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IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION OF THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN SLOVAKIA: GENERATIONAL ASPECTS

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В статье рассматриваются возрастные особенности трансформации идентичности венгерского этнического меньшинства в Словакии согласно результатам международного научно-исследовательского проекта ENRI-East «Взаимодействие европейской, национальной и региональной идентичностей: нации между государствами вдоль новых границ Европейского Союза». Анализируется отношение различных возрастных групп венгерских словаков к участию в политической жизни страны, к европейской интеграции, средствам массовой информации и коммуникации, словацкому гражданству.

Ключевые слова: идентичность, возрастная группа, средства массовой информации, политическое участие, гражданское участие, гражданство, европейская интеграция.

В статті розглядаються вікові особливості трансформації ідентичності угорської етнічної меншини в Словаччині згідно із результатами міжнародного науково-дослідного проекту ENRI-East «Взаємодія європейської, національної та регіональної ідентичностей: нації між державами уздовж нових кордонів Європейського Союзу». Проаналізовано ставлення різних вікових груп угорських словаків до участі в політичному житті країни, до європейської інтеграції, до засобів масової інформації та комунікації, словацькому громадянству

Ключові слова: ідентичність, вікова група, засоби масової інформації, політична участь, громадянська участь, європейська інтеграція.

The article deals with age-related features of transformation of the identity of the ethnic Hungarian minority in Slovakia according to the results of an international research project ENRI-East «Interplay of European, National and Regional Identities: nations between states along the new borders of the European Union». Generational dimensions of the attitude of the Hungarian Slovaks to participation in political life, European integration, media and communications, Slovak ethnic identity are considered.

Key words: identity, age group, communication tools, civic and political participation, citizenship, гражданство, European integration.

EC project ENRI-East: „The interplay between European, national and regional identities: nations between states towards the new eastern borders of the European Union“ (international study of social and ethnic groups living in the border of Europe) has a special slogan, which is well-turned in: „People moving, boundaries moving.“ ENRI-East is an international research project dedicated to the analysis of socio-ethnic identities in Eastern Europe, issues of individual or group self-identification and ethnical belonging. It is a pilot study. Any similar study has been made so far such as this, particularly regarding to geographic scope, thematic framework and diversity of research tools and methods. This research study is realized in Russia (Kaliningrad), Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary (400 respondents of Slovak nationality) and Slovakia (800 respondents of Hungarian nationality). About 7000 respondents took part in quantitative research in 2009 in eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe. FOCUS Agency has made data collection according to prepared project and sociological questionnaire in Bratislava, Slovakia in 2009 (November and December). Through random selection was carried out 801 interviews with respondents, who constitute a representative sample of the Hungarian national minority living in Slovakia, especially with regard to regional allocation. From Bratislava to Michalovce. Face to face interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

The youngest part of research group is generation of people in the age of 18-29. The oldest generation is age group over 60 years. Middle generation represent an age group of 30-59 years. Their representation is relatively adequate, so we can make a comparative analysis:

- Young generation: age group: 18-29 years has 116 respondents (14.5%).
- Middle generation: age group: 30-59 years has 449 respondents (56.1%).
- Older generation: age group: over 60 years reached 234 respondents (29.2%).

1. Communication and information tools of generations

Among all the data that characterize the difference of each age group we have found a real generation gap between age groups using the Internet as a communication tool. Slovak websites are visited by 55,2% young, 25% middle and only 5,6% of the oldest generation of Slovak citizens with Hungarian nationality. Analogue in the case of Hungarian websites: 43,1% - 21,4% - 4,7%. This fact inspired us to call the younger generation as the „Internet generation“ compared with the oldest generation, which in the view of News watching can be termed the „generation of radio“.

Data about frequency of watching TV or listening to radio have different results. The oldest generation still pursuing more often Hungarian „news“ in TV and radio (82,5% and 62,8%) compared with the youngest generation (72,4% and 44,8%). In the case of Slovak „news“ on television and radio the differences between older (56% TV and 38,8% radio) and younger generations (63,8% TV, and 30,8% radio) are not so wide. However, it is clear that younger generation watching Slovak news on television more often than older generation.

The oldest generation is the largest audience (41% compared to 17,2%) and viewers (41,5% compared to 22,4%) of special news programs in the Hungarian language dedicated to the problems of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia in radio and television.

In any case, first of all it is radio as a medium connecting the oldest generation with the world, politics and public. Young generation not only prefers modern information technologies, but much more than older generations watch media in Slovak language starting with TV news (63,8%), Slovak websites (55,2%), reading of Slovak newspapers (47,4%) and ending with listening to the radio (38,8%).

2. Hungarian identity and its generational dimensions

Young generation as well as old generation of Slovak citizens with Hungarian nationality is committed to the dominant identity of „I'm Hungarian living in Slovakia“. The younger generation prefer in the first choice of their identity qualities like „gender“, i.e. they are a boy or a girl (29,3% young and 18,4% older) and age, i.e. they are young or old (15,5% young and 10,7% older).

In the case of the first choice the younger generation doesn't prefer its nationality such as the older generation (16,4% younger and older 22,2%). In the second choice there is flattening between generations in declaring nationality (18,1% and 18,4%) and only in the case of the third choice the younger generation declares „nationality“ more often than older (17,2% and 13,2%).

The younger generation derives its identity primarily from the fact that is a young man or young woman and "ethnic", i.e., he is „Hungarian“, however, is moved to the second place.

„Emotional closeness“ to their own ethnic group among youth does not have the intensity of feelings such as the older generation (very close is 57,8% of young and 74,8% of old). It's similar in the case of closeness to native land (or residence) (very close 48,3% of young and 67,9% of old).

An exception is the emotional closeness to Europe, where the younger generation overreach the older generation (31,9% and 25,6%). To the Slovakia (36,2% vs. 49,6%) and even more to Hungary (25% vs. 37,2%) as the nation states has younger generation modest attitude as the older generation.

This generation peculiarity is also reflected in the measurement of "pride". The young generation does not reflect its assessment so „expressive“ or „intensive“ as the older generation. Evaluation of pride „a lot (very)“ to the „I'm Hungarian“ was used only by 30,2% of young people, but as many as 42,3% of older. Similarly, in the case of identity I'm „Hungarian living in Slovakia“ the pride in category „very“ was evaluated only by 44% of younger, but 48,7% of older respondents. Therefore, to be „true Hungarian“ by the respondents it is very important to know the Hungarian and to feel to be Hungarian. Generational differences are that the older generation accentuates much more, i.e. about 10%, that it is „very important“ (77,4% vs. 69,8% in the case of language, 73,1% vs. 69% in feeling to be).

3. Genuine Hungarian and Hungarian citizenship

The only characteristics „of the genuine Hungarian“, where is the generation gap in a different order, as above, is „to have Hungarian citizenship“. For a „genuine Hungarian“ is by the younger generation (15,5%) very important and for the older only 10,3% to have „Hungarian citizenship“. Both generations in November and December 2009 expressed their opinion that Hungarian citizenship for „true Hungarian“ is not important: 55,1% for the younger and 61,1% among the older generation. Among the young generation at home, they speak less (72,4%) only in Hungarian as in the case of the older (82,1%). Bilingualism is promoted more at younger households (22,4% in comparison with older generation 14,1%).

The younger generation generally gives less emphasis to the many sensitive issues coupled with the Hungarian language and with education of children to patriotism and nationality. Generational differences in the evaluation, that it is very important to lead children to these values are evident in three cases. According to the young generation it is not so important:

- to preserve national traditions (38,8% vs. 50,4%);
- for children to study national history and culture of the Hungarian nation (38,8% vs. 47%);

- talking to the friends in Hungarian (58,6% vs. 71,8%)

Generational „agreement“ that it is very important is higher in these three cases. The young generation treat as very important as well as the older generation:

- possibility to read a newspaper in Hungarian (58,6% vs. 60,3%);
- to get children's education in the Hungarian (37,9% vs. 44%);
- to have representatives in parliament (43,1% vs. 47%).

4. Civic and political participation

The younger generation declares essentially less that it has „great interest“ in politics, whether it relates to politics in Slovakia (6%), Hungary (5,2%) as well as the politics (7,8%), which concerns Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The oldest generation prefers minority policy really significantly (23,7%) but interest in Slovak (11,5%) and Hungarian politics (9,4%) is given below. But it is still higher than the interest found in the younger generation.

Declaring „interest in politics“ can be confronted with the voting behavior of respondents. In the research we the possibility to find out whether respondents participated in parliamentary elections in 2006 (44,8% of younger and 67,9% of older) and the European Parliament elections in 2009 (30,2% of younger and 50,9% of older). Intergenerational difference in both cases is close to 20%.

Currently these 20% of non-participating among the younger generation, despite of eligibility to participate in European elections, reflects the fact that in 2009 SMK received only 31% of the votes of young compared with 53% votes which SMK received in the structure of votes of the older generation.

5. The European integration from the generational aspect

The young generation in general evaluate the EU as an institution much more positive than older (25,9% vs. 8,1%). Younger generation also supposed much more that the membership in the EU is a great contribution for Slovakia (30,2% vs. 13,7%).

Comparing the situation of position of the „Hungarian minority“ before accession and after accession to the EU suggests that in evaluating its „word in politics“ dominates: everything is „almost the same“ (48,3% of younger and 44% of older).

Nevertheless generational aspect allows to point out how are the actual changes evaluated: getting better or worse. This could be shown as far as it is regarding the recognition that is getting the of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia after EU accession.

- The younger generation has a greater sense of any change wheter it is getting better (22,4%) or worse (18,1%).
- The older generation does not feel these changes so intensive, but similarly equally evaluates, that there were better (10,7%) and also worse changes (12,8%).

Significant differences are also in assessing of concerns about the future of Europe and the European Union in terms of impact on some sensitive spheres of life of respondents. As far as it is related to the „organized crime and drugs“ (62,8% of older) and to the „loss of social assurances“ (older 55,1%), the concerns are concentrated clearly among the older generation. It is about 20% difference (younger 44% drugs and 37% assurances).

The loss of identity of Hungarian and Slovak culture in integrating Europe does not raise concerns primarily among young generation (72,4% Slovak culture and 78,4% Hungarian culture).

Similarly, the concerns are higher among older generation by about 20% for „Hungarian identity“ (51,3%) and 10% for „Slovak identity“ (68,8%). The young generation does not have such a high concern about the difficulties which might arise on ethnic and national minorities. 34,5% of respondents to 30 years and 43,6% of respondents over 60 years replied „Im afraid of this“.

Mobility or migration in the European area is primarily actual for the younger generation and partly for the middle generation. Interest in moving to another country was expressed by very few of the older generation (2,6% certainly, perhaps 3,8%) in our research. The young generation would „definitely“ (18,1%) and „perhaps“ (34,5%) leave their country under very favourable conditions. The target destinations of moving are in the case of the young generation not only Hungary (10,3%), but for example the UK (8,6%), Austria (3,4%), Germany (2,6%), Italy (2,6%) and Czech Republic (1,7%).

The young generation of citizens of Slovakia with Hungarian nationality is more open to European integration processes, not linking it with concerns about the loss of national identity and feel them as beneficial for people living in Slovakia. Security and social threats are not perceived as sensitively as in the case of the older generation. As far as concerning the evaluation of position of the „Hungarian minority“ after the Slovak accession to the EU the global feeling that the situation is „almost unchanged“ overweights and if it is changed so equally to better and to worse.