups of participants and seems to be stronger than the attachment to their countries. In spite of the fact that our participants have lived for 10 years (for some of them half of their lives) in the independent Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, there is still almost one fifth of persons in both random samples and in the Prague target group and almost a quarter in the Bratislava target group, who feel strongly about the "Czechoslovak" nationality. (Table 5)

**Table 5: Percentage with 'strong' or 'very strong' feelings about national identities (in %)**

	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
Slovak	-	-	87.2	88.7
Czech	87.5	87.5	-	-
Czechoslovak	18.1	17.5	19.3	24.0

**Table 6: Feeling strong or complete attachment to (in %)**

	Czech Republic	Slovak Republic	Spain		Britain	
	Prague	Bratislava	Bilbao	Madrid	Edinburgh	Manchester
Study area						
University town	77	77	82	98	79	68
Region or sub-nation	Not asked	Not asked	77 Euskadi	75 Madrid	87 Scotland	81 England
Nation/federal nation	78	72	41	80	46	72
Europe	42	44	39	54	32	39

Question: 'People may feel different degrees of attachment to their city, town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Thinking about your own attachments, and using the scale (0=not at all attached – 4=completely attached), please rate how you feel about....'; a. r.= autonomous region

In contemporary multinational federal states, Great Britain and Spain, being "British" and "Spanish" is different from feeling "Czechoslovak" when two

separate countries exist instead of common state. It may be presumed that if Czechoslovakia still existed today, the perception of “Czechoslovak” identity, in case of the Slovaks would be analogous to the Scots’ perception of “British” or the Basques’ recognition of “Spanish” (Table 6).

## Identification with Europe or the European Union

Measuring the attachment to Europe and attitudes of young people toward European citizenship and EU is a method of investigating ‘European identity’. However, each of these indicators measures different aspect of it. Thus European identity cannot be reduced to only one of these indicators.

That is why, in the qualitative part of our research, it will be necessary to explore the meanings of the terms ‘being European’, ‘being a European citizen’, etc.

We asked our respondents about how it feels being ‘European’. As we can see, the proportion of the respondents with very strong or strong feelings about being European (Table 7) is overall lower than the proportion of the respondents with very strong or strong feelings about being Czech/Slovak. However, this feeling was expressed by at least 59.7% of participants in both studied groups in both cities.

Table 7: **Strong or Complete Feelings About ‘Being European’ versus Other Nationalism** (in %)

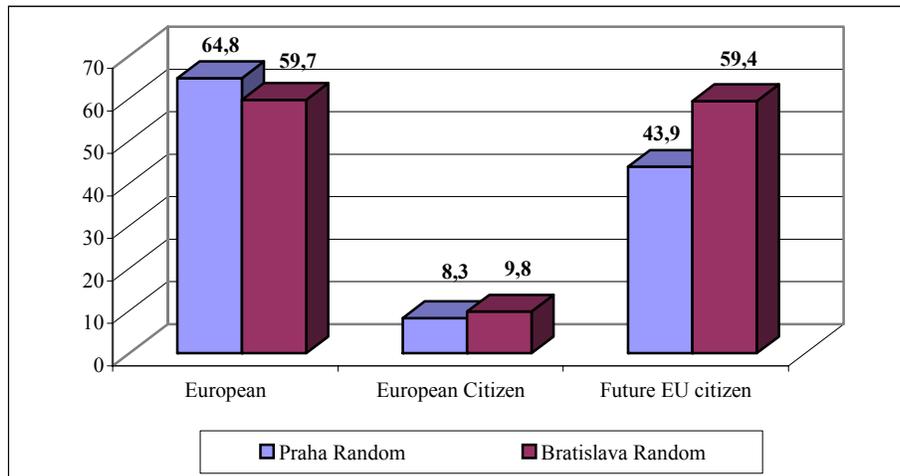
	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>Slovak Republic</b>	<b>Spain</b>		<b>Britain</b>	
Study area	<b>Prague</b>	<b>Bratislava</b>	<b>Bilbao</b>	<b>Madrid</b>	<b>Edinburgh</b>	<b>Manchester</b>
Region/sub-nation	Not asked	Not asked	68 Basque	67 Madrilenian	85 Scottish	80 English
Federal nationality	88	87	31 Spanish	68 Spanish	43 British	77 British
European	65	59	28	38	23	30

Question ‘Now I would like to ask you about the strength of how you feel about holding different nationalities On a scale of 0-4 (0=no feeling at all, 4=very strong feeling) how do you feel about being... (for instance) English/Scottish, British, European?’

This proportion is also much higher than the proportion of the participants who feel themselves to be Czechoslovak (Table 5).

In both Bratislava and Prague, more young people from target groups than from random samples reported very strong or strong feelings about being European .

Graph 3: Percentage of those with very strong or strong feelings (3-4) about being



Participants were asked, ‘how frequently they think of themselves as a European citizen and as a global citizen’. Only 8.3% of participants in the Prague random sample and 9.8% in the Bratislava random sample chose the answer ‘often’ and ‘always’<sup>ix</sup>. However, in both the Prague and Bratislava target groups, a significantly higher proportion of the participants chose the latter answer.

Also slightly more young people in the Prague than in the Bratislava target group chose the answer ‘often and always’, but this difference is not statistically significant. It seems that ‘being European’ and ‘being European citizen’ means different thing for our participants.

Overall, but especially in the random samples from both cities, the proportion of young people who feel a ‘strong’ or a ‘complete’ attachment to Europe (Table 4) is higher than the proportion of those who ‘often’ or ‘always’ think of themselves as European citizens.

Finally, we asked our participants to rate on a scale from 0 to 4, how important ‘being a future citizen of the European Union’ is in terms of how they feel or think about themselves as a person. 43% (Graph 3) of young people in the Prague and 59% in the Bratislava random samples rated European citizenship as of ‘high’ or ‘very high’ importance. In Prague, a significantly higher proportion of young people from the target group rated it like that, than from the random sample. The difference between the Bratislava samples is not significant, but considerably more target group participants seem to consider being future citizens of the EU as important.

Only in Bratislava the majority of interviewees equally rated citizenship in the European Union and national identity as important for ‘how I feel or think about myself’ (60% & 60%). There is a surprisingly large difference (Jamieson, L., et al, 2003) in the proportion placing importance on European citizenship between

Bratislava and Prague (60% & 44%). A finding could be predicted from other answers, mainly from “understanding of Europe” and “what Europe means”.

## The meaning of Europe

### The ‘geographical’ representation of Europe

We wanted to know what Europe means for young people. First we explored geographical representations of Europe. We made it clear that there was no ‘right’ list of countries in Europe and that Europe meant different things to different people.

Participants were offered a list of seven countries, including the EU accession states (the Czech and Slovak Republic, Estonia, Turkey), countries that are not EU members (Iceland, Russia) and one member state (Britain/UK). The countries were chosen to represent the geographical ‘edges’ of Europe, the North Atlantic and Iceland in the north, the UK and the continental ‘edges’ by Russia, Estonia and Turkey. The countries were listed in a random order. The participants were asked to consider each country being a part of Europe or not.

The overwhelming majority of participants in both studied cities and both in the random samples and target groups see the Czech and Slovak Republic as part of Europe. This could be explained by countries’ common history and cultural traditions, close languages, geographical location and mutual interaction in various fields, for example, on the governmental level in the integration processes into EU and NATO.

**Table 8: Percentages of participants who think of the selected country as part of Europe**

Country	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
UK	90.4	95.5	81.1	90.8
Turkey	27.5	31.5	50.4	31.6
Czech Republic	90.7	92.1	96.7	100.0
Estonia	60.9	75.3	49.4	64.3
Iceland	55.1	73.0	52.6	67.3
Slovakia	93.4	96.6	96.0	98.0
Russia	49.0	40.4	55.9	56.1

On the other hand, Turkey has the lowest ranking from all the countries listed. Turkey obtained the highest rating in the Bratislava random sample (as resid >1,96), when only half of participants see it as a part of Europe. This low ranking can be explained by the country’s geographical distance from Slovakia and the

Czech Republic, but mainly by the cultural differences and differences in religion, Turkey being a Muslim country.

In both cities examined, Estonia and Iceland are considered European countries by a significantly higher proportion of respondents from the target groups than from the random samples (as resid >1,96). Estonia obtained the lowest ranking in the Bratislava random sample. In fact, the differences can be explained by the fact that the Baltic States are relatively unknown amongst the general population, which leads to perceptions of them as homogenous states and being still part of the former Soviet Empire.

The target group participants seem to be more acquainted with Estonia's economic and political achievements, which have played a large part in Estonia's accession to the EU.

Russia is excluded from Europe by a substantial part of both the Prague random sample and the target group participants. However, more than half of the participants both in the Bratislava random sample and the target group consider it the part of Europe, more than Turkey, for example. The perception of Russia in the Slovak and Czech Republic has been considerably influenced by the experience of 40 years of the communist regime, Russia being the most powerful heir of the former USSR.

One of the possible reasons of the difference in perception between Prague and Bratislava respondents could be, for example, the crushing of the Prague Spring in August 1968 and the harsher regime in the Czech lands during normalisation. Another factor could be the relative geographical proximity of Slovakia and Russia. A potential factor behind young Prague inhabitants' exclusion of Russia from the concept of Europe could be the inflow of "new rich" Russians into the Czech Republic and the "invasion" of Chechnya refugees.

All different perceptions of European countries need to be further explored and explained through qualitative interviews.

### *'What Europe means for you'*

In addition to the question of which countries are part of Europe, interviewees were asked how important the following issues in relation to 'what Europe means' to them: 'membership of the European Union', 'Euro currency', 'geographical location', 'certain values and traditions'. Interviewees were asked to rank each from 0-4, from 'not at all important' to 'very important'.

**Table 9: Percentage of participants ranking the following as "very important" in what Europe means to them. In brackets is the sum of percentages of those who answered "important" or "very important" (3-4)**

	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
Membership in the EU	28.1 (57.0)	41.4 (66.7)	47.6 (68.7)	47.4 (78.3)
Euro currency	15.4 (40.7)	25.3 (44.8)	29.8 (62.3)	33.3 (62.6)

Geographical location	27.2 (61.3)	37.9 (64.3)	37.6 (64.2)	37.9 (70.5)
Certain values and traditions	39.0 (72.7)	40.9 (85.2)	43.7 (67.7)	45.7 (72.3)

None of the items was placed close to 'very important' ('4' on the scale) by the majority. This may indicate that the judgment of the meaning of Europe is a complex process, combining many different criteria and the ratings are thus not clear-cut. It might also indicate a lack of knowledge or lack of interest in the issues.

Membership in the EU, euro, and the geographical location of the country are considered as 'very important' by more young people in the Prague target group than the Prague random sample (as  $\text{resid} > 1,96$ ). In Bratislava, there is no significant difference between the responses of the random sample and the target group in any four categories.

The euro seems to be the least important in both Prague samples. This tendency is even stronger when we look at the sum of the percentages of those answering 'very important' and 'important' (3 and 4). Then, in the case of both Prague samples, the euro currency is the only item that is not considered as 'important' for the meaning of Europe by the majority of respondents. On the other hand, the majority of participants in both the Bratislava random sample and target group see it as important. Young people from Bratislava, probably more than their Prague peers, link EU integration to the economic development and the economic prosperity of the country, which is symbolised by euro.

The results (Table 9) clearly show that for the Slovaks, Europe means much more than for the Czechs all that formally characterize the European Union politically (membership) and economically (common currency - euro). It also means that the Slovaks, being a relatively young nation, grasp very well that they will be definitely labelled and also recognized as the Europeans only as EU members. The Czechs with their rich historical and cultural tradition and autonomous statehood were never faced with such a problem in modern history.

Table 10: Percentage of interviewees including CZ and SK in their 'Europe'

Respondents from listed countries	Bregenz	Vienna	Prague	Bratislava	Chemnitz	Bielefeld	Bilbao	Madrid	Manchester	Edinburgh
Czech Republic	73	81	95	98	90	70	66	64	44	58
Slovak Republic	73	81	97	97	81	56	61	61	37	49

The answer options were yes (shown above), no and don't know. 'Don't know' are included in the valid percentages.

Certain doubts on attachment of the Slovaks to Europe are roused among citizens of big cities (Table 10), with exception of Austria and Czech. Analysis comparing all of the data suggests that those respondents “living in Manchester had a particularly narrow and distinctive view of ‘Europe’. The majority of Manchester interviewees included Turkey (54%) in ‘their’ Europe but only a minority included the Czech (44%) and Slovak Republics (37%). Only a minority of respondents in Edinburgh included the Slovak Republic (49%) in ‘their’ Europe” (Jamieson, L., et al, 2003:21).

The meaning of Europe for interviewees is an area that we hope to explore more thoroughly through in-depth interviews.

### **Attitudes towards European integration**

One of our aims has also been to explore the attitudes toward European integration among young people in Prague and Bratislava. The participants were asked to rate on a scale (0 no impact – 4 a big impact) the impact of the future integration of their country into the EU. They were considering, respectively, the impact on themselves, their region (Prague/Bratislava) and their country (Czech/Slovak Republic).

**Table 11: Percentage of participants thinking that the integration of CR/SR will have ‘an impact’ or ‘a big impact’ (answering 3 or 4 on the scale)**

Impact of integration on	Prague		Bratislava	
	Random	Target	Random	Target
You personally	58.3	78.6	53.7	68.3
Prague/Bratislava	72.5	84.3	68.0	82.7
Czech/Slovak Republic	83.3	94.4	78.6	90.8

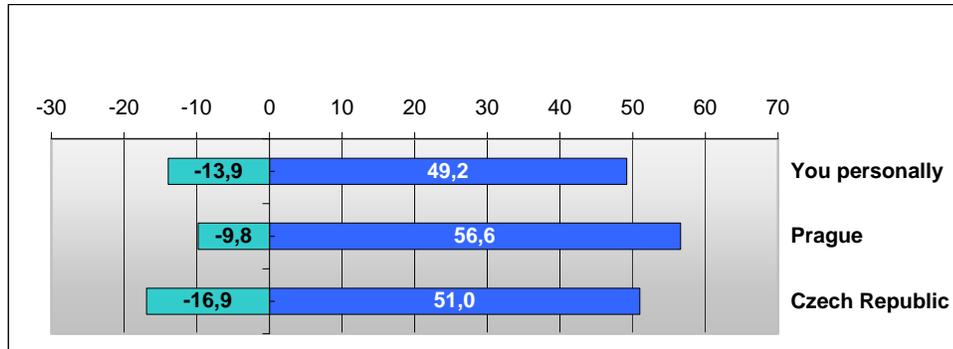
The majority of young people from both cities and both samples consider that European integration will have an impact on themselves, their region/city and the country.

As (Table 11) illustrates, the percentage of respondents who think there will be an impact, is highest for the anticipated impact on the country and decreases for the city and again for the anticipated impact on the participant. One possible interpretation of this pattern of answers is that our interviewees do not really understand what EU membership can bring to them as individuals, but they can better imagine its consequences on macro social - economic and political - level. Nowadays, the economic and political consequences are emphasised in media most of all. However, many young people probably do not understand what exactly the costs and the benefits of EU integration are and subsequently see it as relatively distant to their own lives<sup>x</sup>.

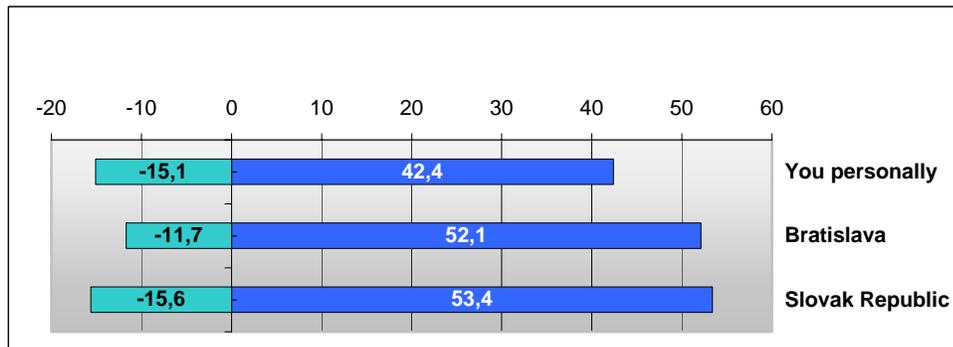
Moreover, the young people in Bratislava and Prague expect that the impact of EU integration will be mainly positive. The Prague target group participants expect it to be almost equally positive for themselves, their region and the country. In both cities, the number of young people expecting EU integration to have a positive impact is significantly higher (as resid >1,96) in the target groups than in random samples. This holds on all the three levels of anticipated impact. There are no

gender differences Moreover, expecting a negative impact of EU integration is very low in Bratislava and Prague. It seems that in both countries the political parties and movements with a Euro-sceptic political agenda do not receive support from the young people. Euro-optimistic expectations clearly dominate, especially those related to personal prosperity, development of regional towns as well as the future of both countries in the united Europe.

Graph 4: **Will this impact be mainly positive or mainly negative?**  
(% respondents in Prague)



Graph 5: **Will this impact be mainly positive or mainly negative?**  
(% respondents in Bratislava)



## Conclusion

The split of Czechoslovakia is a challenge for politicians and sociologists even after a decade. An answer is sought to the question of whether the actions of the political elite were justified in the light of the commencement of European integration and the complicated split of the big federations (Yugoslavia and Soviet Union) with the consequences for peace and European stability. An answer is sought to the question of whether the Slovak or Czech public would support or refuse their decision if they had been given a referendum on the matter.

In 1993, public opinion on the split of the CSFR was rather confused. It should be noted that there was no clear feeling amongst the Czech public: 40% were positive,

40% negative, and the rest undecided. The attitude of the Slovak public was less confused: almost a half (47.8 %) evaluated the split negatively, 26% were undecided and only 28.9% evaluated the split positively. The political elite knew that the referendum would certainly mean a rejection of the split with Czechoslovakia and for that reason there was no referendum. The 2001 research (Tuček, M. 2003) showed, some facts of the split of Czechoslovakia in the new light:

In opinions on the common state

1. The coexistence in the common state was not advantageous for the Slovaks in the opinion of both the Slovaks (57.1%) and the Czechs (55.8%).
2. The coexistence in the common state was advantageous for the Czechs in the opinion of both the Slovaks (75%) and the Czechs (61.9%).

In opinions on the prosperousness of independent republics

1. The independent development of the Czech Republic after the split was prosperous not only in the opinion of the Czechs (67.9%) but especially of the Slovaks (80.5%).
2. The independent development of the Slovak Republic after the split was prosperous neither in the opinion of the Czechs (74.9%) nor, particularly, the Slovaks (82.7%).

The public in both of the independent republics evaluate the Czech Republic's areas of societal life - democratism, possibility of self-realisation, social certainties, social justice, societal moral, freedom of an individual, lawfulness, and standard of life – as better, while the Slovaks give it still higher evaluation than the Czechs.

The critical attitude of the Slovaks to their own situation after the split of the common state (especially to the lower standard of living) does not consequently mean a negative evaluation of the new political order created in 1989. A surprising finding for the Czech and Slovak publics is that "...unfulfilled expectations in Slovakia bring along almost excessive criticism of the present Slovak situation, but the criticism does not lead to any envy or anti-Czech phobia" (Tuček, M., 2003, p. 19). This is hardly surprising for those sociologists who did some research on Czech and Slovak relations. (Roško, R., 2000; Machonin, P., 2002). Historically, the hatred was never the fundamental part of Czech and Slovak relations. On the contrary, these relations were dominated by feeling of common belonging, solidarity, subtle irony and competitiveness.

One can assume that the Czechs do not say any more what they did during the period of the split: That serves them right, they have what they wanted. Today, there are mostly the Slovaks who say that, in a slightly changed form: That serves us right, we have what we did not want, but still we did let that happen. The nationally oriented political forces that initiated the process of the split of Czechoslovakia had the possibility to control (1994-1998) the social transformation processes. In the period 1998-2002 they had to retreat to the opposition particularly

because they threatened the beliefs held by the younger generation that Slovak membership of the European Union would lead to personal prosperity.

The low standard of living in the Slovak segment of the former common state is objectively connected with underdeveloped infrastructure (uncompleted highways, express railways, regional airports) with the consequences of conversion of heavy industry (unemployment), etc.<sup>xi</sup>

Under the conditions of the independent Slovak Republic, a natural battle for civic modernisation of the Slovak society has been immediately launched. It is connected with the founding of new civic political parties with more liberal orientation<sup>xii</sup>, with the origin of right-left democratic coalition (1998-2002) and right-oriented coalition (2002-2005); and with an unprecedented development of civic society and the increase of political and civic participation of youth.<sup>xiii</sup>

The new national identity is also co-created by traditional instruments for encouraging exalted manifestations of collective solidarity for removing consequences of unjust decisions of international community.

The story of the Slovak ice-hockey team in the period 1993-2003 is a classic example. Its success is considered as a result of long-year effort to achieve professional performances and career, but also the outcome of “the whole nation’s” strive for international recognition, independent existence and the respect of other partners.<sup>xiv</sup>

The European Union is a similar challenge for the Slovak Republic. After 1993 and election results in 1994 (coalition of national political parties: V. Mečiar and J. Slota) all political processes of acceptance of Slovakia as a suitable partner not only for NATO but also for EU, slowed down and stopped. This situation changed in 1998 thanks to the younger generation who realized that and did not let the parliamentary agony continue. The government received a mandate to accelerate the processes of the European integration of the Slovak Republic. In 2002, Slovakia became a member of NATO (guarantees security of foreign investment).

In 2003, Slovakia, along with the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia and Malta, successfully concluded pre-accession negotiations for EU membership (guarantee of implementing the standards of democratic governance), which officially began on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004.

Higher enthusiasm about the independent Slovak Republic does not have to be necessarily interpreted as lower enthusiasm about Europe and European Union. However, young people from the Bratislava random sample consider being future EU citizens as more important than young people from the Prague random sample.

The young citizens of Bratislava have much greater expectations about Slovakia’s EU membership at the level of “being” in Europe than “having” something from Europe. Slovakia, which gained in the past only penalty points from the European Union and the Council of Europe<sup>xv</sup>, has gained by EU membership a certificate of democratic country and “the Slovak chair at the European table” (J. Čarnogurský). Only two weeks before its entrance into the EU, Slovakia held its presidential elections. In their second round, Slovak citizens decidedly withheld Vladimír Mečiar’s prospects for becoming the Slovak President for 2004-2009 term.

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ZÁSADY štátnej politiky vo vzťahu k mládeži. (Principles of the State Policy of Youth) in *Youth and Society*, No. 1, p.47, 1992.

<sup>i</sup> In January 2000 we carried out a sociological survey focusing on young people living in eight regional centres of Slovakia regarding their opinions and attitudes towards current issues of youth policy and youth activities in Slovakia.

In the interview, we asked young people aged between 15 and 26 years living in eight main regional centres some questions concerning

- a) their leisure time, and possibilities of how to spend it meaningfully in and around their city;
- b) If and in which ways they are interested in what is going on in their city, their personal participation in the problem-solving processes (e.g., within the structures of various children's and youth associations);
- c) How they perceive and evaluate risks (drugs, unemployment) of today's young generation in comparison to their parents;
- d) How violence is approached and assessed by their group of friends, if they would use violence in self-defence and in defence of their friends (or family);
- e) How they would accept legal changes that would grant more rights to young people at an earlier age (16-17) and would thus confer more responsibility for their own decisions and actions on them;
- f) How they see their own future in the context of these changes taking place in Slovakia and in Europe.

The data were collected by ASA (Agency for Social Analyses) in Bratislava between January 7<sup>th</sup> and February 7<sup>th</sup> 2000. The sample includes 945 young people aged 15 to 26 years.

The selected group of young people living in the main regional centres constitutes 27.72 % of the total number of young people in this age group living in Slovakia. The group under survey is representative with respect to gender, age, education, social groups and cities.

<sup>ii</sup> Research reported here emerges from the project "Youth and European Identity" which is funded by the European Commission as part of its 5<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. The work on this project is coordinated by Lynn Jamieson from the University of Edinburgh. The other partners, researchers and consultants in this project are Claire Wallace and Reingard Spannring (Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna), Klaus Boehnke and Daniel Fuss (International University Bremen), Bernhard Nauck (Technical University Chemnitz), Ladislav Macháček, Gabriel Bianchi, Barbara Láštiová and Pavla Macháčková (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava), Maria Ros and Miryam Rodriguez Monter (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), Hector Grad and Gema Garcia Albacete (Universidad Autonoma de Madrid), Susan Condor (University Lancaster), Sue Grundy and David McCrone (University of Edinburgh). The author is indebted to Barbara Láštiová for her cooperation (Macháček, Ladislav – Láštiová, Barbara: "Orientations of Young People from Bratislava and Prague to Citizenship and European Identity" *Sociológia* 2003, No. 3, pp. 247-266).

<sup>iii</sup> The issue of European, National and Ethnic Identity has traditions in sociological literature in former Czechoslovakia (Laiferová, E., 2000, Turčan, L., 2000).

<sup>iv</sup> The selection of the participants in the target group was based on the assumption, that their educational qualification or their current profession make them more likely to pursue a European career. The Bratislava target group is a bit younger than the Prague target group. The majority of young people from both target groups are still studying (65.2% in Prague and 68.5% in Bratislava). In comparison to the random samples from both cities, significantly more main earners in the families of the target group respondents work in professional occupations.

<sup>v</sup> In Slovakia, the term “nationality” is commonly used as a synonym of ethnicity, but we make a distinction between nationality and citizenship. It means that a person who has, for example, Hungarian nationality can be a citizen of the Slovak Republic.

<sup>vi</sup> In the Slovak and Czech Republics both ‘General high school’ (leading to a general A-level) and ‘Higher vocational/basic initial apprenticeship qualification’ (leading to a professional A-level) are university entry qualifications.

<sup>vii</sup> The concept of unified state-forming Czechoslovak nation proliferated through the common political and educational usage of the naturalising metaphors such as the “the (Czechoslovak) trunk with two branches (Czech and Slovak)”.

<sup>viii</sup> War-time Slovak Republic (1939-1945) was Nazi-controlled, “puppet” authoritarian regime.

<sup>ix</sup> We don't know what is the perception of the label ‘European citizen’ in the EU member states. In Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, it is not often used. On the other hand, the term ‘global citizen’ has a slightly negative connotation in Slovak language (cosmopolitist). It denotes a person ‘without the homeland’ who can be at home anywhere in the world. This term was often used in this negative sense by Slovak nationalist politicians to denote the people whose Slovak ‘national feeling/national identity’ was not ‘strong enough’ (no patriot).

<sup>x</sup> It may be documented by comparison of data collected in Austria (Vienna), where the young people give the highest evaluation to the positive impact in EU membership on their individual person (65%) and slightly less to the city and country.

<sup>xi</sup> It may be assumed with high probability that these problems would survive in the entire period (1993-2003) of accession negotiations with the EU in the Czechoslovak Federation too. The problem of economic situation in some regions of Slovakia, especially in the East, would satisfy the nation-ethnically oriented political parties whose elite would reorient the population dissatisfaction to the Czech political elite. It would mean a tension in Czechoslovakia and dissatisfaction with negative impact on European integration process.

<sup>xii</sup> Alliance of a New Citizen (chairman P. Rusko).

<sup>xiii</sup> The volunteer and non-government sector of civil society and its development between 1993 and 1998 has been considered as an important factor of transformation and modernisation of the Slovak Republic. The NGOs in Slovakia “...are now much more than islands of isolated idealists or the so-called islands of positive deviants, as the independent civil activities in late 1980s were called by Slovak sociologists. They created a vivid, vibrant and efficient “civil archipelago”, an archipelago of hope and positive action” (Bútorá, M., 1997).

The empowering of young people as voters and as social actors can have important consequences for a political change as we have seen during the 1998 elections. (Macháček, L. 2000) The challenge for the future will be to create and encourage a civil society in which young people will play an active part and which can help to sustain the progress towards democratisation and the development of a market economy in the Slovak and Czech Republic as members of the new European Union after 2004.

<sup>xiv</sup> The very last presentation of the joint Team Czechoslovakia was the Ice Hockey World Championship in 1992, which was held in Bratislava for the second time in history. Leaving the federation of two states politically and in a hockey way too had a taste of bronze. After the split up the Czech hockey walked to the top goals. Slovak ice hockey started modern independent history (according to the IIHF decision) right from the bottom of the world hierarchy (pool C) letting everybody know of who they were.

Thanks to the skilful diplomacy Slovakia was to participate to the Olympic Qualification in Sheffield in 1993 and to win. Therefore the door to the *Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer in 1994* was open up. Performance of the Slovak National Team was a surprise for many hockey specialists. Team Slovakia under the leadership of *Peter Šťastný* (the only Slovak player, who started with hockey in Slovakia and got to the NHL Hall of Fame), winner of a strong group accompanied by Canada, Sweden and USA was unlucky to lose the game against Russia by 2:3 in overtime period during the quarterfinals. However, the overall 6th place was a great success.

Slovakia must have bit through to hockey elite right from the bottom - C category. The top-level hockey was seen in Spišská Nová Ves and Poprad in 1994 when *Oto Haščák* scored two winning goals during the decisive game against Team Belarus. There was no other obstacle on further way to

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the higher category for the players under coaching tandem of *Július Šupler and František Hossa*. One year later the World Championship Category B was organised in Bratislava.

23 minutes and 45 seconds was the time limit for the premier scoring at the World Championship Category A in Vienna in 1996. It was a benefit of Lubomír Sekeráš in game against Team Canada and the first performance of the Slovak players resulted in a tie 3:3. Despite the fact that Slovakia must have fought for its position among the top hockey teams in relegation round during the mentioned championship, the team proved its valid membership to the group in order to proceed higher step by step.

The 2000 IIHF World Championship in St. Petersburg was a demonstration of such effort winning the silver medals under the baton of the Slovak National Team Head Coach *Ján Filc*. Slovak players led by their captain *Miroslav Šatan* returned home with the title of *Vice Champions of the World, 2002 with the title of Champions of the World* (Sweden) and 2003 with bronze medal after winner match with Czech team.

<sup>xv</sup> Black Peter of nationalism for the split of Czechoslovakia (1993) and Water Power Station Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros. Red cards of visa duty as the only postcommunist country from among Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary as well as for problems with Roma ethnic and its economic tourism in Europe (Belgium, Finland, United Kingdom).