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*Original Paper*

Trends in the number of foreign students at Slovak universities and Slovak students at foreign universities

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ABSTRACT

Just as students from abroad come to Slovakia to study, Slovak students go to study at foreign colleges and universities. In our article we analyze trends in the number of foreign students studying at Slovak universities and Slovak students leaving mainly for the Czech Republic in 10 years from 2010 to 2019. In Slovakia, but also in the Czech Republic, we observe a decrease in the total number of students studying at universities. We are also following this trend among Slovaks studying in the Czech Republic. In contrast, in Slovakia we are seeing an increase in the number of foreign students studying at our colleges and universities. Czechs and Ukrainians study the most in our country, and the ratio between them has been changing since 2017 in favor of Ukrainian students. The share of Slovak students among all foreign students at Czech colleges and universities was almost 64% in 2010, in 2019 it is only less than 45%.

KEYWORDS: trends, Slovak students, foreign students

JEL CLASSIFICATION: C02, C11, I210

INTRODUCTION

As of 31 December 2021, there are 41 universities in the Slovak Republic, of which 20 are public, 3 state, 10 private and 8 foreign universities. A total of 133,558 students study at them, of which 18,243 are foreigners (MINEDU, 2022), which represents 13.66%. As of the same date, there are 79 universities in the Czech Republic, of which 26 are public, 2 state, 33 private and 18 foreign universities. 304,054 students study at these schools, of which 52,109 are foreigners (MEYS, 2022), which is 17.14%.

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In both republics, we are seeing a decline in the total number of students studying at universities. In contrast to these trends, the numbers of foreign students in both republics are gradually increasing. Therefore, we decided to examine trends in the number of students from 2010 to 2019, whether Slovaks and foreign students studying at Slovak universities, but also Czechs and foreign students, with an emphasis on Slovaks studying in the Czech Republic. Antalíková (2020) and Blanár (2020) dealt with similar topics. We also stated these trends in the contribution of Pechočiak and Drábeková (2020), although since 2018 we have observed that the decline of Slovak students studying in the Slovak Republic has stopped or increased slightly.

One of the most important factors in achieving a country's prosperous socioeconomic environment is education. As Országhová et al. states (2018) investments in human capital, including education, skills upgrading, the development of education and science, are nowadays a significant prerequisite for the further development of society and its economic growth. Tholen (2014) in his work says that Policymakers has argued as well as assumed that the share of degree holders within the workforce is a direct measure of national competitiveness and economic strength within the global era. However, if the structure of graduates does not meet the expectations and needs of the labor market the growth of the number of university graduates won't produce the desired effect.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this article, we follow the trends in the number of Slovak and foreign students studying at Slovak and foreign universities for 10 years from 2010 to 2019. In 2020 and 2021, a pandemic of covid virus spread to the world, so we assumed that it would affect the numbers of these students. Therefore, we did not include them in the examined sample. We obtained data from databases of Slovak Center of Scientific and Technical Information (SCSTI), Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR), The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MINEDU) and Ministry of Education, Youth and sports in Czech (MEYS).

We used methods of mathematical descriptive statistics to evaluate them. In Excel, we created spreadsheets in which we calculated Percentages. From this data, we drew graphs, which we transferred with tables to Word in our article.

Table 1 shows the numbers of enrolled and in Table 2 the numbers of enrolled Slovak and foreign students at Slovak universities in the years 2010 to 2019. We see that the differences between enrolled and enrolled students are many times large. For Slovak students it is two to three times, for foreign students almost double. Therefore, we took the data on enrolled students as more representative. We assume that some students applied to more universities, or some did not get to the university.

Table 1 Number of registered Slovak and foreign students at Slovak universities in the years 2010 to 2019

Year	Slovak students	foreign students
2010	144 038	3 472
2011	135 739	3 735
2012	117 806	3 625
2013	101 345	4 497
2014	87 109	3 747
2015	79 114	4 418
2016	72 156	5 184
2017	62 766	6 408
2018	65 643	6 910
2019	66 531	8 822

Source: SCSTI, SOSR

Table 2 Number of enrolled Slovak and foreign students at Slovak universities in the years 2010 to 2019

Year	Slovak students	foreign students	Share in percentage
2010	49 758	2 199	4,23
2011	49 074	2 230	4,35
2012	44 994	2 317	4,90
2013	41 894	3 013	6,71
2014	38 190	2 404	5,92
2015	35 601	2 447	6,43
2016	32 512	2 865	8,10
2017	30 158	3 418	10,18
2018	31 320	3 645	10,42
2019	31 639	4 788	13,14

Source: SCSTI, SOSR, own

If we notice from which countries most students come to us, then we find that they are mainly 2 countries, the Czech Republic and Ukraine. Data on the number of students from these countries, the total number of foreign students and the share in% between the sums of the numbers of Czechs and Ukrainians to the total number of foreign students studying in our country are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Number of enrolled foreign students from the Czech Republic, Ukraine and from all countries together at Slovak universities in the years 2010 to 2019

Year	Czech Republic	Ukraine	all countries together	Share in percentage
2010	1548	44	2 199	72.40
2011	1314	55	2 230	61.39
2012	1195	54	2 317	53.91
2013	1277	604	3 013	62.43
2014	1048	206	2 404	52.16
2015	838	358	2 447	48.88
2016	764	608	2 865	47.89
2017	826	941	3 418	51.70
2018	613	1385	3 645	54.81
2019	822	1830	4 788	55.39

Source: SCSTI, SOSR, own

In terms of Slovak students studying abroad, we find that most of them study in the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Austria and Germany. At the same time, up to 70% of these students study in the Czech Republic. That is why we focused our work on Slovaks studying at Czech universities. Table 4 shows the total numbers of students and Slovaks studying at universities in the Czech Republic.

Table 4 Total number of students and Slovaks studying at Czech universities in the years 2010 to 2019

Year	All students	Slovaks
2010	395982	23 930
2011	392039	24 086
2012	380893	23 565
2013	367772	22 937
2014	346811	22 166
2015	326437	21 713
2016	311060	21 614
2017	298682	20 955
2018	289680	20 766
2019	288644	20 642

Source: MEYS

Table 5 shows the total numbers of foreign students and Slovaks studying at Czech universities and the ratio of Slovaks to the total number of foreign students. This table, as well as Figure 4, shows that the total number of foreign students at Czech universities is growing

and the number of Slovaks is declining, which is also reflected in the ratio of the number of Slovaks to all foreign students. While in 2010 this ratio was 63.82%, in 2019 it is only 44.53%.

Table 5 Numbers of all foreign and Slovak students at Czech universities

Year	All foreign students	Slovak students	Share in percentage
2010	37498	23 930	63.82
2011	38707	24 086	62.23
2012	39430	23 565	59.76
2013	40330	22 937	56.87
2014	40916	22 166	54.17
2015	42027	21 713	51.66
2016	43450	21 614	49.74
2017	43671	20 955	47.98
2018	44685	20 766	46.47
2019	46359	20 642	44.53

Source: MEYS, own

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Table 2, in addition to the numbers of enrolled Slovak and foreign students studying at Slovak universities, we also stated the percentage share between the numbers of foreign students and all students studying at Slovak universities. While in 2010 this share was 4.23 %, in 2019 it was already 13.14 %. As we can also see in Figure 1, the trend in the number of Slovak students over the period under review is declining compared to the number of foreign students, which is why this ratio is growing.

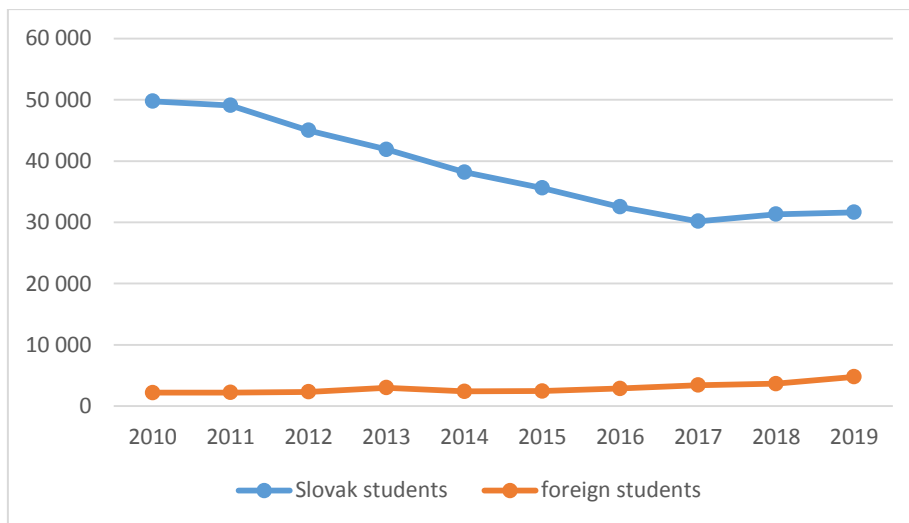


Figure 1 Number of enrolled Slovak and foreign students at Slovak universities in the years 2010 to 2019

Source: own

Most foreign students at our universities come from the Czech Republic and Ukraine. Data on the number of students from these countries are given in Table 3. The table shows that in 2010 1548 Czechs and only 44 Ukrainians studied here. Gradually, these numbers are "turning" in favor of Ukrainians, and we see that in 2019, 822 Czechs and 1,830 Ukrainians studied in our country, and the trend in the sum of these numbers is growing. In Table 3, we also stated the share in% between the sums of the numbers of Czechs and Ukrainians to the total number of foreign students studying in our country. This ratio decreased from 72.4 % in 2010 to 55.39 % in 2019. Trends in the numbers of Czechs, Ukrainians and the total number of foreign students can be seen in Figure 2. Trends in the total numbers of foreign students and Ukrainians are almost identical, growing, we observe in the Czechs decline.

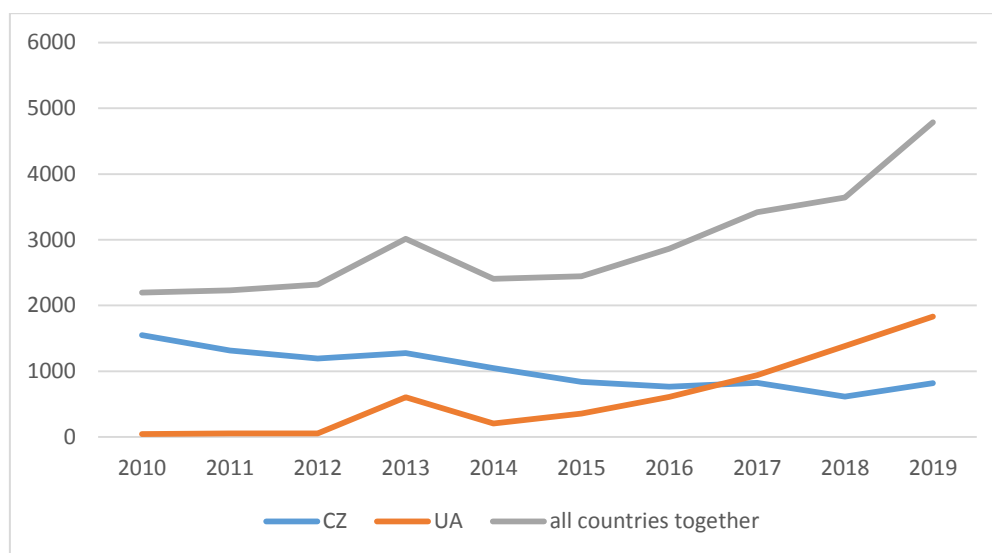


Figure 2 Number of enrolled foreign students from the Czech Republic, UA and from all countries together at Slovak universities in the years 2010 to 2019

Source: own

As we presented in Table 4 and we see this in Figure 3, which shows the trends in the numbers of these students, the total number of students and the number of Slovaks studying at universities in the Czech Republic has a declining trend, as we observe in Slovakia. In the total number, this decrease is 1.37-fold, for Slovaks I observe "only" 1.16-fold decrease.

Table 5 shows the total numbers of foreign students and Slovaks studying at Czech universities and the ratio of Slovaks to the total number of foreign students. This table, as well as Figure 4, shows that the total number of foreign students at Czech universities is growing and the number of Slovaks is declining, which is also reflected in the ratio of the number of Slovaks to all foreign students. While in 2010 this ratio was 63.82%, in 2019 it is only 44.53%.

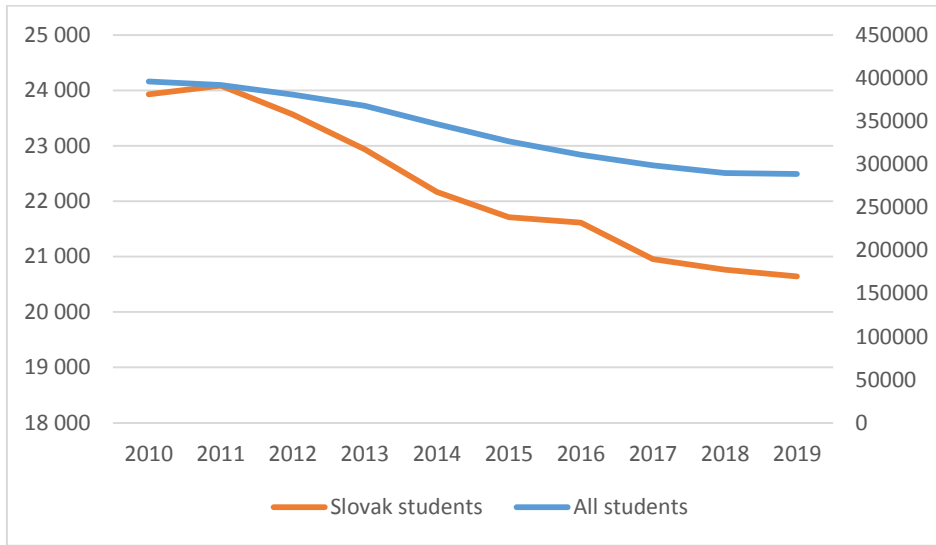


Figure 3 Total number of students and Slovaks studying at Czech universities in the years 2010 to 2019
Source: own

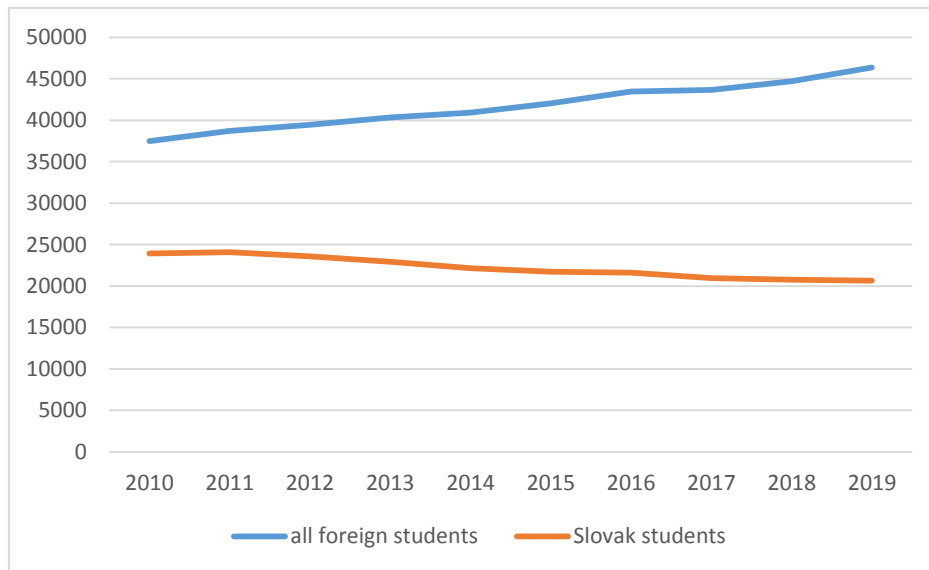


Figure 4 Numbers of all foreign and Slovak students at Czech universities in the years 2010 to 2019
Source: own

CONCLUSIONS

Hundreds of students choose to study abroad every year, as they can obtain quality study in a foreign language and on favorable terms. This applies not only to foreign students studying in Slovakia, but also to Slovaks studying at foreign universities. By studying abroad, students often improve their prospects for their future profession, have the opportunity to complete an internship after or during their studies, improve their language skills, get to know a new culture and people, and learn independence. The new way of education will not

only broaden their horizons, but will also support their personal and intellectual development.

It is no coincidence that Slovak students decide to study in the neighboring Czech Republic. We are united by a common history and culture, it is close, so it is very accessible and it is very important that students can study there for free. The greatest interest is in the study of technical fields and informatics, economics, management, medicine and pharmacy.

Although we observe growing trends in the number of foreign students studying in Slovakia, but also in the Czech Republic, the number of Slovaks studying in our country and in the Czech Republic is declining. One of the factors is the decline of the population in a given age range, but certainly also the realization that skillful students can find employment without graduating from college.

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