

Mixed marriages with foreigners in Slovakia

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Abstract

The subject of the presented study is mixed marriages with foreigners in Slovakia created mainly in the last decade. Marital preferences are studied in terms of citizenship as well as from the perspective of gender. Our objective is to answer the question whether it is possible to find certain patterns of behaviour in partner selection. Our primary sources of information are data from the Statistical Office of the Ministry of Interior. The results show that Slovakia has a relatively strong marriage endogamy as far as the citizenship of the partners is concerned. The findings also reflect the isolation of country, poor contact with foreigners and the low number of foreigners in Slovakia nowadays. Behaviour in marriage is apparently dependent on the moderate prevalence of the number of Slovak women over men, who leave the country, as well as on the composition of immigrants in Slovakia, where, on the contrary, men outnumber women. Slovak women and men tend to choose their partners, mainly from countries, which are close – geographically, linguistically, religiously, culturally (the Czech Republic and other neighbouring countries, EU countries). Women marry foreigners more often than men. Women are more likely than men to marry husbands from geographically and culturally different environment.

Keywords

Citizenship, choice of partner, endogamy, marriage with foreigner, migration, statistical data

Introduction

The choice of a spouse in Slovak tradition was part of a stable system of models, norms and values whose main aim was the stability and effectiveness of marriage and consequently the integrity of the community. Most of the criteria that applied to a suitable spouse were based on the principle of partner similarity – endogamy. Endogamy, as the predominant type of matrimonial preference,¹ meant choosing from the same or similar groups and environments,

¹ Many authors studied mixed marriage issues in a traditional environment. We can mention, for example, the works: ŠOLTÉS, Peter. *Tri jazyky, štyri konfesie. Etnická a konfesijná pluralita na Zemplíne, Spiši a v Šariši*. Bratislava: Pro historia, 2009, ISBN 978-80-970060-6-8, KÁĽAVSKÁ, Viera – KÁĽAVSKÝ, Michal. k otázke zmiešaných manželstiev. Káľavský, M. (ed): *Južný Zemplín. Štúdie o etnokultúrnom vývoji národnostne zmiešanej oblasti*. Bratislava: Národopisný ústav SAV, 1993, s. 124–144, MANN, Arne. B. Výber manželského partnera u Cigánov-Rómov na Spiši (k problematike existencie "cigánskej skupiny"). *Slovenský národopis*, roč. 38, č. 1–2, 1990, ISSN 1335-1303, s. 278-284, FÓNADOVÁ, Laura – KATRŇÁK, Tomáš. Etnická homogamie na Slovensku v letech 1992 až 2012. *Sociologický časopis*, roč. 52, č. 2, 2016, ISSN 0038-0288, s. 157–178, LETAVAJOVÁ, Silvia. Lokálna endogamia a jej význam pri uzatváraní manželstiev v tradičnom ľudovom prostredí. *Etnologické rozpravy*, roč. 22, č. 1, 2015, ISSN 1335–5074, s. 114–128.

referred to as “our”. It was related mainly to the spatial (local), ethnic, religious and social proximity of the partners. The “foreign” and “remote” attributes reflected the extent of the known world (foreign cultures) as well as the ability to move within it and to cross its borders. The small-scale mobility of the population, the isolation as well as other factors meant that the traditional understanding of the term “foreign” and “foreigner” were different compared to the contemporary perception of geographical distances. In the past these terms referred to localities that were relatively close – a partner from another part of the village, neighbouring village, another region or district. In the modern society, the marriage market² is increasingly expanding and moving beyond the territory of Slovakia. Globalization and migration processes (emigration of Slovaks abroad, the arrival of migrants to this territory, as well as virtual contact with other cultures through the media) increase the likelihood of meeting a foreigner – in the language of today's legal practice – a partner of another nationality.

The aim of this study is to characterize the marriages of Slovaks with foreigners in the context of statistical data. In the introductory part of the text we will describe the cultural and historical background and preconditions that are likely to influence these marriages. We will then analyse the marriage preferences of Slovaks according to the official statistical data available for the period from 2008 to 2016. Our aim will be to find out whether it is possible to observe certain patterns of behaviour in the marriage strategies, but also the differences that will be studied from the point of view of gender. The primary sources of information are in particular data from Eurostat and the Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic about the marriage rate of the population.

Theoretical background

Selection of a partner is currently determined by individual preferences, affection, and emotionality. However, it is clear that there are many social and cultural determinants that force us to perform certain behaviour and marital strategies. Social sciences are working on studying marital preferences with multiple theoretical approaches. Several of them explain the possible acceptance or, on the other hand, the rejection of mixed marriages.

Biological and evolutionary patterns in the selection of a partner are described by Z. Doktorová; J. Haštó and S. Démuthová; V. Blažek.³ The evolutionary concept, based on

² The marriage market is the area where the marriage partners are selected according to certain rules. It is a place where they meet, appreciate each other, consider and select a partner, who they will potentially marry. KALMIJN, Matthijs. Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, 1998, ISSN 0360-0572, p. 398. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.395>

³ DOKTOROVÁ, Zuzana; HAŠTÓ, Jozef. Evolučné-biologické a etologické pohľady na výber partnera pre dlhodobý vzťah u žien. *Psychiatria*, roč. 13, č. 3-4, 2006, ISSN 1335-423X, s. 125-132, DÉMUTHOVÁ, Slávka;

Darwin's theory of natural selection, highlights the fact that only certain elements and properties that have proved to be adaptively appropriate will survive in the development process. People simply choose a partner with the aim to have children with the best possible attributes. For example, today's women, in accordance with this theory, choose men who are able to protect the family physically and financially, and in particular are able to provide material wealth. Another concept takes into account the social status of a person. According to this concept, people prefer hierarchically superior individuals in their selection. Social status is a universal sign of how many resources a man controls, his access to sufficient and good quality food, housing, and thus healthier care for an offspring. Impression theory in partner preferences refers to a certain fixation for the people surrounding us in childhood. In general, these theories refer to a natural tendency towards individuals who resemble our loved ones and those who surrounded us in our childhood.

One of the most important concepts, taking into account the socio-cultural aspects of partner selection, is the theory of similarity or symmetry. We choose our partners according to the same parameters – common interests, values, education, social status, language or other qualities. One possible explanation for this tendency is again the effort to find partners similar to our parents⁴ and the people who surround us, with whom we grew up, who we know well and who we consider good in ethical and normative terms. By choosing a partner from the same group, with the same patterns of behaviour, worldview, values or knowledge, we maintain and enhance not only the economic resources of the social group but also our cultural capital⁵. When speaking about the theory of similarity, the endo-exogamic preferences has begun to be discussed since 1930s. In-depth research on this topic in the French population was carried out in the second half of the 20th century in particular by A. Girard⁶. The opposite principle is based on the theory of complementarity developed by psychologist R. Winch. According to this concept, the opposites attract and a person who is different from us is considered to be the most appropriate partner. R. Winch believed that we preferred a partner that best suits our needs, and this need is defined as reciprocity⁷.

BLAŽEK, Vladimír. Od genu SRZ přes psychické pohlavní rozdíly po rodové role. Blažek, V.; Budil, I. (eds): Dědičnost, osobnost, společnost. Plzeň: Katedra antropologie. 2007, ISBN 978-80-87025-16-1, s. 21-28.

⁴ GABURA, Ján. *Teória rodiny a proces práce s rodinou*. Bratislava: Iris, 2012, ISBN 9788089256952, s. 62-63.

⁵ KALMIJN, Matthijs. Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, 1998, ISSN 0360-0572, pp. 399-400, [online]. [accessed 11 September 2016]. Available on <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.395>.

⁶ GIRARD, Alain. *Le Choix du conjoint. Une enquête psycho-sociologique en France*. Paris: Armand Coli, 1964, ISBN 978-2-200-27832-8, s. 726-732.

⁷ GABURA, Ján. *Teória rodiny a proces práce s rodinou*. Bratislava: Iris, 2012, ISBN 9788089256952, s. 62-63.

According to T. Katrňák⁸, the selection of such a partner will complement the capital which we lack. Another theory operates with the concept of the marriage market. The marriage market identifies the area within which the partners are chosen according to certain patterns. The actors in the marriage market compete with each other, offer their resources; there is also a balance between supply and demand among groups of women and men.⁹ New findings in this area were brought by F. de Singly, who claimed that men and women are not “sold” on the marriage market in the same way. Most men, according to him, emphasize their economic strengths (employment, property), while women emphasize their physical appearance, relationship competencies, and household skills.¹⁰ P. Bourdieu¹¹ looks at marriage and the selection of a partner as a result of marriage strategies. The goal of these strategies is not only to make an agreement and create a “marriage”, but to create a “good marriage”, which means maximizing profit and minimizing loss. In this sense, P. Bourdieu speaks of economic and symbolic marriage costs as transactions of a special type that express the material and symbolic value of marriage. The purpose of marriage strategies is to protect social classes and their social status. The individual selects a partner so that if he/she does not improve their position, he/she should at least confirm their position. This state is achieved by securing a bond with a group that has at least equivalent or higher position in all important relationships in comparison with us.

The choice of a spouse is influenced, even directly determined, by the time, place, opportunities and circumstances of their encounter. In the study of the modalities of meeting a partner, the social sciences acquired the classification of M. Bozon and F. Heran.¹² Individual models of meeting a partner, according to them, are differentiated according to the places and situations that individuals share and prefer. Meeting places in this sense are classified as follows:

1. Selective places – places of study, work, social practices, political activities, leisure time activities.
2. Internet – dating portals, social networks.
3. Public places – street, shop, park, neighbourhood, bar, restaurant.
4. Private environment – family environment, acquaintances, family holidays.

⁸ KATRŇÁK, Tomáš. *Spříznění volbou: Homogamie a heterogamie manželských párů v České republice*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON). 2008, ISBN 978-80-86429-98-4, p. 29.

⁹ KALMIJN, Matthijs. Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, 1998, ISSN 0360-0572, p. 398, [online]. [accessed 11 September 2016]. Available on <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.395>.

¹⁰ KRALOVÁ, Eubica. Homogamia – zákon alebo alternatíva výberu životného partnera? *Sociologický časopis*, roč. 31, č. 3, 1995, ISSN 0038-0288, p. 337-341.

¹¹ BOURDIEU, Pierre. Les stratégies matrimoniales dans le système de reproduction. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, Vol. 27, N. 4-5/1972, ISSN 0395-2649, pp. 1107-1109.

¹² BOZON, Michel; HÉRAN, François. *La formation du couple. Textes essentiels pour la sociologie de la famille*. Paris: La Découverte, collection “Classiques Grands repères”, 2006, ISBN 2-7071-4827-X, p. 11.

5. Friend environment – going out with friends, events, discos, holiday activities.

Interesting findings connected with mixed marriages are found in the research of Ch. Hamel, B. Lhommeau, A. Pilhi and E. Santelli¹³, conducted among domestic French population and migrants in that country. According to them, the domestic population is prone to look for a partner mainly in the environment of selective privileged places, in the environment of friends and in work and study environments, rarely in public, private and family environments. On the other hand, immigrants, who found their partners prior to migration, met their spouses mainly in the family environment.

The research of mixed marriages with foreigners has its long tradition, especially in countries with long-term experience with the presence of migrants in their territory. Mixed marriages between immigrants and the domestic population are often associated in the expert's writings with advanced or final phases of interaction between the newly arrived population and the domestic population and are considered as an indicator of integration or assimilation processes.¹⁴ This interpretation of mixed marriages in social sciences has its origins in the study of R. E. Park and other sociologists of the Chicago School.¹⁵ The marriage between the migrant and the member of the host culture is also considered to be a factor of social and economic integration in the new society, and an indicator of socio-economic and cultural progress.¹⁶ When speaking about progress we have in mind mainly the socio-economic benefits that such a situation brings to an individual in a mixed couple: a migrant – a host country citizen, in contrast with the couple that a migrant creates with a partner from his own group. Mixed marriage is likely to affect the economic performance of immigrants, as domestic partners assist them in language preparation, allow access to certain networks, and generally help to integrate in the host country. Mixed marriage contributes to increased productivity and economic growth of the migrant. For example, empirical studies of mixed marriages carried out by O. Nottmeyer¹⁷ (2009: 17-19) suggest that this process is

¹³ HAMEL, Christelle; LHOMMEAU, Bertrand; PAILHE, Ariane; SANTINELLI, Emmanuelle. *Rencontre son conjoint dans un espace multiculturel et international*. Documents de travail 189, Institution Nationale d'études démographiques. 2013, pp. 10–11, [online]. [accessed 18 November 2016]. Available on <http://teo.site.ined.fr>.

¹⁴ MUUS, Philip. Concepts of migrants' integration: a comparison of national policies. *Measurement and indicators of integration*. Council of Europe. Community Realltion. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Project. Cairman Coussey, M., 1997, pp. 37–44.

¹⁵ PARK, Robert, Ezra – Burgess, Ernest. *Introduction to the science of sociology*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2016, ISBN 978-1-4975-3608-1, pp. 736-738. [online]. [accessed 13 May 2017]. Available on <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/28496/28496-h/28496-h.htm>.

¹⁶ MENDES, Derrick. Mobility and Exogamy: The New Challenges of Immigration in the Azores. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies* 2/1, 2014, ISSN 2321-2799, pp. 29. [online]. [accessed 24 November 2016]. Available on www.ajouronline.com.

¹⁷ NOTTMAYER, Olga. Wedding bells are ringing: Increasing rates of intermarriage in Germany. *Migration information source*, Octobre 1, 2009, s. 17-19, [online]. [accessed 24 August 2016]. Available on <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/wedding-bells-are-ringing-increasing-rates-intermarriage-germany>.

particularly noticeable if a migrant marries a wife from a host country. On the other hand, if a man from a host country marries a migrant woman, these economic benefits are not so obvious and unequivocal.

Background and conditions of creating mixed marriages

Creating of mixed marriages with foreigners has to be perceived in its complexity. It is influenced by historical experience and traditional insights into the phenomenon of marriage and the choice of a partner. It is dependent on the opportunities and limitations that the marriage market provides, it is based on the demographic composition of the population, in particular the characteristics of persons who may be potential participants in marriages both on their own territory and abroad (their age, status, education, ethnicity, religiosity and others), it is determined by the openness or closedness of the group from which the partner comes (the majority and minority), its size and gender composition, or the presence of relatives who oversee the selection of the partner and, last but not least, individual preferences of individuals.

The experience of Slovaks with the presence of foreigners on their territory is small compared to other European countries. In the past this country was characterized in particular by social emigration as well as long-term closedness in relation to foreigners and migration during socialism. The increase in mobility from the country as well as to the country is recorded only after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, and particularly after Slovakia joined the EU and the Schengen area in 2004.

The number of foreigners in its territory has increased gradually, in 1994 their share in the total population of the country was only 0.3%, in 2004 0.4% and in 2013 it reached 1.15%. The current share of foreigners in Slovakia is 1.8%, i.e. 97,934 persons (data from June 2017)¹⁸. This is well below the average of the foreign population in all EU countries and Slovakia has the 6th lowest number of foreigners¹⁹. The largest number of foreigners is registered from neighbouring countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Austria and Ukraine. Migrants from Romania, Bulgaria, Russia and Serbia, as well as foreigners from

¹⁸ *Population status*. [online] Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. [accessed 15 January 2017]. Available on <http://www.susr.sk:80/wps/portal?urile=wcm:path:/Obsah-SK/informativne-spravy/vsetky/6700d047-5977-e38-8e5c-d7d5b94c66b1>. *Statistical overview of legal and illegal migration in the Slovak Republic for the 1st half of the year 2017*. [online] The bureau of Border and Alien Police of the Presidium of the Police Force. [accessed 23 June 2017]. Available on https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/policia/hranicna_a_cudzinecka_policia/rocnky/rok_2017/2017-I.polrok-UHCP-SK.pdf.

¹⁹ *Population without the citizenship of the reporting country – Persons*. [online] Eurostat. [cit. 8. 3. 2017]. Dostupné z: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tps00178>.

Asian countries, mainly from Vietnam, China, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, are also significant. More than half of all foreigners come from European Union countries²⁰. In terms of gender, males predominate among foreigners. According to the last census in 2011²¹, their ratio to women – foreigners was approximately 60: 40, in some groups (e.g. Tunisia, Egypt) their share exceeds 80%. Considering age, foreigners in Slovakia were mainly in a group of young and middle-aged productive people. Nearly half of the foreigners belonged to the age group of 15 to 45 years. This category includes people of the age in which they find their partners, get married, or get married for the second time. In terms of nationality, the largest proportion of foreigners in this age group was from Egypt (95.5%), India (93%), Tunisia (88.2%), Turkey (85.5%) and Romania (83%). Family reunion and joining a family member is one of the most frequently cited reasons for immigration to Slovakia along with the work reasons. The statistical office's data²² show that more than 45.4% of the immigrants reported this motive. The reason of marriage was reported by 2.1% of the immigrants.

From the point of view of emigration flows, it is obvious that nowadays it is mainly young and middle-aged people that leave Slovakia. Between 2004 and 2016, according to statistical data²³, the age group 25- 44 prevailed and it accounted for approximately 65%. In terms of gender, women are more likely to emigrate (approximately 60%), and in particular those with secondary education with a school leaving exam (approximately 42%) and university education (about 18%). Until 2007, married individuals predominated among all the emigrants from Slovakia. Since 2008, single individuals prevail. In 2016, the proportion of single persons in the total number of emigrants was 69%. These attributes increase the probability of their participation in marriage markets abroad and the creation of mixed marriages. Statistical data²⁴ also report that one of the most frequently cited reasons why the Slovaks have been leaving the country in recent years is, in addition to work, following a family member or a marriage. Slovaks migrate mainly to the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom has become a clear “number two” after this traditional destination, due to the opening of its labour markets. Besides that, Slovaks move mainly to Ireland, Germany and

²⁰ *Statistical overview of legal and illegal migration in the Slovak Republic for the 1st half of the year 2017*. [online] The bureau of Border and Alien Police of the Presidium of the Police Force. [accessed 23 June 2017]. Available on https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/policia/hranicna_a_cudzinecka_policia/rocnky/rok_2017/2017-I.polrok-UHCP-SK.pdf.

²¹ *Population and Housing Census 2011*. Datacube, table no. HC24. [online] Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. [accessed 22 June 2016]. Available on <http://datacube.statistics.sk>.

²² *Population and migration*. Resource work – migration, emigrated abroad by gender, age, education, marital status, and the country of migration. Years 2004–2016, table no. H4, H11. [online] Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. [accessed 23 June 2017]. Available on <http://statistics.sk>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Austria. Countries such as Switzerland, Hungary, the USA, Canada and Italy are also significant. An important type of short-term mobility of Slovaks, which is directly related to creation of mixed marriages with foreigners, is tourism. Based on the data provided by the Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents²⁵, we can see that in the last 5 years Croatia, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Italy are the most popular travel destinations of Slovak tourists. However, the northern African states of Egypt and Tunisia are also among the top ten destinations. These destinations are attractive in terms of both passive and active holiday, for families as well as individuals. From the point of view of our topic, the development of the phenomenon of so called single travelling is also important.

Statistical data analysis

Specific data about marriages with foreigners in European countries and the overall position of Slovakia among them can be obtained through the European Union Statistical Office – Eurostat. Its databases allow access to the data about marriages of EU nationals with other citizens in the period from 2012 to 2015. Marriages with foreigners are recorded in the databases from the perspective of citizenship and the country of birth of both partners in the engaged couple. The countries with the most numerous marriages with foreigners, registered by country of origin, are Luxemburg, with their share in the year 2015 of 49.9%, Malta with 34.9% and Switzerland with 35.8%. Estonia, Latvia and the Netherlands have approximately 10% representation of marriages with foreigners. The share of marriages with foreigners in the Czech Republic in 2008 was 4.5%, in Turkey 3.1%, in Croatia 5.6%, in Poland 0.7%, in Hungary 1.1%, in Bulgaria 2.3% and finally in Slovakia 3%. Among its neighbouring countries Slovakia with a share of 3.0% of marriages with foreigners is somewhere in the middle.²⁶ Available statistical data also allow us to monitor the number of marriages with EU 28 partners and partners outside of the EU. Under this category, countries can be categorized into three groups. The highest share of engaged individuals – foreigners from the countries of EU 28 in comparison with partners outside this zone is in Malta (77.7% in 2015) and Luxembourg (72.7%). On the other hand, Latvia (95%) and Estonia (89.8%) have the highest proportion of non-EU 28 partners. In the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Hungary, the ratio of foreign partners from the EU-28 and partners outside is almost balanced. The ratio of

²⁵ *Statistics*. [online] Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents. [accessed 20 November 2016]. Available on <http://www.sacka.eu/sk/SACKA/Statistika/>.

²⁶ *Marriages by citizenship of bride (citizen) and groom (partner)*. [online] Eurostat. [cit. 8. 3. 2017]. Dostupné z: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tps00178>.

EU-28 partners and partners outside this zone in Slovakia was 60:40 in 2012–2015. Slovakia is not included in the statistical data connected with the country of birth of the partners.

In this respect, a study by G. Lanzieri²⁷ analysing marriage behaviour in Europe based on the same sources is inspiring. According to him, every 12th marriage in Europe in the period 2008–2010 was a mixed marriage to a foreigner, with the highest rate in the northwest countries and lower rate in eastern countries where migration is less developed. On the one hand, Malta and Cyprus have a strong tendency to exogamy (probably because they are a gateway to the European Union). On the other hand, the countries like Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria have opposite tendency i.e. they are typical for strong endogamy. The reason for this is probably the low number of foreigners on their territory. In this regard, G. Lanzieri also assumes that the number of mixed marriages will rise in the future due to the increasing number of foreigners, but also the fact that immigrants are generally younger than the domestic population and will therefore enter the marriage markets in the future as well.

Marriages with foreigners are recorded in Slovakia in several ways. One of them is a special registry office in Bratislava, which records marriages of Slovak citizens abroad. However, this institution does not create any registers of marriages according to the exact categories (such as the country of origin of a groom or bride). So far, the special registry has registered about 55,800 applications, with about 4,200 applications before 1978 and about 51,600 applications after 1978. The office currently records²⁸ approximately 3,600 applications for registration of such a marriage, i.e. an average of 300 applications per month.

However, the exact data about mixed marriages are available mainly from the Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior²⁹. Between 1992 and 2008, the Office registered mixed marriages only in terms of nationality. Data about marriages according to citizenship were made available by the office only after 2008. Until 2013, when classifying partners (i.e. partners of a Slovak citizen), the office used not only the exact state's name but also its inclusion in larger geographical or political unit (e.g. EU 15, Africa, Asia) or they used the category "other". For example, in the case of a partner from African state, it was not possible to determine a particular country from which the individual came from. However, from 2014, it is possible to obtain accurate data on all the nationalities of the fiancées.

²⁷ LANZIERI, Giampaolo. *Merging populations. a look at marriages with foreign-born persons in European countries*. Population and social conditions. Statistics in focus. 2012, 4 p, [online] Eurostat. [accessed 5 December 2016]. Available on <http://www.west-info.eu/pdf/report-svizzera/>.

²⁸ Based on requested information for the year 2015.

²⁹ The statistics do not include marriages of Slovaks who got married abroad, or the marriages where the couple lives abroad and comes to Slovakia only temporarily or the couples who were not interested in being registered in a special registry for various reasons. Such marriages are recorded by the embassies of the Slovak Republic abroad, ministries or local authorities in the countries where these marriages were created.

Table 1. The number of marriages by citizenship of the married couple.³⁰

year	total number of marriages	marriages of Slovak men	marriages of Slovak women	marriages of Slovak men with Slovak women		marriages of Slovak men with foreign women		marriages of Slovak women with foreign men		marriages of a foreign man with a foreign women ³¹	
2008	28293	25138	27652	24497	86.6%	641	2.6%	3155	11.4%	0	0.0%
2009	26356	23125	25604	22377	84.9%	748	3.0%	3227	12.6%	4	0.0%
2010	25415	22446	24712	21751	85.7%	695	2.7%	2961	12.0%	8	0.0%
2011	25621	22490	24754	21634	84.4%	856	3.8%	3120	12.6%	11	0.0%
2012	26006	23149	25283	22463	86.4%	713	3.2%	2847	11.4%	10	0.0%
2013	25491	22510	25491	21753	85.3%	757	3.4%	2964	12.0%	17	0.1%
2014	26741	23741	25955	22977	85.9%	764	3.2%	2978	11.5%	22	0.1%
2015	28775	25579	27719	24734	86.0%	845	3.3%	2985	10.8%	211	0.7%
2016	29897	26826	28952	25909	86.7%	917	3.4%	3043	10.5%	28	0.1%

The figures in the table point to the fact that men and women with Slovak citizenship are primarily married to partners with the same citizenship. The percentage of marriages between Slovak citizens among the total number of all marriages is relatively stable during the monitored period from 2008 to 2016 and it ranges from 84.4% to 86.7%. The percentage of persons married to foreigners over the last 9 years (compared to other EU countries) is low and almost unchanged in all categories (according to the countries of origin of the partners). a moderate total (not annual) increase in the number of marriages with foreigners is recorded only among Slovak men. The year when the number of mixed marriages with foreigners in Slovakia culminated was 2011. From the point of view of the gender, it is obvious that Slovak men marry foreigners less often than Slovak women. In the reviewed period, the number of Slovak men who married a foreigner ranged from 2.6% to 3.8%. The percentage of women who married a foreigner ranges from 10.5% to 12.6%. So, the Slovak women marry foreigners almost 4 times more often than the Slovak men. The percentage of marriages between two people who are both foreigners is almost negligible and in the surveyed period does not exceed 0.1% (with the exception of 2015).

³⁰ The percentage of marriages of Slovak men with Slovak women, as well as the marriages of two foreigners, represent their share in the total number of marriages. The percentage of marriages of Slovak men and women with foreigners expresses their share of the number of marriages that were created by Slovak men (separately) and Slovak women (separately). Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, resource work – Marriages. [online]. [accessed 8 December 2016]. Available on <http://statistics.sk>.

³¹ Explicit identification and quantification of marriages between two foreigners is only available in statistics until 2013. We have inferred data for other years according to differences in numbers of marriages from other categories. Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, resource work – Marriages. [online]. [accessed 8 December 2016]. Available on <http://statistics.sk>.

Table 2: Marriages of men with Slovak citizenship with a woman according to her citizenship³².

Bride	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The Czech Republic	241	294	268	319	296	263	265	295	360
Germany	7	7	13	12	10	8	16	20	23
Hungary	16	23	18	24	28	41	44	5	57
Austria	6	3	4	10	3	5	5	7	5
Poland	73	64	88	85	61	79	69	61	65
Romania	8	8	13	26	8	12	17	21	9
The United Kingdom	6	5	9	10	11	7	9	13	14
Serbia							15	31	17
Russia	21	31	39	40	43	38	42	50	53
Ukraine	90	114	72	104	72	71	78	81	74
The U.S.A.	2	27	20	17	18	16	14	11	13
Brazil							6	8	11
Japan							3	7	11
Thailand							8	5	12
China							12	11	11
Philippines							14	10	11
Vietnam							12	5	7
Europe	25,012	22,973	21,751	22,350	23,033	22,348	23,602	25,452	26,680
Europe without Slovakia	515	596	573	716	597	605	625	718	771
EU 15	30	24	41	47	44	39			
Asia	61	69	65	73	68	99	82	65	88
Africa	10	12	12	17	10	10	8	17	12
America	51	66	42	47	37	46	46	39	38
Other	137	160	141	188	142	201			
Slovakia	24,497	22,377	21,751	21,634	22,436	21,754	22,977	24,734	25,909
Foreign women	641	748	695	856	731	774	764	845	917
Total number of marriages of men with Slovak citizenship	25,138	23,125	22,446	22,490	23,149	22,510	23,741	25,579	26,826

Table 3: Marriages of women with Slovak citizenship with a man according to his citizenship.³³

Groom	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The Czech Republic	930	947	853	895	828	915	882	863	890
France	73	68	61	78	71	59	78	87	66
Italy	135	138	148	129	116	147	158	175	140
Germany	253	272	245	258	225	247	224	234	224
Bulgaria	13	8	13	11	7	15	12	11	11
Hungary	139	136	113	123	117	147	158	209	188
Austria	282	261	200	214	168	174	167	194	143
Poland	68	72	91	67	71	83	92	70	64
Romania	25	17	20	20	23	26	31	35	43
The United Kingdom	243	234	251	261	269	283	270	312	317
Switzerland	75	76	70	79	70	73	67	56	59
Belgium							21	15	17
Spain							37	45	43
Greece							17	30	32
Croatia							14	16	15
Ireland							23	33	20

³² The country of origin of the partner is shown in the table only if the number of marriages in at least one of the monitored years reached at least 10 marriages. Statistical Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, resource work – Marriage. Marriages according to the citizenship of the partners. [online]. [accessed 8 December 2016]. Available on <http://statistics.sk>.

³³ Statistical Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, resource work – Marriage. Marriages according to the citizenship of the partners. [online]. [accessed 8 December 2016]. Available on <http://statistics.sk>.

Mixed marriages with foreigners in Slovakia

Macedonia							16	26	18
Netherlands							22	29	20
Portugal							11	22	15
Serbia							84	53	70
Slovenia							16	6	9
Russia	8	7	11	11	10	10	13	12	7
Ukraine	27	28	24	23	19	14	19	30	21
The U.S.A.	150	167	139	145	143	114	83	103	116
Canada	16	19	12	17	19	17	23	13	24
Turkey							33	45	42
Algeria							14	17	16
Egypt							20	31	38
Morocco							10	7	10
Nigeria							23	31	29
Tunisia							25	25	25
South Africa							15	9	10
Brazil							13	14	13
India							30	32	28
Pakistan							24	37	45
Europe	27,067	24,969	24,853	24,131	24,717	24,270	22,502	27,422	27,460
Europe without Slovakia	2,570	2,592	2,407	2,497	2,281	2,517		2,688	2,551
EU 15	1117	1116	1056	1096	983	1047			
Asia	174	205	180	204	184	103	137	140	144
Africa	171	171	154	158	133	143	136	143	146
America	214	226	195	213	222	69	145	183	178
Australia, Oceania	26	33	32	48	27	32	28	29	24
Other	719	777	702	789	691	640			
Slovakia	24,497	22,377	21,751	21,634	22,436	21,754	22,977	24,734	25,909
Foreigner men	3,155	3,227	2,961	3,120	2,847	2,964	2,278	3,183	3,043
Total number of marriages of women with Slovak citizenship	27,625	25,604	24,712	24,745	25,283	24,717	25,955	27,917	28,952

Of all foreigners, the Slovak men and women married mainly the citizens of the European states, which accounted for 78.2% to 85% in the monitored period. We find some differences in the marital preferences of Slovak men and women. In the years 2008 to 2016, the Slovak men married mainly European women (we are not counting citizens of the Slovak Republic). These marriages account for about 82% of all marriages with foreigners. Of all marriages with foreigner women approximately 38.1% marriages were with women of Czech citizenship, for the period of 9 monitored years it was 2 601 marriages. Following are marriages with women from other European countries, with Ukrainian women on the first place (756 marriages, 10.8% of all marriages with foreigners) followed by Polish women (645), Hungarian women (256) and Russian women (357). There is only a small number of marriages of Slovak men with women from the EU-15. For the years 2008 to 2013, there were 225 cases, which is approximately 3.7% of all marriages of Slovak men with foreign women. In the monitored period there were 412 marriages of Slovak men with American women, 670 marriages with women from Asian states and 108 marriages from African states. It is clear from the data that the share of African women in the total number of marriages of Slovak men

with foreigners is 1.6%, the share of American women is 5.7%, and the share of marriages with women from Asian states is the highest: 10.4%. Men with Slovak citizenship are mainly oriented to partners from geographically and culturally close countries (Czech Republic, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary) in their marital preferences. Besides that, they tend to choose partners from Russia.

Women with Slovak citizenship also focused mainly on Europeans when selecting a partner. More than 25.3% of all marriages of women with foreigners are with Czech citizens (6,250 marriages, 15.5%). a relatively large number of partners of Slovak women come from the EU-15 countries, which accounts for more than 25.9% (6,415) of all marriages of women with foreigners in 2008–2013. Of the western European countries, the most significant groups of partners are from the United Kingdom (2,440), Germany (2,182), Austria (1,803), Italy (1,286), followed by men from Hungary (1,330), Poland (678) and Switzerland (625). The number of men from Ukraine, the country that was first in the case of marital preferences of Slovak men, is low (196, which accounts for only 0.8% of all marriages of women with foreigners). The percentage of marriages of Slovak women to foreigners from America (6.1% of all marriages of women with foreigners), Asia (5.5%) and Africa (5.1%) is almost equal. The number of marriages of Slovak women with men from the African continent is almost 14 times higher than that of Slovak men with women from the African continent. Men from American continent were preferred by Slovak women almost four times more often and from Asia more than twice more often in comparison with partner preferences of Slovak men. There is a clear tendency of Slovak women to find partners mainly from the economically advanced countries of Europe and, in particular, Western Europe (United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland) and then from neighbouring countries (Hungary, Poland).

Discussion and conclusion

Our findings have shown that there are still strong endogamous preferences in the marriages of Slovak men and Slovak women, i.e. the selection of a partner with the same nationality (more than 80%). Slovaks tend to find partners mainly in geographically, ethnically, linguistically, religiously and culturally same or similar country. This may reflect historical experience and it can be connected with the persistence of traditional patterns in matrimonial strategies, i.e. giving preference to a partner from the same or similar group (the principle of local and cultural endogamy)³⁴. On the other hand, it reflects the relative closedness of the

³⁴ LETAVAJOVÁ, Silvia. Lokálna endogamia a jej význam pri uzatváraní manželstiev v tradičnom ľudovom prostredí. *Etnologické rozpravy* 22/1, 2015, ISSN 1335–5074, p. 114–128.

country, the small contact with foreigners in the past (in the period of socialism) and the still low number of foreigners in this territory today.

The endogamy matrimonial preferences of the Slovak population document vigorousness and constant persistence of several theoretical concepts that we described in the introduction. The concept of similarity or symmetry, and probably also the concept of impression are still important at present. In our case, we mean preference for partners from the same or similar group, partners whose culture we know, understand, which is close to us since our childhood, it means partners of Slovak citizenship (Slovak nationality, Slovak language, the same faith), partners from nearby countries and similar cultures – especially citizens of neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine), Slavic countries (Czech Republic, Ukraine, Russia, Poland) or countries of the same geographic / political / economic territory – Europe, the EU countries.

An analysis of available statistical data suggests that the number of marriages with foreigners in Slovakia is relatively low and unchanging when we look at it from the perspective of the country of partner's origin (the number of marriages of Slovak men with foreigners is getting slightly higher). In general, it is possible to say that the characteristics of partners of Slovak men and woman, according to their nationality, reflect the migration processes (both immigrant and emigrant) that have been taking place in this country in recent years. Their partners come mostly from countries where most of Slovak men and Slovak women emigrate (the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria) or the countries of origin of most immigrants to Slovakia (Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Ukraine, Russia, Asian States). These tendencies indicate the expansion and diversification of places and situations where potential partners meet and marry. The real marriage markets are extended mainly by the presence of foreigners on our territory, but also by travelling of Slovaks abroad (work, study, holidays...). Nowadays, expansion of virtual space of internet dating (chats, dating portals) becomes significant and interesting.

From a gender perspective, it can be said that marriages with foreigners are more typical for Slovak women than Slovak men. Slovak women marry partners from geographically and culturally remote places (African continent, America, Asia, Islamic states³⁵) more often than Slovak men. Certain parallels of these tendencies can be found in traditional marriage patterns, according to which it was expected and considered to be more

³⁵ However, the tendency of Slovak women to marry African husbands must be judged in the context of the marriage rules of Muslim men and Muslim women with partners of different religion (Muslim man can be married to a Muslim woman, a Christian or a Jewish woman, while Muslim woman can only marry a Muslim man – born or converted).

natural if a woman accepted her partner's culture, assimilated or changed her residence after marriage and followed her husband (patrilocality).³⁶ Nowadays this situation is also supported by statistical data on emigration from Slovakia which suggest that Slovak women leave the country because of marriage more often than Slovak men. They are therefore more willing to move and adapt to their husband's culture. Another explanation of the mentioned situation is the fact that at present Slovak women are equally active in foreign migration and have enough opportunities to meet their foreign partner when they are abroad. Finally, the overall composition of migrants in Slovakia is also an important factor determining this fact. Migrants in this country are dominated by young or middle-aged men, who become potential marriage partners.

The marriage strategies of the Slovak men Slovak women and their movement within the marriage markets also indicate the importance or possible change in traditional biological and economic aspects in finding a partner. One of the relevant models that confirms their validity is finding a partner according to a following pattern: a woman tries to find a partner with a higher economic status, from the west, while a man provides financial security to a woman who comes from an economically less developed country, from the east³⁷. Slovak women are more likely to find partners from Western European countries, the EU15, and Slovak men prefer partners from Ukraine, Russia or Asian states more often. According to the idea of the marriage theory of P. Bourdieu of, marriage with a partner from an economically advanced country can signify strengthening and increasing of social capital and, ultimately, not only the realization of the marriage but also the realization of a “good marriage”. In this context, in the future it will be interesting to look into situations where marriage of Slovaks with a foreigner or marriage of foreigners with the Slovaks becomes a targeted strategy, increasing social capital (fictitious marriages – in order to obtain financial benefit, permanent residence, citizenship and other benefits).

On the contrary, the invalidity of biological and economic strategies when choosing a partner are supported by examples of women who choose a partner from an equally or even weaker economic environment (for example, from some African countries). The traditional male and female roles distribution in the family is no longer significant at the moment, women become equally important breadwinners of the family, they achieve financial self-sufficiency, and the choice of well-placed partner is not essential. In addition, a husband who

³⁶ MICHÁLEK, Ján. *Lud Hornádskej doliny*. Košice: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo, 1989, MJARTAN, Ján. *Horehronie: Kultúra a spôsob života ľudu*. Bratislava: Veda, 1974.

³⁷ On the tendencies to migrate and find partners in economically more advanced countries, more NIEDOMYSL, Thomas; ÖSTH, John; VAN HAM, Maarten. The Globalisation of Marriages Fields: The Swedish Case. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36/7, 2009, ISSN, pp. 1-20, p. 5. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903488184>

comes to a new country following his wife as a migrant is often handicapped by unfamiliarity with the new environment and the language. Particularly in the initial stage of its integration, this is manifested by an inability to find an adequate job and obtain financial security. He is dependent on his wife's help. Compared to his wife who comes from a country of their residence, his social and economic status is reduced even more.

We assume that the number of mixed marriages will grow in our environment as a result of globalization processes and stronger migration and it will become a frequent subject of a public discourse. The theme of mixed marriages brings a number of challenges and questions that are gradually becoming the subject of interest for social scientists.

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