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## Student School Councils: An Impulse for Non-formal Education for Democracy in Slovakia

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# STUDENT SCHOOL COUNCILS: AN IMPULSE FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN SLOVAKIA

## 1. Participation – new structural opportunity

On the occasion of defending the *National report on the Youth Policy in Slovakia*, we also presented the outcomes of the sociological survey EUYOUPART targeting young people ranging from 15 to 25 years of age in Slovakia (2004/2005), which have showed, that young people have been loosing their interest in politics, and that they tend to express skepticism towards public political life, show distrust in the institutions of a state based upon the rule of law, and have a tendency to support autocratic forms of managing the life of society[1].

We also have to mention, that the interest in working with civic associations of children and youth has also stabilized[2] at the level of 5–7%, and, overall, the activities of young people in different interest associations and civic participation in the voluntary sector is close to 15%. At least it seems that the "grouping potential" of youth organizations in their leisure time has achieved, under current conditions, its "ceiling" or "barrier".

The actual hope for a real increase in the interest of young people in public issues and in participation in a representative democracy (e.g. participation in the elections on all levels) is primarily a new **structural opportunity – students´ councils at schools were established in compliance with the – Slovak National Parliament's Act No. 596 from November 5, 2003 on Public Administration in Schools and School Self-government.**

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[1]  Political Participation of Young People in Europe. EUYOUPART. L. Macháček, CERYS FF UCM in Trnava, November 2005, p. 64.

[2]  Sociological survey on how children and juveniles spend their leisure time. RMS, Bratislava 2002.

The article No. 26 of this Act named "Student school Council" allows students:
– to express their statements to imperative questions, proposals and measures of the school in field of the education,
– to participate on the creation and application of the school rules,
– to represent students in relationship to the principal and generally to the management of the school,
– to vote their representation to the School Council.

Decisions made by the student school councils at secondary schools and/or student councils or academic senates at universities concern all students without distinction. It is a completely different situation, compared to the impact of decisions adopted by a youth civic association, which usually concerns only its members.

This explains why in the Ministry of Education – ME SR, its Department of Youth Affairs has begun to focus the attention of the sociological survey of youth[3] also on student school councils as an "**non-formal school of democracy**" paradoxically in the school environment.

## 2. Participation of the school-going youth in the self-governmental life of the school

In concord with general efforts of European institutions to stop the rising threat of the "civic deficit of youth", our sociological survey also reflects an effort to better analyze the civic and/or political participation of youth. From the methodological point of view, a thesis from the White Paper on Youth (2001) is of specific importance, stating that democratic European governance requires the willingness of young citizens of Europe to deal with public issues. Participation of citizens can be manifested in different forms (discussions in the media, demonstrations, elections to representative bodies at different levels etc.) and, naturally, different intensity, all of which help to legitimize the political system. Democratic systems depend on the level of political involvement and preparedness of its citizens to actively participate in civic and political life, while participation in public discussions and participation in decision making processes in the municipality, school, self-governmental region or country is of different significance.

The school is an *institution* the mission of which is to ensure the transfer of knowledge, skills and competences, creating the foundation of our society's system of culture, from one generation to the next. It is not so often emphasized that the school is also a *bureaucratic organization,* that can be characterized by its functional hierarchy and distribution of tasks between groups (students, teachers, directors), as well as by a set

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[3] The representative sociological survey of secondary school and university students was conducted in October 2005 on a surveyed sample of secondary school students (870 respondents) and university students (829 respondents). The survey was conducted in cooperation of IUVENTA and UIPS in Bratislava. The data was collected by ASA s r.o.

of rules for governing processes and its day-to-day operation. At school, the process of education for democratic citizenship is also carried out by means of self-governmental bodies making important decisions regarding the functioning and development of the school (children parliaments, student school councils, student councils, academic senates).

Their agenda can include all relevant issues that directly and/or indirectly concern the pupils at school[4]. K. H. Durr developed a system of eight areas that are potentially open for pupil participation:

– **individual affairs** – expressing the interests and problems of the pupils;
– **peer affairs** – relations between individual pupils and/or groups of pupils;
– **class affairs** – matters and conflicts between a class of pupils and the teacher, as well as activities, projects and conflict resolution between peers;
– **school affairs** – matters and conflicts between the pupil community and the management or administration; school projects, communication with the local community, festivals and the school environment;
– **organizational and staff affairs** – matters and conflicts pertaining to the regulation of school life, relations with the staff, maintenance and reconstruction of the building, problems with the administration and transport;
– **content and methodological issues** – matters and conflicts relating to the scope and methodology of teaching, educational projects;
– **curricular and education policy issues** – matters and conflicts pertaining to curriculum regulation and its interpretation, selection of subjects and student assessment; and
– **links with extracurricular activities** – issues and conflicts pertaining to the relations between the school and the external community, extramural activities, cooperation with extramural agencies and organizations.

Substantial forms of learning within the system of non-formal education include direct social action aimed at social change, which includes communication between the students, and also between the student and their teachers, i.e. non-verbal methods and informal communication requiring intellectual skills and participatory abilities.

The school is an important factor for forming an "informed, responsible and participatory citizen" which should be the ultimate result of the *formal education* of students about society, its history and/or economy and views on philosophy, political science and/or sociology. This educational process is carried out through a range of school subjects, including both traditional ones such as history, and modern ones such as civic education, civic instruction, or theory of society.

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[4]  K. Dürr, *The School: A Democratic Learning Community. The All-European Study on Pupils' Participation in School*, Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg, Germany, Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex.

*Since 1989,* the schools have the right (now it is even given by law[5]) to open adequate areas for the pupils aimed at the active sharing of responsibilities with the goal of allowing pupils to learn the practical ways of how to apply their civic rights and responsibilities.

## 3. Political knowledge and civic literacy of secondary school and university students

In the study, we have placed sufficient attention on establishing the level of knowledge and reader competences of students significant for their civic and political participation. Such procedure is not traditional for common sociological youth research. Usually only the attitudes and opinions are studied, including the preferred values and verbal expressions of the surveyed individuals. In consideration of the nature of our study, we had to overcome some inhibitions that might have been expressed by the respondents during "face to face" interviews, in the off chance that the interviewer reacted inadequately to his/her response.

Since this study focused on school-going youth, and, despite the fact that the general public is literally inundated with various knowledge quizzes in the mass-media, we also decided to include a knowledge test in the sociological interview. We have chosen proven questions from two international researches[6].

## 4. Knowledge of students on politics and democracy

In the first set of test questions we presented the respondents with several statements relating to national politics and European politics.

In essence we can state, that students of both secondary schools and universities (about 90–95 %) know the fundamental facts (president, parliamentary elections). The same can be said regarding some basic information about the European politics (70––80%), even though the level of surveyed information is lower in some areas by a few percentage points (e.g. whether Turkey is an EU member state, how many member s EU has had since 2004).

The truth is that the answers to the remaining questions (35%) were rather incorrect if the SNS (Slovak National Party) is a parliamentary party, if EU has adopted a consti-

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[5]  Act No. 596/2003 on Public administration at schools and school self-administration, provision of §26 "Pupil school council". Act on Universities No. 131/2002 Coll. stipulates that at least one third of the members of academic senates shall be represented by students. This share expresses the influence of the students on the self-administrative functioning of the university.

[6]  Political participation of young people in Europe (2004) conducted by CERYS FF UCM in Trnava, and survey of civic literacy CEA conducted in Slovakia in 1998 ŠPU in Bratislava in 14-year-old pupils (www.statpedu.sk).

tution. Selecting the correct answers required a much more profound and more systematic interest in politics than the students were able to demonstrate, as reflected by the results. There were significant differences in the correct answers between university students and secondary school students, while the students of secondary grammar schools (gymnasium) and secondary technical schools significantly differed from those at secondary vocational schools (SOU).

**Table 1**
**Statements on politics and democracy in our country and in EU**

| | | Correct University students | Correct Secondary school students |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Turkey is a member of EU | 82,9 | 67,6 |
| 2 | EU has 25 member states | 77,2 | 60,4 |
| 3 | The EU flag is blue with white stars | 60,2 | 77,6 |
| 4 | SNS is a parliamentary party | 52,2 | 37,2 |
| 5 | I. Gašparovič is the Presidents of SR | 98,4 | 95,4 |
| 6 | EU has an adopted constitution | 35,3 | 20,6 |
| 7 | Parliamentary elections are held every 4 years | 91,9 | 81,8 |
| 8 | The Prime Minister has the authority to dissolute Parliament | 46,4 | 30,6 |

Note: In this overview, we have modified the answers so as to be comparable, i.e. in the event. The respondent answered that e.g. Turkey is not an EU member state; that the stars on the flag are not white but yellow; the SNS is not a parliamentary party; the EU does not have a constitution, the Prime Minister does not have the authority to dissolve Parliament – these we included as correct answers.

There was a specific question aimed at determining the knowledge of the "heart" of parliamentary democracy, i.e. the relation between the representative and executive powers, surveyed by means of the statement of "The Prime Minister has the authority to dissolve Parliament". In this case, university students achieved better results as to the number of correct answers than the secondary school students. From the secondary school students, those studying at gymnasiums achieved better results. The students of SOU responded mostly with the answer "I don't know".

There is a remarkable fact among the university students: there was no significant difference as to the number of correct answers in higher grades as compared to lower grades of the university. This can be explained in two ways: the first one states that the process of education regarding democracy and the functioning of the political system is not taking place, and therefore there aren't any qualitative changes in the students´ knowledge. The second one would claim that the political and civic participation of students in the last three years deepens their conviction about the fact, that the "Parliament" only holds up and detains the adoption of "reasonable" proposals made by the

government. This could lead to the answer, by means of which they – despite knowing the correct relation between the two powers in the state – express their attitude toward the actual situation in our parliamentary democracy.

## 5. Reading competences of students

The second set of questions (5) included in the test was not primarily focused on knowledge, but rather on the reading competences of students.

In this case we can also basically state, that approximately 25–30% of the surveyed university students, and 35–40% of secondary school students cannot correctly identify a violation of the principle of equality; cannot identify cases when the government acts non-democratically; do not know what has been going on in relation to the textbooks of history; what is the purpose of a pre-election leaflet, and, finally, they cannot make a distinction between "an attitude" and "a statement". Just to give an example, the following table includes the results of a test aimed at establishing what is, in young people's opinion, "non-democratic" in regards to the government.

**Test**
**Which of the following situations would lead to a result in which the GOVERNMENT WOULD BE DESCRIBED AS NON-DEMOCRATIC?**

A) People are not allowed to criticize the government
B) Political parties often argue amongst themselves
C) People have to pay high taxes
D) Each citizen has the right to a job

**Table 2**
**Understanding of the text if we use the notions of "democracy"**

| Attended school | The government would be non-democratic, if... | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | People are not allowed to criticize the government | Political parties often argue amongst themselves | People have to pay high taxes | Each citizen has the right to a job | |
| Secondary vocational school without school leaving examination | 40,0% | 6,7% | 23,3% | 30,0% | 100,0% |
| Secondary vocational schools with school leaving examination | 53,2% | 13,4% | 19,0% | 14,5% | 100,0% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secondary technical school | 59,8% | 14,1% | 15,8% | 10,3% | 100,0% |
| Secondary grammar school | 81,1% | 5,8% | 7,8% | 5,3% | 100,0% |
| Abs. | 538<br>62,3% | 95<br>11,0% | 130<br>15,1% | 100<br>11,6% | 863<br>100,0% |

Amongst the secondary school students, there is a clearly visible difference in the reader comprehension. In particular, the students from secondary vocational schools (SOU), the future workers and service providers with lower qualifications and lower level of education in general, failed to understand the questions, or they did not know exactly what equality, discrimination, democracy, opposition, opinion or statement meant.

This is a classical example of findings established by PISA surveys under current Slovakia conditions, when there were many questions from a large variety of areas – including even mathematics and natural sciences – which the students did not even begin to solve, as they did not understand the wording of those questions.

These findings, however, can also be interpreted differently. In particular the students of secondary vocational schools tended to assign different meanings to some concepts. In their opinion, the principle of equality is violated and real discrimination begins, if someone with lower qualifications receives a lower salary, even though he/she performs a task just as necessary and useful as someone else with higher qualifications. In regards to the second question, the secondary vocational schools students claimed that the government is "non-democratic" even in cases where it cannot ensure a citizen's right to a job. It is obvious in both aforementioned cases, that people in different social situations have a tendency to fill in and interpret general concepts – such as democracy, equality – quite differently than those taught at school offering civics classes in the spirit of classical political science.

The results were a bit different in the case of the test concerning the concepts of "statement" and "opinion", or as to how the concept of "opposition" was understood as it pertained to the pre-election or political struggle. The interpretation of these results shows, that a number of young people cannot differentiate between a "statement" and an "opinion".

**Student school council and the academic senate**
In the study, we constructed a typology of students depending on how important they see their own education, how much of their extracurricular time they devote to different activities (i.e. hobby, income, organizational activity). We constructed this typology in a way which allowed us, in a subtle way, to separate students into two groups; one of young people who prefer the development of group life, and who want to apply their abilities to the benefit of the functioning of such a group, and the other consisting of students who are in general interested in the political and civic areas.

The outcomes of the study show that the share of this type of individuals among students is relatively stable (9–10%), regardless of whether it is a secondary school or a university. At the same time, in a number of cases the following analysis showed that it takes a long time to form such groups, at school and also during extracurricular activities, while family background and traditions also constitute a significant factor.

**Try to assess the following types of students and rank yourself:**

> **1. Peter/Petra** – focuses on achieving excellent results in his/her field of study; thus his/her extracurricular interests are rather limited
>
> **2. Pavol/Pavla** – focuses on achieving good results in his/her field of study, but he/she can also find time to actively participate in his/her personal hobby in his/her free time (culture, sport, body-building)
>
> **3. Martin/Martina** – focuses on achieving goods results in his/her field of study, but he/she also tries to do something for his/her fellow students in the class, organize something at school or in the dormitory.
>
> **4. Jozef/Jozefína** – focuses on achieving good results in his/her field of study, in leisure time he/she works and earns money necessary for school.
>
> **5. Janko/Janka** – his/her field of study is not of primary interest; he/she rather focuses on the joys of student life with a good group of friends, leisure-time entertainment

**Table 3**
**Typology of students from the aspect of "presence of organizers": self-ranking**

|                      | % universities | % secondary schools |
| -------------------- | -------------- | ------------------- |
| 1. Peter/Petra       | 12,3           | 8,0                 |
| 2. Pavol/Pavla       | 35,7           | 46,8                |
| **3. Martin/Martina** | **9,7**        | **8,2**             |
| 4. Jozef/Jozefína    | 32,9           | 13,6                |
| 5. Janko/Janka       | 9,4            | 23,4                |
| Total                | 100,0          | 100,0               |

It is worth mentioning that there is a significant difference between secondary schools and universities in regards to the presence of secondary school students (Janko) focusing on the joys of student life, and university students (Jozef), who earn some money in their free time.

## 6. Motivation for student participation in school self-government

As in our study, we have primarily been interested in the group of "organizers", and have tried to identify their motivation for participating in such activities; in particular how they are perceived by their fellow-students. We asked the following a question:

*How would you explain the reasons for some students' interest in carrying out differ-ent tasks and responsibilities within the class, student councils, academic senate, school commissions, in the dormitory etc.?*

**Table 4**
**Motivation for participation from the students' perspective**

| Motives and reasons | Definitely yes Universities | Definitely Secondary schools |
|---|---|---|
| They feel useful and needed | 29,7 | 29,4 |
| They think one has to help other people | 20,7 | 25,3 |
| They have some organizational skills already, so they make use of them | 22,7 | 24,2 |
| Such organizational activity has traditions in their family | 11,1 | 8,9 |
| They are pleased if they can actually influence some things | 29,6 | 26,3 |
| They consider it to be free time well spent | 18,7 | 12,8 |
| They are gaining the recognition and gratitude of their peers | 16,0 | 15,9 |
| They consider it as a possibility to gain "competences" and "skills" for their professional career | 27,3 | 22,3 |
| They also have certain benefits stemming from it (accommo-dation, they know the teachers, functionaries at school) | 33,8 | 19,6 |
| They feel more comfortable among people, they don't like to be alone | 20,0 | 22,2 |

The comparison of secondary school students and university students has shown that the motivation and reasons they indicated are rather similar. There are only a few cases where the difference was slightly more significant: competences for professional career; free time well spent, and, above all, "certain benefits".

In this case, the difference is of statistical importance. Therefore we took a closer look at this "motif" by applying our personality types at the universities. The motiva-tional structure is evenly distributed across all identified types – with the exception of type Janko/Janka, focusing on the joys of student life. This type not only extremely sensitively perceives all benefits obtained by "organizers" of the Martin/Martina type, but it also has a tendency to give the concept of "benefits" a negative meaning.

## 7. Secondary schools – structure of participation

In our study, we succeeded in identifying different levels of participation of secondary school students in the self-govermental life of their schools. In particular, we found out that the majority of the students – almost 75% – are informed about the fact that there is a student school council at their school. Approximately 14% of secondary school students have worked in student school councils, or in student parliament, and an additional 15% participated in its events and/or sessions. Almost the same percent-

age, i.e. about 30%, also participated in the elections of representatives to student school councils.

Considering that this particular fact belongs to the most problematic issues, from the viewpoint of the legitimacy of the functioning of self-govermental bodies in schools, we provided the following data, demonstrating that elections are more frequently participated in (40%) by two types of students – those focusing on academic results and those focusing on organizational activities. They are followed – at a relative distance (30%) – by students pursuing leisure time activities of interest, or activities aimed at earning money, or other joys associated with living a student's live. Finally, we also obtained information about whether or not the students were candidates to be members in the student school council at their schools. The result (11%) shows that there is a relatively considerable share of students belonging to all personality types, but primarily belonging to the group of organizationally capable students highly interested in participation. In this category, "candidacy" approaches as much as 28%.

**Diagram 1**
**Who were the candidates to student school councils – broken down by types of students**
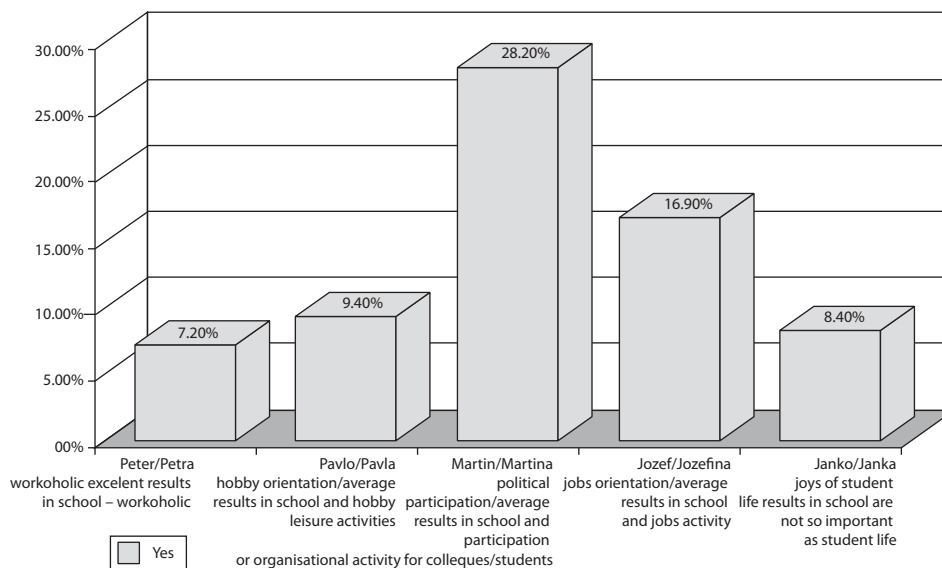


Before we start analyzing the situation in regards to the participation of university students in the self-goverment of their universities, we want to mention, that the former life and experiences of students from secondary schools may play a significant role in this regard. About 30% of university students indicated, that they have experience being in the position of a chairman or a spokesman of the class.

## 8. Universities – structure of participation

Analogically, we also tried to find out at universities, whether or not the students are members, were members or were candidates for membership of the academic senate (5%); how many of them participate in elections for the academic senate (27%); how many of them used the right of any member of the academic congregation to participate in the session of the academic senate (31%); how many students know (62%) about the existence of the student council at the university, and about the existence of the academic senate at the university (81%).

There are differences between the students in terms of their participation in the elections and also in relation to their attitude towards university study. In particular the type focusing on the "joys of student life", who expressed the least interest in making the representation of students in the academic senate legitimate by his/her participation in the elections.

The situation, however, differed in the area of obtaining information on the activities and results of sessions conducted by academic senates. Particular student types achieved higher scores in this area, and the achieved scores were distributed more evenly between individual types. This simply affirms that even the students, who primarily focus on the joys of being a student, may also be interested in self-governmental activities, including all issues and tasks presented by the self-government body to the executives of the university (director or rector, deputy directors vice-deans etc).

## 9. Secondary schools and universities – what do they expect from self-administration

The overall process of creating the structure for democratic self-administration is closely connected to the highly significant question as to what are the expectations of today's students regarding these two forms of self-administration at their schools.

Above all it seems indisputable, that secondary school students expect the student school council to help in providing specialized services at their school (53,7%), and to create conditions for their extracurricular activities of interest (41,7%). The university students more typically focus on developing and improving the quality of information services (43,3%).

The difference between secondary school students and university students can also be explained and understood by comparing the biggest differences between these two groups in the category of some "tasks" and/or "expectations".

Secondary school students mainly emphasized their specific preference of extracurricular activities; university students, on the other hand, highlighted the issues pertaining to defending the schools interests against school executives and/or administrators

and also labor services allowing them to take short-term and appropriate temporary jobs.

**Table 5**

**Tasks executed by the self-administration of the school – as expected by students**

| Tasks of student school councils and academic senates | Secondary schools Definitely yes | Universities Definitely yes |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Create conditions for extracurricular interest activities of secondary school students (sport, discotheques, theatre, student journal etc.) | 41.7 | 25.8 |
| 2. Organize fundraising events for various necessary things | 15.1 | 16.1 |
| 3. To establish (or improve the functioning of the existing) student web site aimed at increasing awareness of school issues, possibilities to study abroad etc. | 33.6 | 43.3 |
| 4. Propose students' suggestions for changes in the timetable, school regulations, or educational process | 37.7 | 31.0 |
| 5. Increase the involvement of students in resolving their own problems (e.g. accommodation, meals) | 18.7 | 24.8 |
| 6. Bring attention to problems associated with the school maintenance, orderliness, cleanliness | 21.7 | 17.5 |
| 7. Activate a service providing short-term jobs for students (labor service) | 25.7 | 33.7 |
| 8. Demand the establishment and functioning of special services for students (e.g. buffet, vending machines for drinks, lockers, copy machine etc.) | 53.7 | 35.6 |
| 9. Present and protect the rightful interests of the school to the respective municipality (Municipal Council) | 16.7 | 30.0 |
| 10. Facilitate the equipping of classrooms and special classrooms with modern teaching technology; equipment and books/journals to the school library | 36.6 | 35.0 |
| 11. More systematic and result oriented student assessment of teachers | 26.2 | 29.6 |
| 12. Support the secondary school student scientific and research work | 32.8 | 31.5 |

Finally, there were some additional tasks and expectations largely emphasized by the students of both types of schools – *to develop scientific and research activities, equip the schools with teaching technologies, and the possibility to effectively assess the teachers.*

Both secondary school and university students dislike fundraising events, and, they did not see such activities as important in the context of priority tasks executed by self-govermental bodies.

## 10. Conclusions

The analysis of the outcomes of the sociology study conducted among secondary school and university students in 2005 uncovered some very interesting information:

1. Knowledge about national and European politics is at an adequate level, in particular in the area of the most elementary and unchanging data and facts. The somewhat more difficult issues of the political life, in regards to the hectic workings of parliamentary democracy, are mainly grasped by students of secondary grammar schools, and some students of secondary technical schools. A number of students attending secondary vocational schools tended to respond "I don't know" to some of those questions.

2. The tests of civic literacy focusing on the understanding of texts with political contents showed that approximately 25% of all students – both secondary school and university – have problems in correctly understanding the given information. This is particularly true for students of vocational schools. However, university students – also in smaller numbers – had similar problems – to our great surprise. This proved true for students of the second, the third as well as of the fourth grade, for students of philosophical areas, natural sciences as well as technical branches of the study.

3. The participation of students in the activities of school self-governance bodies is developing a classical hierarchical shape – the majority of students are informed about their existence, a somewhat lower number of them follows its activities and results, or even personally participates in their sessions; and, an even smaller number of students participates in the elections, and the smallest group is made up of those students who are candidates and actually work in self-administration bodies. This is, in fact, the essence of the functioning of representative democracy.

4. The typology of students proved that there is a kind of "core of organizers" arising and forming among the students. It represents approximately 8–9% of the overall age cohort, and most of the students who are candidates in elections to student school councils and/or academic senates belong to this particular group.

5. Their motivation differs and reflects their different interests and needs, but, in general, their motives and reasons are of a positive nature. It is interesting, though, that the other types of students – "the academics", "money-making professionals", or "hobbyists" – they all perceive these activities as positively motivated, and they accept that it is in the interest of implementing their own system of values. The only exception to this is the small group of students – "enjoyers" – who participate less in the self-administration of the school (e.g. their participation in the elections), but this group also gives the notion of "having benefits by participating in the self-administration bodies of the school" negative meanings.

6. The secondary school students prefer – in regards to the agenda of student school councils – the area of services, and extracurricular interest-based activities. In terms of the agenda of the academic senate, the university students prefer information services and defending the interests against the executive representatives at school, and labor services allowing the students to take short-term job contracts. Finally, students at both school levels jointly and specifically emphasized the need to develop student scientific and research activities, the task of equipping the school with modern teaching technology. Their requirement as to the possibility of evaluating the teachers with actual results is of specific significance.

In principle we can state, that the overall area of civic participation by students through school self-governance authorities makes an impression, which leads to expectations of a qualitative change to come. It should be demonstrated as a synergic effect of the new impulses coming from two sources: a/ teaching of civics and theory of society, and b/ from multiple years of the functioning of the school self-governance.

Both forms of education – formal as well as non-formal – in particular at secondary schools – requires an impulse aimed at starting to share experiences among 8 regions of Slovakia[7]. In 2006, adequate attention has been devoted to this process of modernization, by means of disseminating information of "know-how" type[8].

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[7] Project of the Department of Children and Youth at ME SR in 8 regions of Slovakia is implemented by IUVENTA, and in May it was participated in by approximately 100 young people. In the fall 2006 (17.11.) there will be a Slovak conference on the premises of the Slovak Parliament – National Council of Slovakia.

[8] Methodology material from Austria and Ireland have been translated to Slovak; these material were welcomed with special interest of the participants of focus groups in regional cities of Slovakia. For more information please see: www.ziackerady.iuventa.sk.

Political Participation of Young People in Europe (2004) conducted by CERYS FF UCM in Trnava, and survey of civic literacy CEA conducted in Slovakia in 1998 ŠPU in Bratislava in 14-year-old pupils (www.statpedu.sk).

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