

# Slovak Students as First-time Voters

in European Parliament Election in 2009



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**Official name:** Slovak Republic

**Established:** January 1, 1993

**Form of government:** republic

**Political system:** parliamentary democracy

**Constitutional Law:** legislative power granted to the National Council, executive power granted to the president and government, judicial power granted to courts

**President:** Ivan Gašparovič

**Chair of the National Council:** Pavol Paška

**Prime Minister:** Robert Fico

**Territorial division:** 8 regions, 79 districts, 138 towns, 2,883 villages

**Regional Capitals:** Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín, Žilina,

Banská Bystrica, Prešov, Košice

**Official language:** Slovak

**Capital:** Bratislava (population 428,672)

**Neighbouring countries:** the Czech republic, Poland, the Ukraine, Hungary, Austria

**Area:** 49,035 km<sup>2</sup>

**Highest peak:** 2,655 m (Gerlachovský štít)

**Population:** 5,379,455 (out of it 51.4 % women)

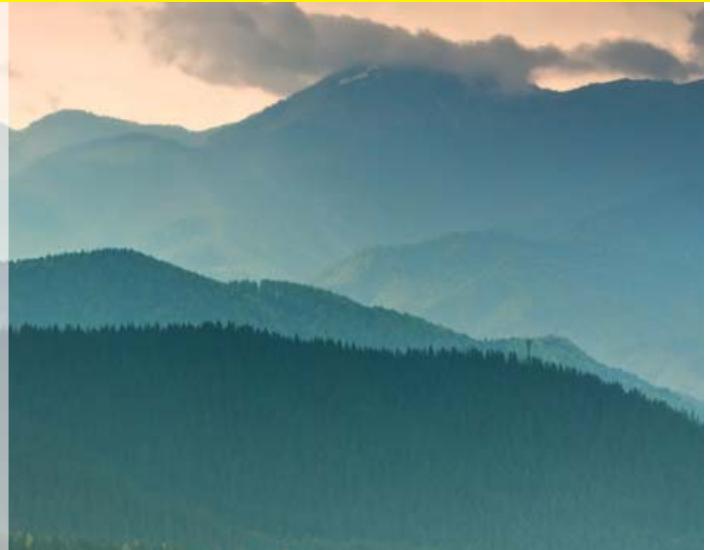
**Population density:** 109/km<sup>2</sup>

**Major Cities:** Košice (240,915), Prešov (92,687), Nitra (87 357), Žilina (86,685) Banská Bystrica (84,919), Trnava (70,191), Trenčín (58,872),

**Nationalities:** Slovak (85.8 %), Hungarian (9.7 %), Roma (1.7 %), Czech (0.8 %), Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Russian, German, Polish and others (2 %)

**Religions:** believers (84.1 %), out of them Roman Catholics (68.9 %), Protestants (6.9 %), Greek Orthodox (4.1 %).

**Political parties in the National Council:** Smer-DS, Slovak



National Party (SNS), Movement for Democratic Slovakia-People's Party (HZDS-LS), Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ), Christian-democratic Movement (KDH), Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK)

**Currency:** Euro

**Membership in international organisations:** EU, NATO, UN, OECD, OSCE etc.



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## VALUE ORIENTATION

*In any democratic society, there are important values which should be shared by its citizens in order to maintain the society's cohesion. These values also contribute to the solution of problems in social and economic growth without political struggles that could result in giant economic losses, damage of cultural heritage or even in the bloodshed of innocent citizens.*

Any society desires that its young generation acquires not only the new knowledge of science and technology but that it also employs, in their professional lives and citizenship, the culture based on traditional values such as equality, solidarity, tolerance and the like.

In sociological research projects of 2005, 2007 and 2009 (see [www.vyskummladeze.sk](http://www.vyskummladeze.sk)) we analysed which problems disappointed students most of all, which issues are discussed by them, which considerations unify them as a generation. Also we were looking for answers to which problems should get entry into programme documents of political parties or to portfolios of electoral promises of those politicians who aspire to get confidence of young voters in the electoral fight for political power.



## DISCIPLINE AND OBEDIENCE

The closest correspondence between upper secondary school students' and university students' orientations (75.6 % and 78 %, respectively, data from 2007) was identified in the emphasis on teaching children to keep **discipline and obedience in families and at schools.**

Discipline and obedience in families and schools was rated first in the January and February 2009 surveys of 18 – 23 year-old first-time voters from upper secondary schools and universities (61.9 % and 69.2 %, respectively).

Obviously, discipline and obedience is a vivid topic not only among parents and teachers but also among students and children at home. Scenes of violence on TV, e.g. bullying in groups of youngsters, brutality of children towards parents or even teachers, make this topic sensitive.

*Threats to personal security and the shift of violence from streets to schools challenge all involved parties to take part in a public discourse on the topic. An appeal for "new discipline" at schools is necessary, because to children and adolescents schools represent the first public sphere in which they learn how democracy works.*



## EQUALITY UNDER THE LAW

There has been identified a surprisingly close correspondence between upper secondary school students and university students in **evaluation of functioning of the legal state** in the plurality democracy in Slovakia (69.4 and 75 %, respectively).

In the 2009 survey, both the first-time voters from upper secondary schools and from universities assessed the problem alike (January 59.6 and June 64.9%).

By expressing these opinions, students are worrying about the existence of inequality of citizens under the law. Though democracy defeated communism in this country in 1989, social differentiation is omnipresent. Thus, the problem in a democratic country is not poverty and richness, but civil inequality of the poor and the rich under the law.

If misdemeanour or offence is judged equally with all citizens, then it is a model through which young people are taught to understand democracy and to be responsible citizens. Therefore, we are appealing to restore order – this time not the school order but the public or citizen one.

*In both cases it is a nourishing field for radical citizen movements which make themselves visible when enforcement of law is absent in dealing of a citizen with legal state institutions.*



## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Before 1989, little sensitivity to such post-modern values as **equal chances for women in all spheres of social life prevailed** in Slovakia. However, students nowadays have a more open attitude to these issues. In 2007, approximately 50 % of upper secondary school students and 55 % of university students agreed that more women should have participated in politics. There are not many strong adversaries to women in politics; however, there is a large subgroup of students who maintain unclear attitude on this topic.

The 2009 survey confirmed that a large part of first-time voters would like to see more women among the European Parliament members (59.6 % in January, 43.1 % in June).

*There is a need to expand the participation of women in political and civic life of the Slovak society. Political parties should respond to it by placing women on the electoral candidate lists. In the 2004 and 2009 elections to the European Parliament, citizens, including first-time voters, made use of the electoral law provision of shifting candidates from lower positions of the political parties candidate lists to the first positions – to displeasure of political party leaders and secretariats.*

## DEATH PENALTY

According to the majority of Slovak students, there is another sphere of social life which should be regulated, i.e., **capital punishment for some severe crimes**. The number of adherents of death penalty among university students and upper secondary school students has somewhat increased from 2005 to 2007 (to 56 % among university students and to 59.6 % among upper secondary school students).

In 2009, first-time voters showed similar preferences - they claimed for rightful reprisal for committed murder by death penalty (48.4 % and 53.6 %, respectively).

However, the topic of death penalty is avoided now in public dispute; it is considered to be a taboo. TV news on murders committed by paedophiles irritate young people and they cast doubt on the state's standpoint on death penalty. Young people, especially students, have an interest in discussing this topic with parents, teachers and experts in order to make their opinions clear about the justification of death penalty in EU countries. The same applies to euthanasia of terminally ill patients who suffer from severe pain.



## CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

In 2007, 30.6 % of university students judged personality traits as primary **reason of unemployment**, in contrast to only 20.8 % of them in 2005. In that period, university students were yet unable to understand the phenomenon of unemployment. In 2005, only 21.7 % of upper secondary school students attributed unemployment to personal failure of a person, as contrasted to 30.2 % in 2007.

Because between 2005 and 2007 there was an increase in the number of new jobs, unemployment began to be a problem rather for specific subgroups than for general population. This is to explain why students developed a belief of personal failure for a person who became unemployed.

In 2009, the situation quickly changed, and many first-time voters saw that unemployment is not only the matter of some individuals but of entire staffs of companies, firms and producers, some of which were well known and respected.

Between January and June 2009, there was a decrease from 21 % to 16.8 % in belief in person's failure as a cause of unemployment. However, there was an increase from 32.6 % in January to 37.2 % in June 2009 of students who rejected such explanation.

*Students associate unemployment and unemployability with a relatively high trust in good life prospects. Economic crisis with its impact on diverse segments of work and regions, with the fights between associations of employers and employees to*

*preserve employment is an excellent "political school" for the young generation. Our research was unable to survey upper secondary schools graduates and university graduates in autumn 2009. However, the first time since 1990, there have been cases of unemployment among university graduates.*



## NATIONAL IDENTITY

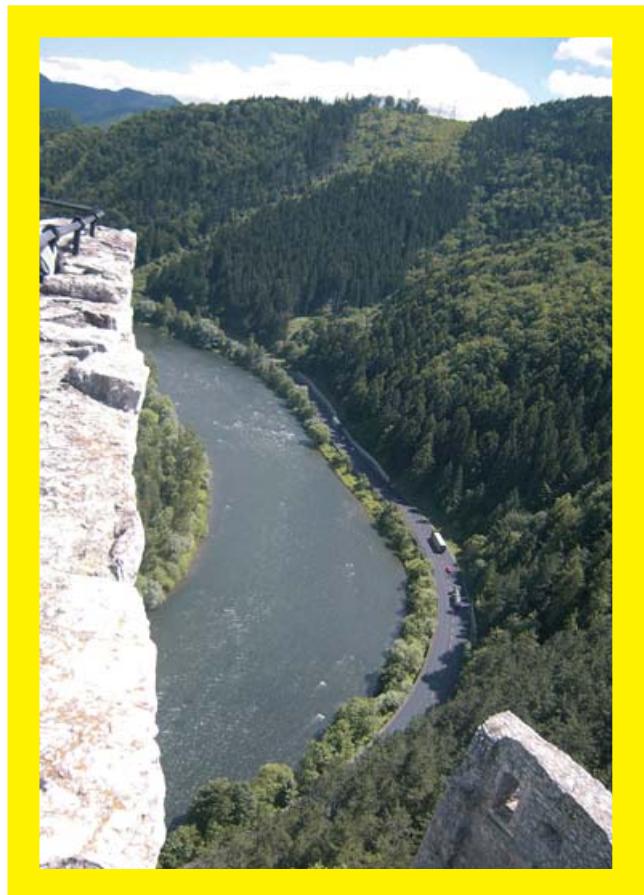
Integration of Europe brings many benefits to this country. It is generally assumed that the young generation supports European integration because it opens new opportunities for studying and working abroad. However, this integration also puts to the foreground the danger of **losing the national identity, which has long been the sign of cultural autonomy of the Slovaks.** In 2007, approximately 27 % of university students gave affirmative answers to the question whether the European Union would cause the loss of national culture and traditions. In 2005, only 21.6 % of students answered likewise.

As to the first-time student voters, such attitude was advocated only by 19.5 % (January 2009) and 20.9% (June 2009), respectively.

*The Slovaks will not lose their cultural autonomy; on the contrary, they will expand it. Through intensive contacts with other nationalities of European countries the Slovak culture will become more familiar abroad. The Slovaks who come to these countries as artists, tourists, craftsmen or successful students have an opportunity to demonstrate their culture and traditions.*

*Slovak symbols and Slovak identity have become more familiar abroad after Euro was adopted as the currency in Slovakia. After adoption of Euro Slovak customers made first friendly "invasions" to shops in the neighbouring Poland, Czech Republic or Hungary, and they were surprised to be well*

*welcomed by shopkeepers. Some of them even started to learn the Slovak language. Also, the Slovaks were surprised to see that the international shopping chains appealed to Slovak patriotism by displaying slogans such as "Support Slovak Economy, Buy Slovak Products".*





## IMMIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

In Austria and Slovakia the **phenomenon of immigration and asylum seeking** is associated both with competition on the labour market and increase in the criminality rate. However, the attitude of Slovaks toward people who seek new homeland in this country gradually changes, though there is still no general acceptance or rejection of immigrants.

"There are too many immigrants," claimed only 21.6 % of university students and 26 % of upper secondary school students in 2007.

In 2009, as many as 24.7 % and 31.5 % first-time student voters admitted this threat as much as upper secondary school students and university students in 2005 and 2007.

In 2009, we found out that 39.4 % (January) and 32.8 % (June) of first-time student voters rather reject than admit the threat of immigrants and asylum seekers (Graph).

Polarisation of students in admittance of immigrants and asylum seekers has increased.

*As to the extent and composition of immigrants, Slovakia differs much from countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Germany or Austria. This is why it makes a chance to accept living together with non-European cultural groups. Many of them are considered to be non-threatening, and some of them even enrich everyday life of Slovaks (Asian cuisine) or make it more pleasing (Asian cheap textile products).*

*Rather than problems with immigrants, the Slovaks have more troubles with living together with Roma (Gypsies). Due to*

*economic and financial crises the Roma population is very much traumatized, and no prospects are seen to improve their living conditions. Great expectation is linked with the idea of multicultural integration of Roma into the European Union.*



## AUTHORITY AND DEMOCRACY

The inclination of the Slovaks to admire a **strong leader**, or trust in a “strong man” was a much discussed topic in the media of Europe after 1989. This trait of the Slovaks has its roots in long periods of both brown and red dictatorships in this country. Probably for this reason within the country’s democratic political system there are political parties the aims of which arise suspicion.

In the 2005 survey, 31.1 % of upper secondary school students preferred an authoritarian political leader, in 2007 the number dropped to 26.3%. In the same time interval, the number of university students who disfavoured an authoritarian political leader increased from 40.6% to 49.3%.

The data on first-time student voters show a decrease of adherents to an authoritarian political leader from 24.7 % (January 2009) to 25.7 % (June 2009), and the number of adversaries remained at 34.8 % and 36.3 %.

*In Slovakia, the parliamentary democracy has been working well since 1989, and the political parties have governed in coalitions of partners through mutual confrontation and consensus. In the parliamentary election of 2006, citizens did not give much chance to political parties which favour an authoritarian style. However, there exist extremist civic movements that have gained support of the public; these recruit its members from among young people.*

## INTEREST IN POLITICS

Findings from the sociological survey demonstrate that interest of upper secondary school students and university students in politics is rather small.

**More specifically, approximately 70 % of upper secondary school students and 60 % of university students from the sample showed no interest in politics. Rather, they concentrate on their success in jobs, develop sports and cultural interests, and enjoy eventful student life. This is also the case of the first-time student voters in our sample. In January 2009, 65 % of them declared disinterest in politics, compared to 72 % in June 2009.**

In the last 10 years, a gradual polarisation in political and value orientation of students has been noticed. In 2005-2007, approximately 10 % of students favoured the left orientation and 15 % the right orientation. In principle, this means that about 25 % of students have a clear vision on solving social problems.

After June 2009 elections to the European Parliament, 12.8 % of the first-time voters stated they inclined to the left, whereas 19.7 % of them accepted the right. From this it can be deduced that 32.5 % of them show a distinct interest in politics, while the right-liberal attitudes slightly dominate.

*Students started to understand that there are diverse solutions to the current economic crisis or to everyday problems. They carefully compare programmes of political parties, especially when they are confronted with party candidates or members of parliament personally. They favour their presentations if they have ingredients of humour and wit.*

## OPTIMISM OF THE YOUTH

In 2004, an international survey confirmed that there were differences between European countries in how young people conceived their future. Young people in Estonia were the most optimistic. The youth in Finland, UK and Slovakia predicted better life conditions in the future than their parents had. Young Frenchmen and Italians were convinced about retaining their jobs and salaries; however, they were afraid of losing the present welfare. Germans and Austrians expressed the most pessimistic attitudes toward the future. After new countries entered the EU, young people in these countries felt a threat to their prospects.

In 2005, expectations of Slovak university students about the future were somewhat higher than in 2007 (60 % vs. 55 %). The figures of upper secondary school students were 45.2 % in 2005 and 56.6 % in 2007.

In 2009, the overall optimism of young Slovaks still prevailed, though figures from the beginning of the year differed from those in the end of the year. As many as 57.4 % 18 year-old people expressed overall optimism about their future as compared to 41.4 % of the 23 year-old.

In spite of fluctuations in these figures upper secondary school students and university students have much more optimism about their future than their parents.

The process of European integration in Slovakia opens unprecedented chances for the young generation of university students. This group has the highest voting potential as to the direct vote of Slovak representatives in the European parliament.

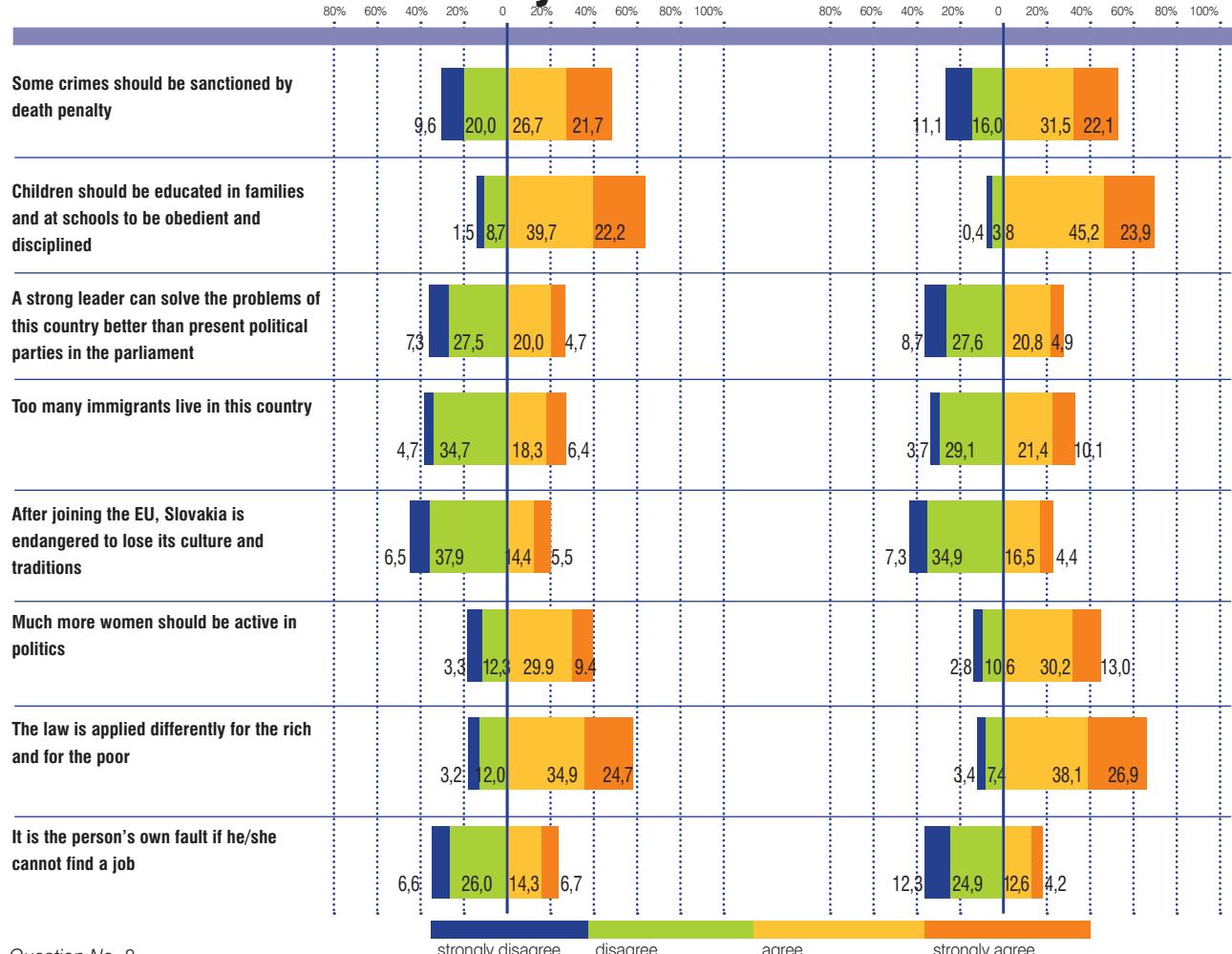


Question: What will be your future in 10 years compared to your parents' past?

## Value Orientation

**January 2009**

**June 2009**





## Aims of the project

The Directorate-General of the European Parliament for Communication supported this project of information enrichment of first-time student voters because Slovakia had the lowest turnout among the EU member states in the European Parliament election in 2009. Only 16.9 % of inhabitants participated.

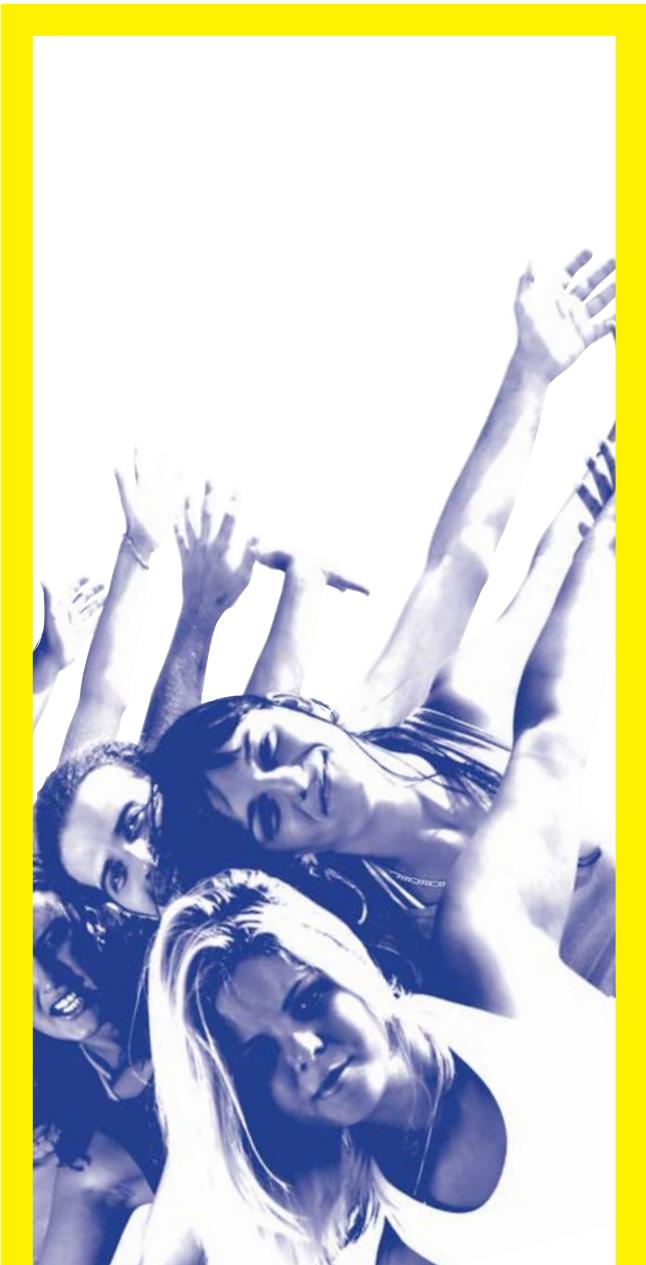
The aim of the project was to explain, in a playful and interactive manner:

- the position and the mission of the European Parliament within EU institutions,
- processes of accession of Slovakia to the EU since 2004; the accession process is conceived as an important factor of transformation towards democratic governance in Slovakia,
- information about activities of 14 Slovak members of the European Parliament in 2004-2009,
- youth policy in the EU and in Slovakia (youth mobility, voluntary organisations, educational programmes, programmes supporting activities with the youth).

We appreciate the subsidy from **the Directorate-General of the European Parliament for Communication** for this project that aims at increasing knowledge about the EU and the European Parliament.

**Robert Hajšel, director, Information Office  
of the European Parliament in Slovakia**

Plenary meeting of the project on February 27,  
2008 in Trnava



## First-time student voters

University students (aged 18–23) represent in Slovakia a subgroup of population of growing importance.

year	No. of universities	number of students
1993	14	58 843
1997	18	82 432
2003	21	98 409
2007	30	131 888

The number of upper secondary school students in the survey was 57,300. Most of them reached the age of 18 and were eligible for voting in June 2009 election.

In 2009, 115,200 young men enrolled to the universities in Slovakia in full time programmes.

On June 6, 2009, these two groups had the opportunity to vote for the first time in their lives in the European Parliament election.

These two groups will be referred to as first-time voters and became the target group in this project.



## Presentation of project findings in the media

The findings of the project were presented at the press conference that took place at the House of the European Union in Bratislava on February 20, 2009 and on two major TV channels. The findings showed little interest of young people in politics and anticipated low turnout at the EP election in June.

The media emphasized that students had information deficit about the EP and its powers. They also pointed out that students had little knowledge about Slovak members of the EP.

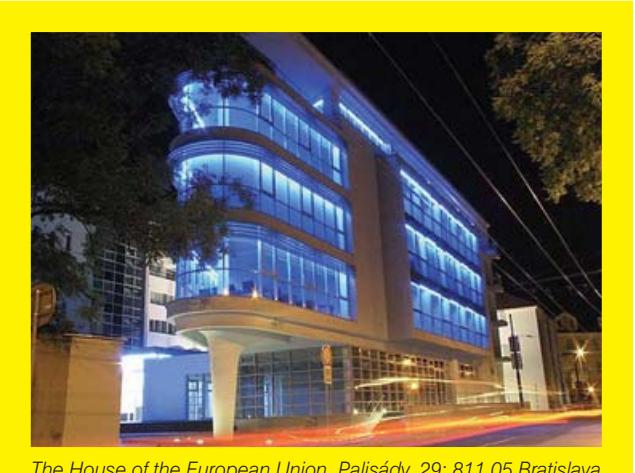
By these media events the nation-wide electoral campaign to the EP was launched.

### **Students: Are they interested in voting?**

Videoreport SEP Slovakia, STV 1 News  
February 20, 2009

### **Election and first-time voters**

TV news, Markíza TV  
February 28, 2009



*The House of the European Union, Palisády, 29; 811 05 Bratislava*



## Sociological survey of first-time student voters in January 2009

We conducted two sociological surveys with the target group of students within 6 months aimed at evaluation of the impact of mobilisation of first-time student voters ?? in the European Parliament election of 2009. The project of cooperation with the youth, referred to as SEP, was based on the principle of better understanding of the youth, which has been applied in European youth policy since 2004.

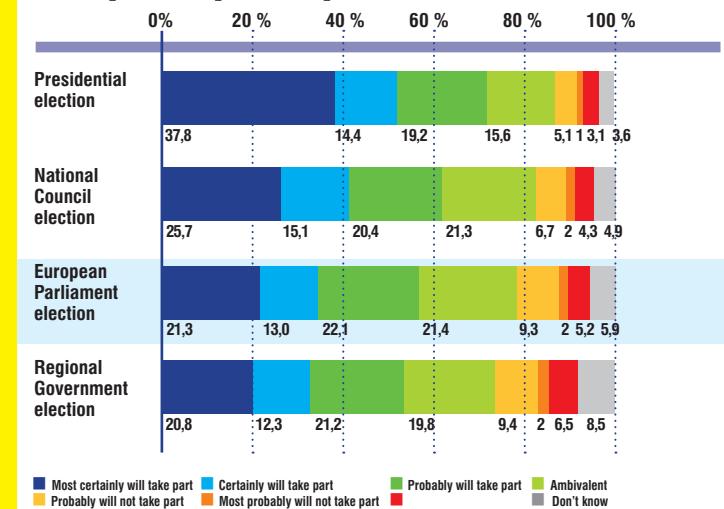
The survey was financed through grants from the Youth Section of the Ministry of Education, Slovak Republic.

The first survey concentrated on 2009 elections (presidential election in the Slovak Republic, regional governments election, the European Parliament election) and on 2010 election (National Council election). The aim of the survey was to find out what young people, the first-time voters, knew about these elections, and whether they would take part in them.

The survey gave information on anticipated electoral behaviour of the sample of first-time voters to the European Parliament as follows:

- 54.2 % of students knew that EP election would be held in 2009,
- 50 % of students supposed that the salary of EP members equaled 6,000 € or more (i.e., is very high),
- 45 % of students trusted in European institutions such as European Commission and European Parliament,
- 40 % of students knew the name of the European Commissioner who came from Slovakia (J. Figel', commissioner for education, culture, youth and sports).
- 32 % of students knew that in EP election of 2009 only 13, not 14 members would be elected in Slovakia.
- 21.3 % students claimed they were most certain to vote in the election and another 13 % of them were quite certain to vote in the election.

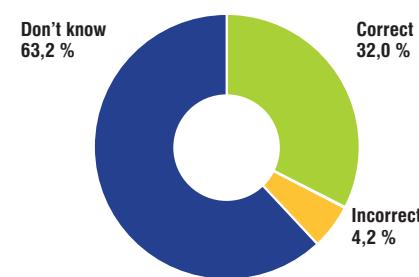
### Anticipated participation in elections



Question 15: How sure are you about going to vote in ...?

Sample: 965 students aged 18-23 in the Slovak Republic

### Who is the EU commissioner for Slovakia?



Question 20: The EU commissioner for Slovakia is ... (fill in the name)

Sample: 714 students aged 18-23 in the Slovak Republic

## OPINION POLL

on European Parliament members from Slovakia

### European Parliament and young people (first-time voters)

In the period before the election, several EP members as well as candidates for EP membership from political parties took part in an opinion poll. They answered a single question: Why should young people vote in the EP election?

The verbatim answers are at [www.sepeu.sk](http://www.sepeu.sk)

In addition to answering in the poll, some of the EP members participated in plenary meetings of SEP in Trnava (E. Bauer, M. Mikolášik) and Bratislava (P. Baco).

### BORIS ZALA (SMER-SD):

It should be said, without big pathetic expressions, we live lives of Europeans. Being Slovaks, we are at the same time Europeans, we are members of the EU, and we want to shape it according to our beliefs, we want to be its co-shapers, not just passive receivers of ideas we are offered by others. The EU is an exciting political adventure in the very best meaning of the word: it is an unprecedented project, a project that expands the sphere of democracy,

justice and market to 27 states. It was only a short time ago that we were unable to imagine free travelling across Europe, free choice of study programmes, employment, business, holiday, travelling without passports. Importantly, starting this year, we can travel without changing currencies at borders.

### EDIT BAUER (SMK):

European integration brings a lot of advantages to young people, the advantages the previous generations dreamt of. Let me mention studying abroad at famous universities, learning about other cultures, establishing contacts with young people all around the world and, the last but not least, improving foreign language knowledge. Also, a great benefit of the EU is possibility to be employed beyond the Slovak borders, travelling within the EU, having across-the-border health care, using the telephone roaming, and many others. These things make life easier and less restrained; they open new horizons and offer new chances.



## **PETER ŠŤASTNÝ (SDKÚ-DS):**

Interests of the EU citizens, both young and adult, are primarily represented by EP. The power of EP



continuously extends and the EU affects our lives. Being citizens of the EU brings us many advantages, advantages especially to young people, who, because of the EU, may travel, study and work throughout Europe. Democracy,

freedom and rights that we enjoy nowadays are not standard everywhere. They must be protected, cultivated and expanded also to others who lack them. By voting you solidify democracy, peace and prosperity in the future in the EU and in the world.

## **MIROSLAV MIKOLÁŠIK (KDH):**

Through the EU youth policy the young people may



join a lot of interesting projects, initiatives and exchanges, and improve their foreign language knowledge. Slovakia needs a generation of young, active people who do not let their future to be decided by others.

Young people know that it is their right and obligation to express their beliefs in a vote in the EP election. Young people take responsibility for their future, their relatives and the whole mankind.

## **VLADIMÍR MAŇKA (SMER-SD):**

In the June EP election, the voters will make an important decision. Europe faces an economic crisis, there is an economic recession and increasing unemployment because of the global financial and economic crises, high prices of foodstuff and fuel, decrease in purchase power, threat of poverty, changes in climate, and safety danger due to terrorism and criminality.

Therefore, the vote is a decision between a social-democratic vision of a progressive Europe in which citizens solve the most serious issues, and a vision of conservative Europe in which the future of our countries and of our citizens will remain in hands of the market economy.



## Knowledge test for secondary school graduates

Testing was administered on the Internet in two phases.

Test was taken by 2,212 students, completed test sheets were returned by 80.4 % of them.

In the first phase, which was decisive for the subsequent phase, the test was completed by 1,477 students (which represented 83.7 % of 1,763 who started the test). Most of them live in Košice region.

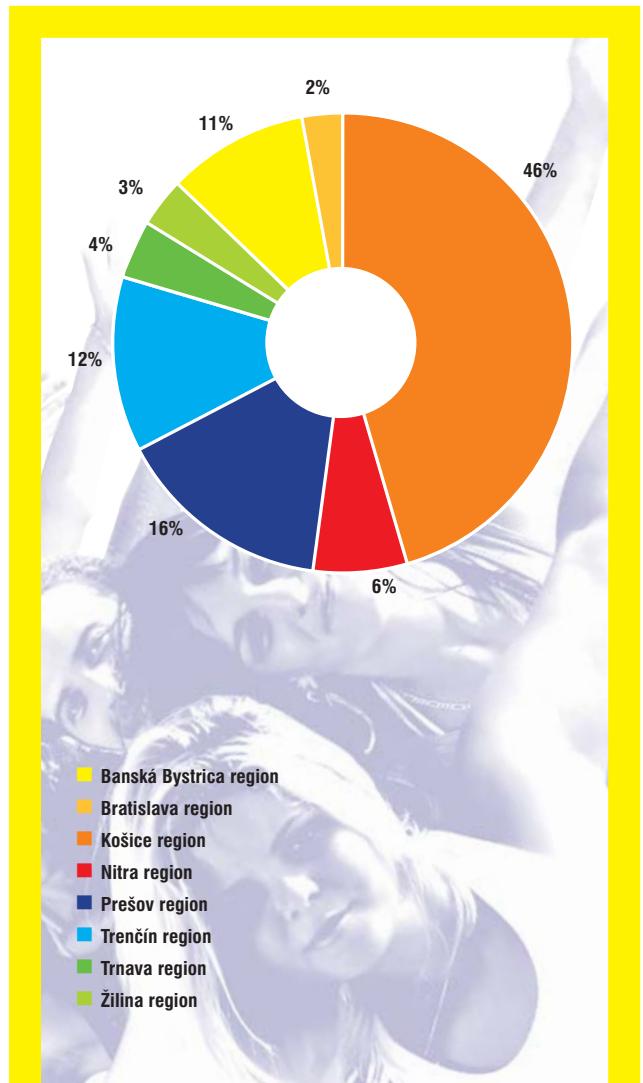
### Diagram: Proportion of test-takers by regions

The questions which were answered correctly by the greatest number of students:

- Flag of the EU (75.32 %),
- Seat of European Commission (62.29 %),
- Identifying European Parliament as the only body elected by EU citizens (61.77 %).

The least correct answers were:

- Date of establishment of the European Community (14.88 %),
- Name of the organisation for forming the EU defence policy (13.43 %).



## Winners of the national knowledge contest

**1st place: Prešov region** – Gymnázium P. O. Hviezdoslavá, Kežmarok – Leo Košúth, Monika Orovčíková and Jozef Osvald

**2nd place: Trnava region** – Gymnázium Jána Hollého, Trnava – Gabriela Stachová, Zuzana Tačovská and Martina Lahová

**3rd place: Žilina region** – Gymnázium, Kysucké Nové Mesto 16 – Dominika Vojtková, Peter Považan and Martin Sýkora

**4th place: Banská Bystrica region** – Prvé slovenské a literárne gymnázium, Revúca

Kristína Korenková, Lívia Brtáňová and Tomáš Bálint

**5th place: Košice region** – SOŠ obchodu a služieb, Michalovce

Emília Ždiňáková, Peter Moroz and Martin Kudělka

**6th place: Trenčín region** – Gymnázium, Partizánske Lucia Kopiarová, Jakub Bučko and Peter Hudok

**7th place: Bratislava region** – SOŠ automobilová, Bratislava Marek Blaškovič, Lukáš Fronc and Michal Beňa

**8th place: Nitra region** – Spojená škola – Obchodná akadémia, Nové Zámky Lubica Mančušková, Martina Poláková and Viviana Ondreášová

**Group of 6 upper secondary school students from Kežmarok and Trnava and a group of university students (Andrea Ferjenčíková, Zuzana Tokárová, Viktoria Kopuničová and Adam Števko) visited the EP in Strasburg in 2010.**



## Committees of the Student European Parliament

These committees simulated meetings of the European Parliament. We have found out that these simulations are good instruments for expanding knowledge of university students on EP functions, missions, and powers. By playing the roles of EP members, they learned about EP member's work. For that purpose, they had to acquaint themselves with topics which were at that time discussed in the EP committees. The committee meetings were organized by students themselves; they also invited guests to participate.

At least one such committee was organized in each of the regional capitals. The regional coordinator participated in committees in Trnava, Trenčín, Žilina, Nitra, and Prešov. One committee was convened in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, and Košice. Due to low concern, two committees were cancelled. Regional coordinator summed up 16 resolutions which were then discussed and approved at the final plenary meeting.

The average attendance in each of the committees was 35 students; the top attendance was at the committee for industry, research and energy in Trenčín, which was attended by 67 students and their guests.

EP members and candidates from parliamentary and non-parliamentary political parties were invited to attend the student committee and plenary meetings. Invitation was accepted also by governmental officials, university instructors, NGO activists, and businessmen.

Slovak students expected that members of EP will be attentive to their opinions, and that some students' proposals would become their agenda and be delivered in committees of real European Parliament in 2010.

The visit of 10 Slovak students to the EP in Strasbourg in February 2010 will serve to support this aim.



## Plenary meeting of Student European Parliament

### Resolution of the plenary session

1. We reject the proposal of arranging zones for cigarette smokers at public places. We support the proposal of prohibiting smoking at all public areas.
2. We propose that first two places in the candidate lists of member states to the EP were assigned for opposite sexes.
3. We approve the resolutions from students' committees and we authorize project coordinators to present them to newly elected members of the European Parliament for the Slovak Republic.

### An appeal to the European Parliament

- To hinder import of those products from the third countries which do not comply with basic health, hygiene or other regulations of the EU,
- To provide additional financial means to support education and exchanges of university students in EU countries,
- That EP Committee for Internal Market and Services organizes an information campaign for customers to expand their knowledge about their rights in purchasing goods and services, including Internet purchase, on goods guarantee, complaint rules, and bank services rules,
- That EU member states adopt legislature for prohibition of smoking at all public places and for severe sanctions for people who violate such provision,
- That EP Committee for Travel and Tourism approves a resolution of building a railway corridor through the capital of Slovakia,
- That EP Committee for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities addresses the member states to repeal restrictions for free movement of work force, if such a provision exists,
- To improve economic conditions in underdeveloped regions through establishing consultation centres (as parts of public administration) that would act as guidance and first-phase control elements in creating and fulfilling the project aims,
- That institutions of the EU include the problems of energy policy into their agenda, and that they strongly support diversification of energy sources throughout the EU,
- That a common agricultural policy focuses on strengthening the competitiveness in agriculture, on supporting market oriented and sustainable agriculture, on intensifying the development of rural regions and small enterprises,
- That EC provides adequate resources for enabling online ordering of public services by clients,
- That a broad discussion on political identity of the EU begins, whereby this identity should not exist at the expense of suppressing national identities.  
Support of entering of young people to market force not only in their mother country but also in the EU is recommended,
- That Commission for Education and Culture as well as other committees support establishment of centres for continuing education; funds to support these centres should be allocated,



- That EC is consistent in implementing its resolutions and that it pays attention on how its resolutions are applied in practice; women should hold public positions according to quotas as required by appropriate law,
- That EC supports management and development on both sides of Slovak-Ukrainian border; that it removes disparities in human resources,
- That EC launches a discussion on Slovak-Ukrainian border problems or that there is a study worked out to identify possible areas of common advancement and cooperation in management and regulation of the Slovak-Ukrainian border crossings.

*Congress Centre of the National Council of the Slovak Republic,  
June 1, 2009*



## Efficiency of the project

In the second sociological survey, we concentrated on gathering data on efficiency of the project. We compared the participation of students in the project activities with the students' turnout in the EP election.

## Knowledge about the project

As many as 57 % of respondents knew nothing about this project. About 43 % of respondents participated in the project or were aware of it. Out of them:

- 5 % of students replied that they participated in some events of the project, e.g., they took part in the knowledge contest on the Internet or at a SEP committee meeting at their university,
- 11 % of respondents replied that they did not participate in the project but their school-mates or colleagues did,
- 27 % of respondents replied that they heard something about SEP or watched something on TV.

## Turnout in relation to participation in the project activities

Turnout varies according to the extent of participation of students in the project.

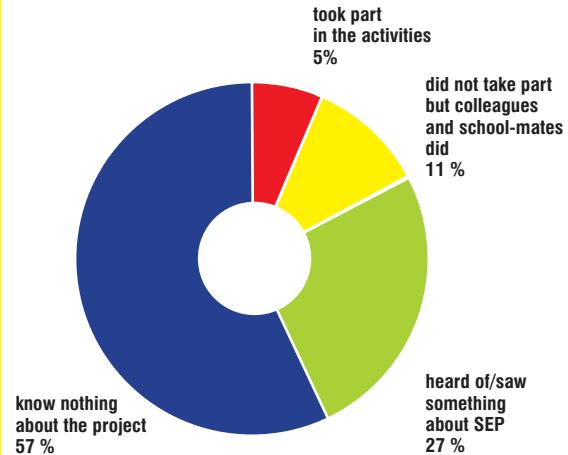
In the election, the highest turnout had the subgroup of voters:

- who personally participated in some project activities – 54 %,
- whose friends, colleagues or schoolmates participated in the project activities – 51 %.

The lowest turnout had the subgroup of voters:

- who heard something about the project on radio or watched on TV, on the Internet, etc. - 41 %,
- who did not hear about the project – 24 %.

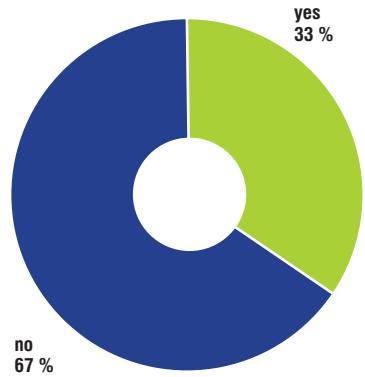
## Student European Parliament



Question 12: Student European Parliament was one of the projects that aimed at explaining the mission of EP to first-time student voters. I can say that I ...  
Sample: 757 students aged 18-23 in the Slovak Republic

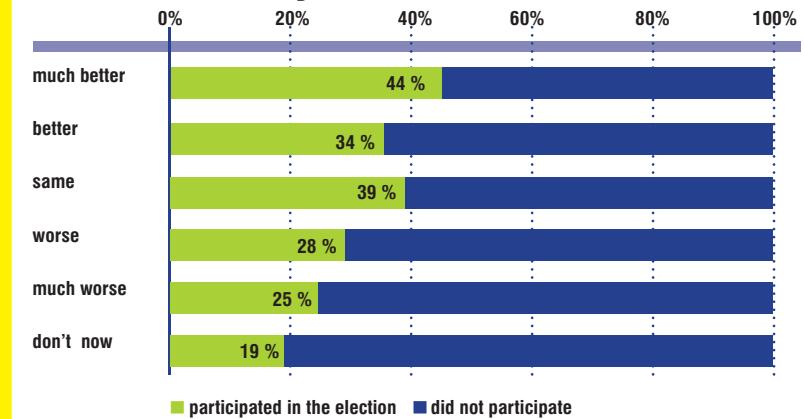
## Voting in the European Parliament election

### Students of the Slovak Republic

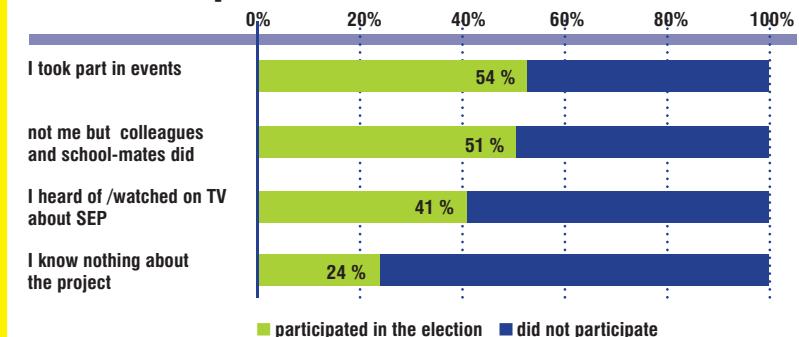


Question 13: Did you vote in the EP election on June 6, 2009?  
 Sample: 757 students aged 18-23 in the Slovak Republic

### Your future in 10 years will be



### Student European Parliament



## Information dissemination

**Personal contacts:** The plenary opening of SEP on February 24, 2009 in Trnava was attended by 100 university students; the final plenary meeting on June 1, 2009 in Bratislava was attended alike.

Fourteen sessions of SEP committees that were organized by Radoslav Štefančík, at 8 universities were attended by approximately 300 students.

**Media:** Due to Peter Horváth, well-known political commentator, who was the member of the project team, the project had good coverage in the media. Information about the project and discussion were presented within the news of top TV channels, STV1 and Markiza. Briefings from the project team, e.g. in TASR agency, had a good response (168 readers responded). It is worth mentioning that agencies published a professional discussion of two readers on interpretation of survey findings.

**The Internet:** The knowledge contest on the Internet was taken by 2,000 upper secondary school students throughout the country. Another contest in 8 cities was attended by 240 upper secondary school students and 300 university students, the first prize being a visit to the EP in Brussels. The SEP website ([www.sepeu.sk](http://www.sepeu.sk)) had fairly good visits (circa 8,000). Secondary schools and universities placed information about this project on their websites.

**Gifts:** Each participant in the project activities received bags and pens with logos of the EP election and of [www.sepeu.sk](http://www.sepeu.sk). Schools received posters (5,000 copies) or calendars describing SEP activities (30,000 copies).



## Implications from the project results for the youthwork

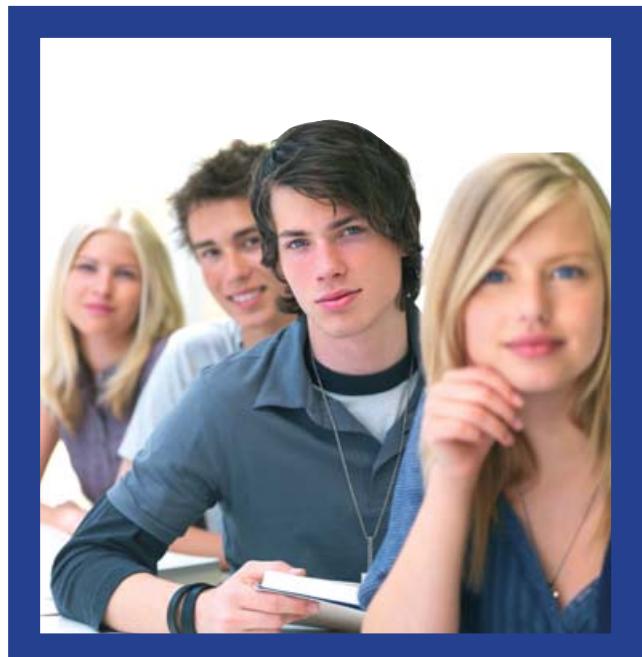
As the knowledge tests about functions and missions of EP revealed, project participants had significantly more knowledge than the group of young people who did not know about the project. Here are some answers to test items: EP members are elected by EU citizens, they are seated according to political orientation, not according to states, countries differ as to the number of members of EP.

Though test results brought interesting data, they do not reveal much about the impact of EP decisions on everyday life of EU citizens. Also they do not reveal much of respondents' knowledge about such decisions, e.g. about the decrease in fees for telephone roaming services or for airport fees. Concerning these topics, there were small differences between participants in the project and other students.

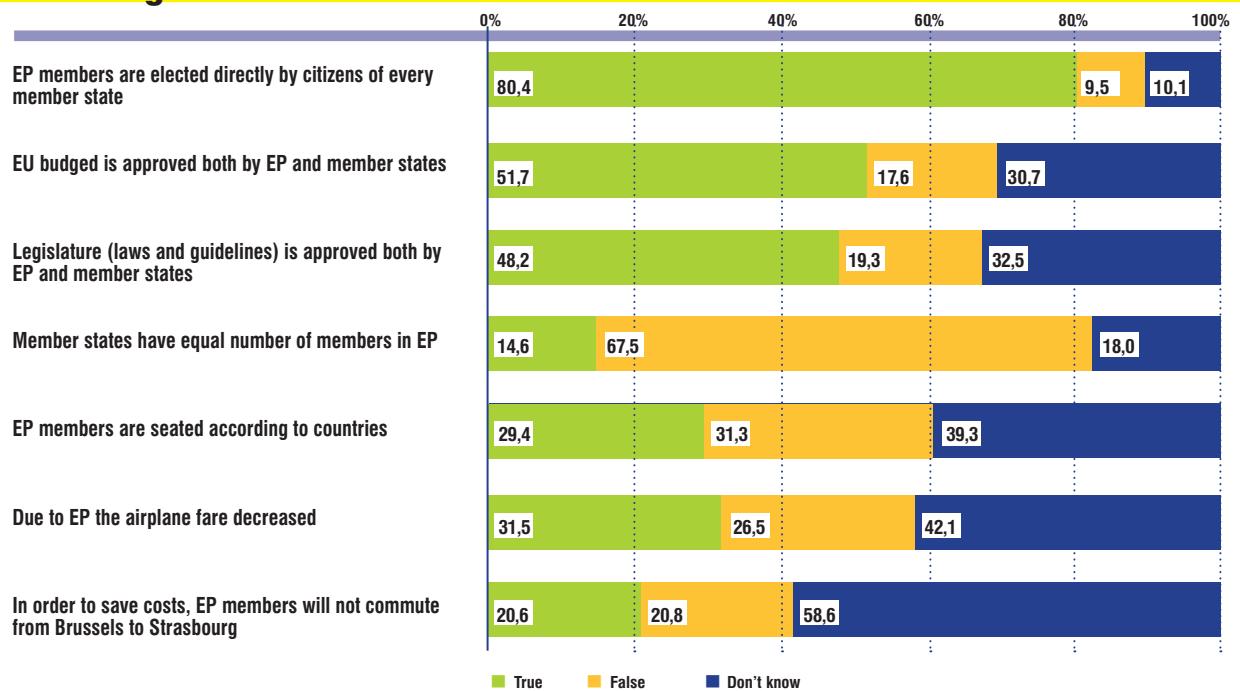
To sum up, upper secondary school students (especially girls) learned, from accessible sources, much about EP and its mission. However, they were not aware of EP decisions about many everyday issues that are important to young people because they had been released in the media only.

The information campaign that focused on participation of young people in EP election indicated that we can encourage young people to take part in such participatory projects. This was especially the case of young people in Eastern Slovakia. Students are fond of winning prizes in contests and, if they are supported by teachers, they "fight" for their schools. They can learn useful facts, however, they fail to grasp relations between them.

It can be concluded that if a student was not familiar with this project, he/she did not know much about EP decisions in the above issues, and vice versa. To remind you, more than a half (60 %) of respondents did not know that this project existed.



## Knowledge test about the EU



Question 9

Judge each question as true or false

Sample: 755 students aged 18-23 in the Slovak Republic

## Students: the target group of information campaigns

Political parties and the media in Slovakia provided smaller amount of information for the public prior to the European parliament election in 2009 than before Slovak presidential election.

In our analysis of the election campaign (published in Slovenská politologická revue, [www.ucm.sk/revue](http://www.ucm.sk/revue)) we concluded that events organized by European institutions made this campaign peculiar. During the election campaign there were several large projects financed by the EU.

High voter turnout of university students aged 20-23 in the EP election is the result of these information projects.

Characteristics of two projects:

- Eurotrain aimed at upper secondary school students,
- You are European Parliament as well was targeted at students of law and international affairs.

### Eurotrain

IUVENTA, the Slovak Youth Institute in Bratislava, organized an information campaign on June 1- 5, 2009. The partners of IUVENTA were EP Information Office in Slovakia, Representation of the EP in Slovakia, and Euro Info Centre of the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The aim of the project was to raise meaningful participation of young people in the EP election, make young people familiar with EU institutions, and show opportunities offered by EU programmes Youth in Action and by the information network Eurodesk.

### You are European Parliament as well

On April 27, 2009, the Information Office of EP, Representation of the EP in Slovakia and Trnava University coorganized a discussion named You are European Parliament as well in Trnava. Three EP members took part in the discussion, viz Irena Belohorská, Peter Šťastný and Miloš Koterec.



## **Project coordinator**

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Ladislav Macháček is a professor at Political Science Department of SS Cyril and Methodius University in Trnava, Slovakia. He teaches Sociology of Youth, Issues of European Youth Policy and Civic Society. He is the director of the Centre for European and Regional Youth Studies (CERYS) at SS Cyril and Methodius University in Trnava. He has participated in several international research projects on the youth, such as EYI, EUYOUTHPART, UP2YOUTH, ENRI-EAST ([www.syrs.org](http://www.syrs.org)). In collaboration with Peter Horváth and Radoslav Štefančík, he coordinates the project on the Student European Parliament the aim of which is to broaden the knowledge of upper secondary school students as well as the university students about the role and the mission of the European Parliament ([www.sepeu.sk](http://www.sepeu.sk)).

## **Sociological Survey of Students in Slovakia**

### **Sample:**

- university students - 870 respondents in 2005, 934 respondents in 2007,
- upper secondary school students - 870 respondents in 2005, 873 respondents in 2007,
- first-time student voters in 2009 – 966 and 756 respondents.

**Research method:** sociological “face to face” questionnaire – interviews of a researcher with individual respondents.

### **Data gathering schedule:**

- upper secondary schools - from Sept. 19, 2005 to Oct. 12, 2005 and from Sept. 22, 2007 to Oct. 17, 2007.
- universities – from Oct. 2, 2005 to Oct. 25, 2005 and from Nov. 22, 2007 to Dec. 12, 2007.
- first-time voters – from Jan. 15, 2009 to Jan. 30, 2009 and from June 8, 2009 to June 18, 2009 (see [www.vyskummladeze.sk](http://www.vyskummladeze.sk)).



*Slovak Republic achieved the lowest voters turnout in the European Parliament elections both in 2004 (16.9%) and in 2009 (19.6%). Slight increase in the turnout that was recorded in 2009 by 2.7% to 19.6% was with the first-time voters aged 20-23. The evaluation of the voters mobilization has been done by experts who claimed that the only difference between the pre-election campaigns in 2004 and 2009 were mobilization projects focused on students. These projects were financially supported by the European Parliament and the European Commission. One of them was the project SEP of the Department of Political Science, University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. During 6 months this project developed activities focused on broadening the students knowledge about the European Union and the European Parliament. The results of the sociological analysis of turnout in the European Parliament elections cast doubt on the statement that the turnout of older citizens was higher than that of young people. Individual segments of young people in Slovakia had completely different voting behaviour. Especially university students identify their future with work in the EU. Therefore the university students turnout was very high (52%), in fact it was the highest in EU in all structured groups in the 2009 European Parliament elections.*

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