

## **Electoral behaviour of the Hungarians living on the territory of the Slovak Republic<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

At the time of the 2001 census 520,528 Hungarians or 9.7% of total population lived on the territory of the Slovak Republic. The author offers a survey of political subjects representing the interests of the Hungarians after 1990 (*Tab. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6*). He concentrates on the relationship between the ratio of Hungarian population and the share of votes given to the Hungarian coalition. In terms of the whole country the number of supporters of the Hungarian coalition is limited by the overall number of voters among the Hungarians, estimated at 380 thousand. He also concentrates on high values of correlation coefficient at the district level which confirm a marked linear dependence between the two variables (*Tab. 8*). At the level of municipalities, situation in the district of Dunajská Streda (*Figs 2 and 3*) is analyzed. It confirms that with the increasing representation of the Hungarians the voter participation among the Hungarian population and the share of votes given to the Hungarian coalition increase. In a way of conclusion the author states that the Hungarians living in the territory of Slovakia exclusively and intensively prefer political subjects of the Hungarian coalition. On the Slovakian political scene this element is characterized by certain specific features.

### **Distribution of the Hungarians on the territory of the Slovak Republic**

The present distribution of the Hungarians on the territory of the Slovak Republic is the result of long-term historical development influenced by different facts. In time of the 2001 census there lived 520,528 Hungarians or 9,68% of total population in the territory of the SR. The most typical feature of the distribution of the Hungarians is its concentration along the southern border of the Republic. Towns and villages with abundant representation of Hungarians form almost a continuous 10 to 50 km wide belt of territory. Representation of Hungarians in the rest of the country's territory is sporadic.

MAZÚR, E. (1974) discerns three areas of mixed Slovak–Hungarian settlement territory in southern Slovakia. The most important area in terms of size of the territory and number of Hungarians is that of the Danubian plain where about 66% of this

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ethnicity concentrate. Administratively, this area includes the districts or part of districts of Bratislava II, Senec, Dunajská Streda, Nové Zámky, Komárno and Levice. The area of South Slovakian basins spreads from the Lučenec Basin to the protuberances of the Košice Basin.

It consist of the southern parts of the districts of Veľký Krtíš, Lučenec, Rimavská Sobota, Revúca, Rožňava and the south-western part of the district Košice-environs. It is inhabited by 21% of total Hungarian population living in Slovakia.

The third area lies in the south-eastern corner of Slovakia. It is the smallest of the three areas and includes parts of districts of Trebišov and Michalovce populated by 8.5% of all Hungarians living in Slovakia. About 4.5% of Hungarians live mostly out of the above-mentioned areas and in large towns.

This situation is represented on the Ethnic Map of the Present Territory of Slovakia by Kocsis, K. (2000).

Subject of this study comprises 17 districts of the SR situated in the above-mentioned areas. Share of Hungarians is higher than 5% in each of them and it is lower in all other districts of the SR (*Tab. 1*).

*Table 1. Representation of Hungarians\* in the selected districts of the Slovak Republic (2001)*

District (Okres)	Total population	Hungarians	% Hungarians
Bratislava II (Pozsony II.)	108 139	6 405	5.92
Senec (Szenc)	51 825	10 553	20.36
Dunajská Streda (Dunaszerdahely)	112 384	93 660	83.34
Galanta (Galánta)	94 533	36 518	38.63
Šaľa (Vágsellye)	54 000	19 283	35.71
Nitra (Nyitra)	163 540	10 956	6.70
Nové Zámky (Érsekújvár)	149 594	57 271	38.28
Komárno (Komárom)	108 556	74 976	69.07
Levice (Léva)	120 021	33 524	27.93
Veľký Krtíš (Nagykürtös)	46 741	12 823	27.43
Lučenec (Losonc)	72 837	20 072	27.56
Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat)	83 124	34 323	41.29
Revúca (Nagyróce)	40 918	8 894	21.74
Rožňava (Rozsnyó)	61 887	18 954	30.63
Košice-okolie (Kassa-környék)	106 999	14 140	13.22
Michalovce (Nagymihály)	109 121	12 819	11.75
Trebišov (Töketerebes)	103 779	30 425	29.32
<i>Total:</i>	<i>1 587 998</i>	<i>495 596</i>	<i>31.21</i>
<i>% Slovak Republik:</i>	<i>29.52</i>	<i>9.21</i>	<i>–</i>
<i>Slovak Republic total:</i>	<i>5 379 455</i>	<i>520 528</i>	<i>9.68</i>

Slovak census data (2001) according to the ethnicity („narodnosť“)

### **Political subjects representing interests of the Hungarians after 1990**

In the period of the first Czechoslovak Republic, that is interwar time, several Hungarian political parties were active in Slovakia. Provincial Christian-Socialist Party (KKSS) associating above all the Hungarian Catholics was the most important. Hungarian National Party (MNS) represented the Hungarian farmers preferred by Calvinist was the second important party. Coalition of these two parties obtained in the 1935 elections held in Slovakia in total 14.2% votes and became the third strongest political subject in Slovakia. In the first Slovak Republic (1939–1945) the Hungarian Party (MS) was founded and took over the political ideology of the KKSS.

After 1948 when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSĚ) became the leading political power, the concept of the National Front (Národný front) created as the political union of workers led by the KSĚ was enforced. This association of different social organizations steered by the KSĚ neutralized the effects of ethnic differentiation of the population of Slovakia.

The candidates of the National Front were also supported in election held in years 1950–1989 in southern Slovakia with high concentration of Hungarians. This support was only formal, as shortly after disintegration of the socialist system (December 1989 – January 1990), three new political subjects of the Hungarians were formed: Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDH), Coexistence-Együttélés (ESWS), and Hungarian Civic Party (MOS). Each of them is based on a different ideology.

MKDH took up the traditions of the Christian KKSS. ESWS was the political movement oriented to protection of interests of all ethnic minorities but obtained support of only some Hungarians. MOS offered to its Hungarian constituency a civil-rightist programme close to the ideas of the Democratic party. MKDH and ESWS entered the 1990 campaign for the Slovak National Council (SNC) together. This coalition also represented Hungarians living in the territory of Slovakia in the following elections.

The character of the 1990, 1992 and 1994 elections was determined by the Electoral Law adopted as part of the packet of democratising measures at the beginning of 1990. The only change in the rules of the proportional electoral system was the change of quota of votes necessary for admission into the Slovak Parliament from 3% to 5% laid down before the 1992 election.

Amendment of this Electoral Law was approved before the 1998 elections and beside other it increased the obligatory quota for admission into the National Council of Slovakia for coalition of two from 7% to 10% and that for the coalition of three from 7% to 15%. Parties oriented to Hungarian constituency (MKDH, ESWS, MOS) then united into the single Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK) which represented the interests of Hungarians living in Slovakia. It must be noted that also the Hungarian People's Movement for Conciliation and Prosperity (MLHŽP) participated in the 1998 elections and obtained the negligible 0.2% of votes.

SMK also remained the representative of the large majority of Hungarians in Slovakia in the 2002 elections for the National Council of the SR. It tried hard to unite the interests of Hungarians into one political party and to strengthen the stability of its constituency during the inter-electoral period. Simultaneously, it presented itself as a solid and serious part of the partially destabilised governmental coalition and offered a positive image to its voters.

### Electoral results of Hungarian coalition in the years 1990–2002

Geographic evaluations of the electoral results appeared in the Slovak specialized press only after 1990. It was immediately stated that one of the important factors which influence the regional structure of political preferences of the inhabitants of the SR is their ethnic composition. The aspects of this effect were pointed to by several authors (BARÁTH, J.–SZÖLLÖS, J.–ĚERNÁK, P. 1995; BRUNN, S. D.–VLĚKOVÁ, V. 1994; MARIOT, P. 1991, 1993, 1994, 1997, 200, 2002; VLĚKOVÁ, V. 1997 etc.).

The first modern elections for the Slovak National Council (8 and 9 June 1990) were held in the period of general enthusiasm of population for newly established democracy confirmed by extreme attendance in elections (93.2%). In these elections 16 political subjects competed for the votes and chairs in the SNC (the minimum of 3% share of votes qualified the parties to enter the SNC). Coalition MKDH–ESWS (EGY) obtained 292,6 thousand votes (8.7%). It ranked at the fifth position among the seven political subjects which obtained chairs in the Parliament. The difference between this subject and the most successful VPN was 20.7% (almost 700 thousand votes. The difference of the same subject and the following three most successful subjects was 5–10% (*Tab. 2.*).

The inner political development after the 1990 elections in Slovakia was characterized first of all by disintegration of the dominating communist forces associated under VPN and KDH to several independent political subjects: Civic Democratic Union (ODÚ) and Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and a new subject oriented to Hungarians–Hungarian Civic Party (MOS). The MKDH and Coexistence /EGY/ Coalition and MOS ran their campaigns separately in the premature elections for the SNC on 5 and 6 June 1992. The newly adjusted limit for the admission to the Parliament (5%) was satisfied by five subjects including the MKDH and

*Table 2. Results of the elections for the Slovak National Council in June 1990*

Party, coalition	Number of votes	% of votes
Publicity against force (VPN)	991 303	29.4
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	648 786	19.2
Slovak National Party (SNS)	471 002	13.9
Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS)	450 858	13.4
Coexistence – MKDH (EGY)	292 636	8.7
Democratic party (DS)	149 067	4.4
Green Party (SZ)	116 069	3.4
<i>Total of all subjects in elections:</i>	<i>3 082 696</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Coexistence Coalition which withheld its fifth position at the national scale although the difference in votes obtained compared to the winning subject increased to almost 920 thousand (Tab. 3). MOS obtained 70,689 votes (2.3%).

Table 3. Results of the elections for the Slovak National Council held in July 1992

Party, coalition	Number of votes	% of votes
Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	1 148 625	37,3
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	453 203	14,7
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	273 945	8,9
Slovak National Party (SNS)	244 527	7,9
MKDH – Coexistence – MOS (MK)	228 885	7,4
<i>Total of all subjects in elections:</i>	<i>3 376 405</i>	<i>100,0</i>

On 1 January 1993 independence of Slovakia was declared. Subsequently, the Slovak National Council transformed into National Council of the SR, the only constitutional authority of the Slovak Republic. The complicated inner-political development finally culminated in premature elections which were held on 30 September and 1 October 1994. Out of 18 participating political parties and movements seven satisfied the limit of 5% and obtained chairs in the Slovak Parliament.

In these elections Hungarian coalition (associating MKDH, Coexistence / EGY/, and MOS) obtained 292.9 thousand votes (10.18%) which won it the third position among the most important subjects in the Slovak political arena. Compared with the leading HZDS, it obtained 712.5 thousand votes less but compared with the Spoločná voľba (second position) it obtained only 6,560 votes less (Tab. 4).

Table 4. Results of elections for the National Council of the Slovak Republic held in autumn 1994

Party, coalition	Number of votes	% of votes
Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	1 005 488	35.0
Common will (Coalition of SDE, SDSS, SZS, HPRS)	299 496	10.4
Hungarian Coalition (MK)	292 936	10.2
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	289 987	10.1
Democratic Union of Slovakia (DÚ)	246 444	8.6
Slovak Workers Association (ZRS)	211 321	7.3
Slovak National Party (SNS)	155 359	5.4
<i>Total of all subjects in elections:</i>	<i>2 875 458</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Coalition HZDS, ZRS, and SNS governed the whole functional period of 1994–98. In autumn 1998 (25 and 26 September) total 17 political subjects presented their candidates for the NC SR. Six of them obtained support of more than 5% of voters, including the SMK with 606.6 votes, which resulted in the fourth position at the scale of the most important political parties in Slovakia. Thanks to unification of several subjects under the SMK, which strived to unsettle the hegemony of HZDS, the gap between SMK and the two dominating subjects was comparatively large (more than 580 thousand votes). In spite of it, success of SMK was in the fact that for the first time it obtained more than 300 thousand votes (Tab. 5).

Table 5. Results of elections for the National Council of the Slovak Republic held in autumn 1998

Party, coalition	Number of votes	% of votes
Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	907 104	27.0
Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	884 498	26.3
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	492 508	14.7
Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	306 624	9.1
Party of Civil Understanding (SOP)	289 344	8.6
Slovak National Party (SNS)	269 344	8.0
<i>Total of all subjects in elections:</i>	<i>3 359 177</i>	<i>100.0</i>

The elections of 25 and 26 September 2002 were held in normal term i.e. at the end of the four-year functional period of the Parliament, with 25 participating subjects including SMK. SMK obtained total 321,089 votes (11.16%) and occupied the fourth position among the most successful political subjects (Tab. 6). The gap between SMK and the winning HZDS or the SDKÚ at the second position became smaller as the difference of votes dropped to only 240 thousand and 113 thousand respectively.

Table 6. Results of elections for the National Council of the Slovak Republic held in autumn 2002

Party, coalition	Number of votes	% of votes
Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	560 691	19.5
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ)	433 953	15.1
Direction (Smer)	387 100	13.5
Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	321 089	11.2
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	237 202	8.3
Alliance of New Citizen (ANO)	230 309	8.0
Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS)	181 872	6.3
<i>Total of all subjects in elections:</i>	<i>2 875 081</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Relationship between the share of ethnic Hungarians and the share of votes for Hungarian coalition.

The data concerning the precise number of Hungarian voters or their share in total number of population in the SR are not available yet. Only the data on the total number of Hungarians including the age group under 18 years of age which cannot vote are precise. Even this generalized date though, provides some exact basis applicable in observation of the relationship between the share of Hungarian inhabitants and the share of votes given to SMK.

#### *The national level*

According to SÁNDOR, E. (1999) about 450 thousand persons out of the total Hungarian population living in Slovakia are eligible to vote. Concerning the electoral results of SMK in the 1998 it seems that about 68% of Hungarian ethnicity entitled to vote did vote. The author also presumes that about 70 thousand Hungarians did not vote at all and about the same number gave their votes to other political subjects.

However, the data quoted in table 7 alter somewhat the overall view of the relationship between participation of the population of the SR in elections and the support given to the Hungarian coalition (*Tab. 7*). The fact is that the number of followers of the Hungarian coalition is limited by the total number of voters adhering to the Hungarian ethnicity, while 380 thousand as the total number of Hungarians living in Slovakia is a more realistic date. The maximum of 80–87% of this number or 305–330 thousand persons give their votes to Hungarian coalition. This absolute number of votes can result in percentage ranging between 9.2% (with the electoral attendance of about 80%) and 12.8% (with the electoral attendance of about 60%). Results of elections held in autumn 2002, when with the electoral attendance of 70% the number of 321 thousand of obtained votes meant the share of 11.16% at the national scale, confirm the latter presumption.

*Table 7. Relationship between the electoral attendance and support given to the Hungarian coalition (1990–2002)*

Year	Voters thous.	Votes thous.	Attendance %	Votes for SMK thous.	Share of SMK %
1990	3 622	3376	93.2	293	8.7
1992	3 270	3083	81.8	229	7.4
1994	3 877	2875	74.2	293	10.2
1998	4 060	3359	82.7	307	9.1
2002	4 158	2875	70.1	321	1.2

#### *The district level*

The relationship between the share of Hungarians (registered in 2001) in total number of district population and the share of votes given to the Hungarian coalition at the level of districts with higher representation of the Hungarian ethnicity can be expressed by correlation matrix. High values of correlation coefficient confirm the high linear dependence between the two variables (*Tab. 8*). High values of determination coefficient expressing causal dependence of these two variables confirm that as much as 98% of vote share values given to the Hungarian coalition can be derived of the values of share of the Hungarian population.

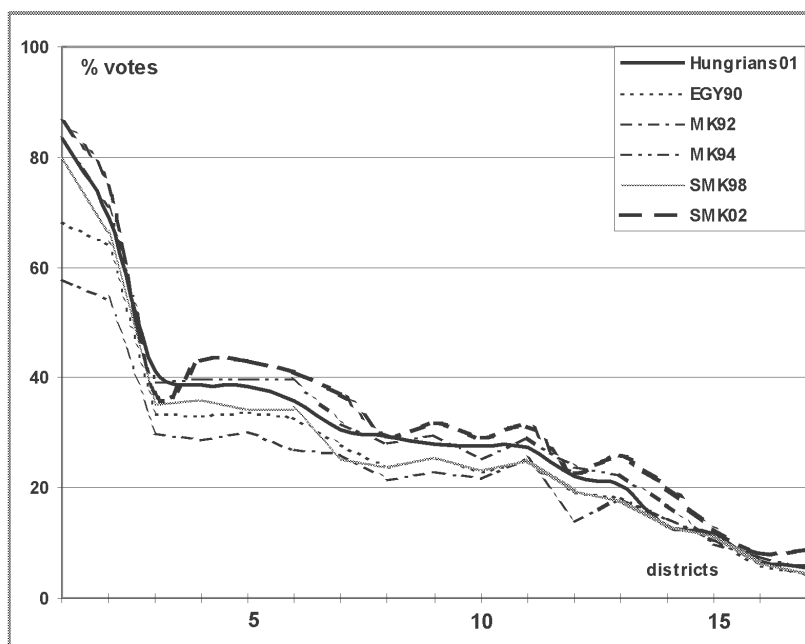
*Table 8. Correlation matrix of the share of Hungarians and the share of votes given to the Hungarian coalition (1990–2002)*

	Hungarians 2001	EGY 1990	MK 1992	MK 1994	SMK 1998	SMK 2002
Hungarians 2001	1	0.993622	0.985584	0.992607	0.993816	0.990583
EGY 1990	0.993522	1	0.992102	0.995986	0.996996	0.994945
MK 1992	0.985584	0.992102	1	0.985527	0.985271	0.991771
MK 1994	0.992607	0.995986	0.985527	1	0.994374	0.995839
SMK 1998	0.993816	0.996996	0.985271	0.994374	1	0.992116
SMK 2002	0.990583	0.994945	0.991771	0.995839	0.992116	1

A closer look to the results obtained by the Hungarian coalition in the years 1990–2002 in selected districts (*Fig. 1* and *Tab. 9*) reveals that there are also differences in overall support given to Hungarian coalition in dependence on attendance of the population of the SR to the individual elections. The Hungarian coalition achieved the best results at the 2002 elections when it was united and the overall low electoral attendance of Slovak voters in districts in question caused that this political subject obtained higher share of votes than the overall share of Hungarians living there.

The data in *table 9* suggest that the parties of the Hungarian coalition obtained a comparatively balanced support in all relevant districts in the Parliamentary elections held between 1990 and 2002. The existing differences in support are comparatively small including those between the Hungarian Coalition and the leading political subject, which is the Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (HZDS) since 1992. HZDS has been loosing voters since 1992 i.e. stability of its support is diminishing.

The interesting fact that the parties of the Hungarian coalition obtained higher share of votes than the share of Hungarians living in these districts manifested itself in 1994. Though it did not repeat in 1998 it re-emerged quite clearly in the 2002 elections. Then the share of SMK exceeded the share of Hungarians in all districts in question with the exception of Rimavská Sobota. Higher electoral discipline of Hungarian citizens which in relative numbers manifests in higher percentage of votes for SMK may be the explanation.



*Fig. 1.* Share of votes obtained by the parties of the Hungarian coalition at the 1990–2002 elections to the Slovak Parliament



Table 9. Share of ethnic Hungarians and share of votes given to the parties of the Hungarian coalition in the selected districts of the Slovak Republic (1990–2002, in per cent)

District (okres)	Hungarians 2001	EGY 1990	MK 1992	MK 1994	SMK 1998	SMK 2002
1 Dunajská Streda (Dunaszerdahely)	83.30	68.40	57.77	83.21	79.33	86.18
2 Komárno (Komárom)	69.10	64.26	54.23	71.01	66.41	74.63
3 Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat)	41.30	33.35	29.80	39.25	35.04	36.97
4 Galanta (Galánta)	38.60	33.25	28.78	39.86	35.92	42.90
5 Nové Zámky (Érsekújvár)	38.30	33.62	30.19	39.90	34.31	43.08
6 Šafa (Vágsellye)	35.70	32.76	27.02	39.96	34.35	41.09
7 Rožňava (Rozsnyó)	30.60	27.95	26.24	31.66	25.24	36.91
8 Trebišov (Tóketerebes)	29.30	23.88	21.39	28.10	23.89	29.41
9 Levice (Léva)	27.90	25.67	22.96	29.59	25.56	31.55
10 Lučenec (Losonc)	27.60	22.90	21.66	25.16	23.21	29.19
11 Veľký Krtíš (Nagykürtös)	27.40	24.88	25.18	28.98	24.98	31.17
12 Revúca (Nagyőrce)	22.00	19.20	13.96	23.84	19.55	22.67
13 Senec (Szenc)	20.40	18.39	17.98	22.52	17.75	25.94
14 Košice – okolie (Kassa-környék)	13.20	14.48	14.43	16.84	13.16	20.15
15 Michalovce (Nagymihály)	11.70	10.84	10.67	9.86	11.41	12.38
16 Nitra (Nyitra)	6.70	5.91	6.80	7.65	6.28	8.03
17 Bratislava II (Pozsony II.)	5.90	4.75	4.23	5.51	4.56	8.69
<i>Slovakia total:</i>	<i>9.68</i>	<i>8.66</i>	<i>7.42</i>	<i>10.18</i>	<i>9.12</i>	<i>11.16</i>

*The municipal level – on example of the district of Dunajská Streda  
(Dunaszerdahely)*

This district has the highest share (83.34%) of Hungarian population in Slovakia and it is where the Hungarian coalition obtained the best electoral results in all Parliamentary elections. In 66 municipalities of this district the coalition obtained between 44.3 and 97.4% of votes in 2002. Two classes of data were applied in our analyses. The absolute number and share of Hungarians in the individual municipalities were taken over from the 2002 census.

The data concerning absolute and relative support of the Hungarian coalition at the municipal level were obtained from documentation concerning electoral results of the elections for the Slovak National Council (1990, 1992) or for the National Council of the Slovak Republic (1994, 1998, 2002). The average values of electoral results were adjusted so as to achieve comparability in spite of the modifications caused by division or joining of municipalities realized in the years 1990–2002.

A more detailed analysis of the relationship between the share of Hungarians and the share of votes given to the Hungarian coalition expressed as the average

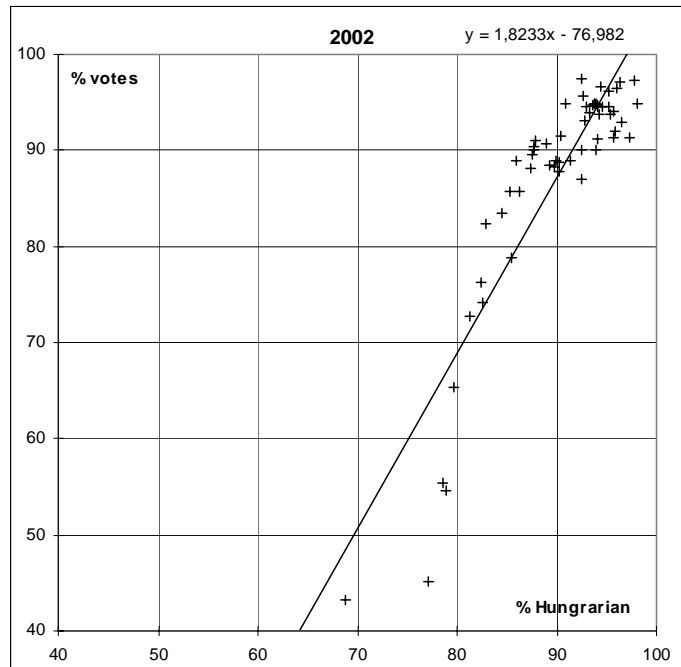


Fig. 2. Relationship of the share of Hungarians and the share of votes for SMK in the municipality of Dunajská Streda – Duna-szerdahely (elections) in 2002

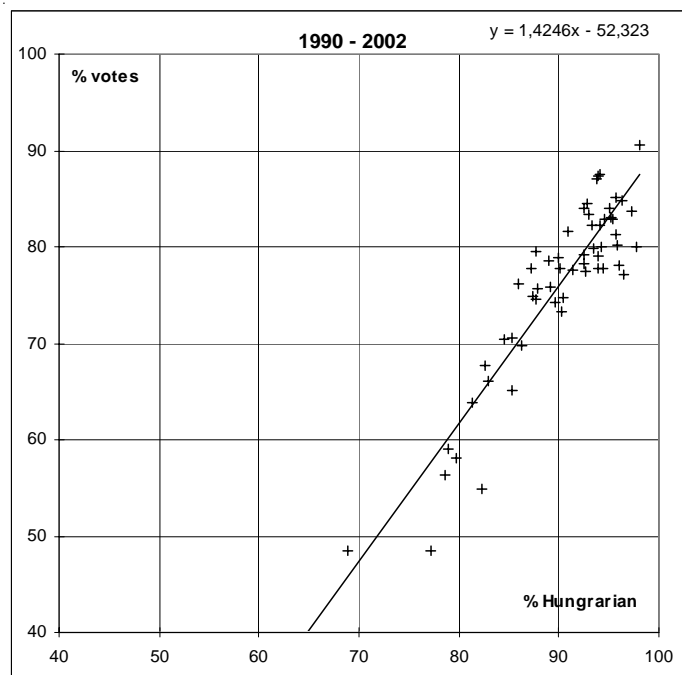


Fig. 3. Relationship of the share of Hungarians and the share of votes for SMK in the municipality of Dunajská Streda – Duna-szerdahely (average of the 1990–2002 elections)

of the shares for the years 1990–2002 reveals very close correlation at the level of municipalities of the district Dunajská Streda (Dunaszerdahely).

*Figures 2 and 3* bring the situation in 2002 and the values of the average share of votes given to the Hungarian coalition calculated for the years 1990–2002, respectively.

Both figures show that with the increasing representation of the Hungarian ethnicity in the municipalities of the district of Dunajská Streda the number of votes given to the Hungarian coalition also increases. Cases, when higher attendance of the Hungarian constituency caused that the share of votes for the Hungarian coalitions resulted higher than the overall share of Hungarian population with permanent residence in the particular municipalities, abundantly occur at the level of municipalities.

### Conclusion

The carried out analyses show, that the Hungarians in Slovakia absolutely and intensively supports the political subjects of the Hungarian coalition. This element of the Slovak political scene displays some specific features, above all:

- distinctly delimited territory of support linked to distribution of Hungarians along the southern frontier of the Slovak Republic,
- absolute number of votes limited by the overall number of Hungarians entitled to vote,
- preference of ethnic principle to all other principles which cause differences in the character of political preferences (for example, religious structure, social appartenance, size category of residence, etc.),
- stability of support in terms of time confirmed by five consecutive Parliamentary elections.

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Official Slovak name of the parties, coalitions mentioned in the text

ANO	Aliancia nového občana
DS	Demokratická strana
DÚ	Demokratická únia Slovenska
ESWS /EGY/	Spolu•itie–Együttélés
HZDS	Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko
KDH	Kres•anskodemokratické hnutie
KKSS	Krajská kres•ansko-socialistická strana
KSĚ	Komunistická strana Ěeskoslovenska
KSS	Komunistická strana Slovenska
MK	Maĭarská koalícia
MKDH	Maĭarské kres•anskodemokratické hnutie
MLHZP	Maĭarské ¾udové hnutie za zmierenie a prosperitu
MNS	Maĭarská národná strana

MOS	Maïarská obèianska strana
MS	Maïarská strana
ODÚ	Obèianska demokratická únia
SDK	Slovenská demokratická koalícia
SDKÚ	Slovenská demokratická a kres•anská únia
SD¼	Strana demokratickej ¾avice
SMK	Strana maïarskej koalície
SNS	Slovenská národná strana
SOP	Strana obèianskeho porozymenia
SZ	Strana zelených
VPN	Verejnosc• proti násiliu
ZRS	Zdru•enie robotníkov Slovenska

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