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OPEN

Journal of Intercultural Management

Vol. 9 | No. 2 | June 2017 | pp. 81–101

DOI 10.1515/joim-2017-0009

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# Characteristics of Slovak Culture in the Context of Bilateral Austrian-Slovak Relations

**Abstract:** Objective: The main intention of the present paper is, on the one hand, to provide a summary of the characteristics of Slovak culture by applying chosen theories and models. On the other hand, we attempt to underline the significance of bilateral Austro-Slovak relations in relation to the economy or migration tendencies. We assume that, based on geographical proximity and the above stated bilateral relations, intercultural encounters are relatively frequent as well. Therefore, certain perception of Slovaks from the Austrian point of view is likely to exist. Methodology: Our work is based on relevant scientific sources, as well as on our own empirical research reposing in the analysis of an online questionnaire.

Findings: Overall, findings of our empirical research may be considered rather positive, as no negative or hostile responses concerning Slovak culture were reported. Furthermore, none of the participants experienced a conflict with a Slovak counterpart that could clearly be ascribed to cultural differences.

Value Added: We believe that the conclusions presented in this paper might be helpful not only for managers operating on the international level or businessmen intending to do business

with their Slovak partners, for scholars engaged in similar topics but also for anyone interested in intercultural communication and cultural differences.

**Key words:** Slovak culture, Austrian-Slovak bilateral relations, values, cultural differences, intercultural conflict, Geert Hofstede, Richard D. Lewis

## Introduction

In today's globalized world it is almost unimaginable to exist without having contact with representatives of other cultures. Moreover, it is impossible to do business on international level without interaction with other cultures. In order to succeed in business, one needs to be aware of differences that may repose between the respective national cultures. On the grounds of such divergences and not being aware of them, an intercultural conflict may occur, which can further result in interruption of a business relation.

The present article is aimed at bilateral intercultural Austrian-Slovak relations, while the characteristics of Slovak culture and the perception of Slovaks from the Austrian perspective is predominantly being focused at. We come out from the assumption that, due to geographical proximity and significant business interactions, mutual bicultural contacts are quite frequent and, therefore, certain culture-related specifics are perceived by the representatives of both national cultures. Our opinion regarding the significance of mutual Austrian-Slovak relations and the comparability of the two countries might be perfectly mirrored in their description provided by Kirschbaum (2008, p. 225). „...Each is landlocked, mostly mountainous, situated in the middle of Central Europe...both states are relatively small... Both populations are relatively homogenous...”. However, as he adds, no more similarities between the two countries exist, since languages as well as historical development show striking differences.

The main part of the paper is logically structured into several thematical areas. Firstly, the most crucial characteristics of the Slovak national culture will be summarized, by application of several models and theories. As the next

step, selected milestones in the Austrian-Slovak migration-related history and chosen aspects of bilateral economic relations will be discussed. The final part will be dedicated to the results of the empirical research having been conducted with the purpose of data collection regarding participants' personal opinions on Slovaks and Slovak culture, as well as their experience with intercultural conflicts in relation to Slovaks. Special attention is thus paid to empirical experience of the individual survey participants.

The main objective is thus, firstly, to summarize the most significant characteristic traits of Slovaks. Secondly, to emphasise the mutual Austrian-Slovak relations (considering the aspect of migration, economy, education, etc.) and to discuss the way Slovaks are perceived from the Austrian perspective. Besides, we strive to find out whether occurrence of intercultural conflicts is frequent or rare, or whether the individuals engaged in our survey have experienced a conflict situation with Slovak citizens, the roots of which were culture-dependent.

The present paper is meant to serve as a brief guidance (not only) for (Austrian) businessmen about issues relating to Slovak culture that are to be considered, but also for anyone contemplating doing business, studying or travelling to Slovakia. Everyone interested in the scientific field of intercultural communication, intercultural management, intercultural psychology or cultural differences and specifics in general is welcome to read this contribution.

## Materials and methods applied

Our research is based on the research of relevant scientific sources and their synthesis. We present descriptions of Slovak culture coming out of several well-known cultural categorisations, divisions and dimensions. However, since the description of a typical Slovak is not the sole intention of this paper, we will disregard many authors and their studies on Slovak culture. Nevertheless, we will predominantly refer to the work of Richard D. Lewis and Geert

Hofstede, who belong to the most frequently cited and respected authors dealing with issues relevant for the present paper.

Besides, a crucial role is played by the method of analysis of the online questionnaire that was distributed among a few Austrians. As our research is limited by a relatively lower number of interviewees, we pay attention to every single submission and state concrete answers, not only broad generalizations.

## Current state of knowledge regarding Slovak culture and Austrian-Slovak relations

Culture-related issues, cultural values and culture-based differences in behaviour attract attention of many academics, scientists and scholars worldwide. Nowadays, a very frequent topic is exploring culture from the business, management or marketing point of view, as well as in connection to psychology. Also, comparative analyses of cultures are to be found in relevant scientific sources rather often. Overall, a wide spectrum of topic-related works is available. In the following section, we offer a brief overview of those mostly linked to the theme of our paper.

Concerning Slovakia, D. Pučko, A. Remišová, and A. Lašáková (2013, pp. 376–395) present research on leadership preferences and culture in Slovakia in relation to Slovenia. Their work is a comparative study elaborated on the grounds of the GLOBE project. They conclude that Slovak respondents are less humane oriented, less gender egalitarian and less in-group collectivistic. Apart from that, they are (in contrast to Slovenians) more power distant and institutional collectivistic. Regarding leadership, Slovaks would accept considerably less autonomous and self-protective behaviour of leaders (2013, p. 391).

J. Bašnáková, I. Brezina and R. Masaryk (2016, pp. 13–25) discuss cultural dimensions of Slovakia (and of the Czech Republic), with the cultural dimensions and values research of Geert Hofstede being the basis of their

research. Since the original survey of Hofstede does not include scores in values of Slovakia, they further build on data collected by Kolman et al (2003). Therefore, they emphasise that their study is a replication and point at several limitations of their work. Regarding the respective cultural dimensions, they predominantly focus on two of them - on the dimension Power Distance and Masculinity, since Slovakia's scores within these two dimensions were reported as extremes. Their primary intention was to provide an updated version of the dimensions in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and to verify the above-standard scoring of Slovakia within the two above stated dimensions (more than 100).

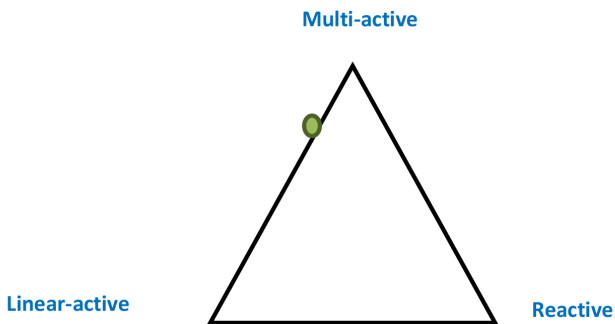
Slovakia, as well as the Czech Republic, and values of the youth represent the core of the research of J. Ilgová and A. Ritomský (2009, pp. 73–113). They present a comparative empirical study regarding values in the two respective countries, while concentrating on people aged 15–34. They state the level of religiosity as the most crucial discrepancy between the two national cultures, whereby Slovaks are significantly more religious and participate in religious activities more frequently than Czechs (2009, p. 83). The portal SlovakiaSite (2017) reports, in accordance with the latest surveys, 84% of Slovak inhabitants as being religious, mostly Christian (Roman Catholics build up the group of 69,9% of the population). Another noteworthy point is that (in comparison to the Czechs) young Slovaks are less open to accepting change and prefer status quo. Besides, demonstrating own abilities, intelligence and reaching targets seem to be of high importance for the Slovak population, or of higher importance than, for instance, power and prestige, respectively (Ilgová, Ritomský, 2009, p. 106).

Austrian-Slovak intercultural relations, extended by the importance of language competence and significance of German language, represent the core of our recent research. The contribution, which was presented at an international scientific conference, predominantly focuses on the way in which Slovaks perceive Austrians, as well as the level of their language competence in German. Overall, the research results may be qualified as positive,

and thus in connection to characteristics that Slovaks ascribe to Austrians, as well as to the level of German among Slovaks (Čiefová, 2016, pp. 179–191).

In his book *When Cultures Collide: Leading across cultures*, Richard D. Lewis offers extensive culture descriptions, including values, communication or behaviour patterns. His work, as well as the model we refer to, is well-structured and comprehensible. „...Cultures of the world can be roughly classified into three groups: task-oriented, highly organized planners (linear-active); people-oriented, loquacious interrelators (multi-active); and introverted, respect-oriented listeners (reactive),” (2006, p. 27). These three categories are usually graphically illustrated as a triangle with each corner being the ideal value of one of the three categories. We offer a simplified version of the LMR model below. The approximate position of Slovakia is marked in green (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Simplified LMR model of Lewis with the approximate position of Slovakia**



Source: Own elaboration according to Lewis, 2006.

Based on Lewis’s model, we can summarize the characteristics prevailing by the respective cultural categories and to derive those likely to be occurring among Slovaks (Figure 2.). For this purpose, we come out from the linear-active and multi-active traits, since the position of Slovakia demonstrates rather multi-active tendencies with linear-active traits usually having lower impact (2006, pp. 33–34).

**Figure 2. Characteristics of linear-active and multi-active cultures according to Lewis**

Linear-active	Multi-active
introvert, patient, quiet, do one thing at a time, punctual, stick to plans, job-oriented, unemotional, confront with logic, limited body language, rarely interrupt	extrovert, impatient, talkative, do several things at once, not punctual, change plans, people oriented, emotional, confront emotionally, unrestricted body language, interrupt frequently

**Source: Lewis, 2006.**

As emphasised above, based on Lewis’s scale, Slovaks incline to multi-active cultures, multi-active characteristics are thus supposed to be dominated in Slovaks’ behaviour. However, we solely talk about tendencies and presumptions. Of course, one might encounter a Slovak with introverted and job-oriented approach who never focuses on more than one thing only, and who would consider interrupting the communication partner to be highly impolite.

Furthermore, Lewis concretely states following values regarding Slovakia (2006, p. 289):

- extended families,
- respect for education,
- love of music and sport,
- defence of their Slovak nation and culture,
- rather religious (marriage, baptism, funerals),
- lack of self-confidence,
- closeness to nature,
- attachment to folklore, folk art,
- epicureanism,
- attachment to popular traditions,
- sense of historical victimization.

As far as the Slovak communication style is concerned, Slovaks are said to be non-confrontational and do not like saying things that could possibly

offend the communication partner. According to Lewis, Slovaks are more punctual than other Slavs. Moreover, they listen well, interrupt foreigners only occasionally (although, they sometimes interrupt other Slovaks) and are polite. Meetings are normally formal and meeting agendas are less rigid than, for instance, those of Germans or Czechs (2006, pp. 299–300). Apart from that, Slovaks tend to dialogue-oriented cultures. A good example of dialogue-oriented cultures is Italian or Arab culture. They usually acquire information via their broad interpersonal information networks, in juxtaposition to so called data-oriented cultures, for which research and information gathering is the ground for further proceeding (Lewis, 2006, p. 48). Therefore, we can conclude that for most of the Slovaks discussing certain issue may be much more valuable source of information than for example databases or figures.

Other intrinsic characteristics of Slovaks are summarized by Lewis as follows (2006, pp. 301–302): multi-active, charismatic, vigorous speakers, Slavic tendencies, somewhat opinionated, nationalistic, sensitive to criticism, party a lot, slower pace, parochial, male-dominated, extended family, relaxed about rules, autocratic leaders, somewhat vague instructions, spend and borrow, Catholic traditions, complain and grumble, non-tactile, some experimentation, religious in the countryside, status by family, wealth and network contacts.<sup>1</sup> According to Lewis, Slovak also like to be encouraged and dislike being called Eastern Europeans. It is highly recommended to avoid such addressing.

As already mentioned earlier, one of the most cited authors on the field of intercultural communication, or cross-cultural psychology, is Geert Hofstede. „Hofstede’s work on culture and values provides scholars with valuable insights into the dynamics of cross-cultural relationships,” (Bašňáková, Brezina, Masaryk, 2016, p. 15). Based on Hofstede’s extensive research, numerical evaluations of values regarding national cultures within the 6 cultural dimensions were identified. For Slovakia, the following data was published.

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1. In the book, these characteristics are compared to their Czechs equivalents. For those interested, we recommend referring to the chapter.



**Figure 3. Unadjusted indices of Slovak cultural dimensions according to Hofstede**

Dimension	Power Distance	Individualism vs Collectivism	Masculinity vs Femininity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long-term Orientation	Indulgence vs Restraint
Score	104	52	110	51	77	28

**Source: Hofstede, Hofstede, Dimension data matrix, 2015.**

However, this is not the single version of Slovakia’s value calculations. As stated by Bašňáková, J., Brezina, I., Masaryk, R., there are currently several versions of Slovak indices (and the Czech ones as well). Besides the version of Hofstede as it is to be seen from the Figure 3,<sup>2</sup> there are also two versions of Kolman (calibrated and uncalibrated) or the adjusted version of Hofstede & Hofstede (from 2014), where the values above 100 were lowered to exactly 100, whereby lower values remaining unchanged (2016, p. 17).

To avoid confusion, we have decided to include solely the Hofstede’s unadjusted version. Undoubtedly, significantly high scores within the dimensions Power Distance and Masculinity vs. Femininity attract the attention of the reader. The high level of Power Distance can be explained as the state when an unequal distribution of power is largely accepted and expected in a society. With high score within the masculinity dimension, we can expect Slovaks to consider values such as winning or being tough rather important (Hofstede, Hofstede, 2017).

Interesting conclusions are provided in the Comparative Report of Country Findings, published by I See You<sup>3</sup> initiative. Within the Report, 10 key competences are analysed, whereby each competence is revised under 4 common aspects (value in society, competence being taught in education, differences in terms of gender, extent of competence of young entrepreneurs) (2015,

2. Estimated values.

3. Initiative to Foster Social Entrepreneurship Experience of Youth.

p. 3). In this paper, we will exclusively refer to the aspect *value in society*. The following Figure 4. offers a list of the key competences and the extent of their being valued in Slovakia’s society.

**Figure 4. Competences and their value in Slovak society**

Competence	Value of the competence in Slovak society
Leadership	Very high
Ability to take decisions	Very high
Willingness to explore	High
Ability to plan	High
Digital competences	High
Taking initiative	Medium
Creativity	Low
Ability to prioritize	Low
Competitiveness	Low
Ability to think critically	Low

**Source:** Own elaboration according to Comparative Report of Country Findings, 2015

In the original comparison, 5 scales were applied, in concrete very high, high, medium, low and very low. It can be seen that the 10 analysed competences are valued on a different level in the Slovak society. Although competences such as leadership or decisiveness are of a very high value, creativity or critical thinking are not considered to be that significant, and thus despite them being generally required for instance by potential employers. As the report demonstrates, several of the above stated competences lack educational background. For example, ability to take decisions is highly valued, however, the level of its being taught is low. Vice versa, the competence ability to prioritize does not belong to the competences with the highest level of value, but the level of its being taught is high (2015, pp. 4-13).

Throughout the previous part, the term *values* was repeated several times. As emphasised by Průcha (2004, p. 80), the system of values is typical not

only for individuals, but is also shared by social groups, nations, etc. Therefore, it has become a frequently discussed phenomenon not only on the field of intercultural psychology, but comparative sociology, as well.

The main hypothesis behind this paper is engaged in significance of Slovak-Austrian bilateral relations, and thus linked to mutual historical circumstances, as well as bilateral political and economic relations. We suppose, mutual intercultural encounters are relatively frequent, also due to geographical proximity.

However, it should be noted that real direct bilateral relations could have been established after the fall of the communist regime and founding of the independent Slovak Republic (Hrabovec, 2008, p. 3).

As already mentioned, one of the facts emphasised within the present work is the importance of Austrian-Slovak economic relations. To undermine this statement, let us point at several macroeconomic indicators. As probably presupposed, as of 2016, Slovakia was one of the most important business partners of Austria, and thus related to export as well as import. More specifically, Slovakia's position in both parameters was 11 (in concrete, 2,2% import and 2,1% export)<sup>4</sup>(Statistic Austria, 2017). In the reversed perspective, the highest active foreign trade balance of Slovakia was recorded with Germany, followed by the UK, France and Austria (data as of the first quarter of 2017) (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 2017). The trade partnership of the two countries is thus of high importance for both national economies.

One of the facts behind our hypothesis regarding frequent international encounters is the number of Slovaks residing in Austria. As of 01 January 2017, there were 38.094 Slovak citizens in Austria, with the migration balance of 2.239 (migration from the abroad / immigration – 5.575; migration abroad / emigration – 3.336). Total population of Austria represented 8.772.865 (Statistik Austria, 2017); Slovaks therefore accounted for 0,43% of the total population. Of course, we also need to take into consideration thousands

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4. In the respective year, the most important business partner of Austria was Germany.

of those commuting to Austria due to work or studies while keeping their residency in Slovakia.

The tradition of Slovak migration to Austria has a long history. Poláčková (2013, p. 7) identifies migration as the determinant for further development of the bilateral relations. As Rydlo states, at the begin of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were Slovak communities in Lower Austria and Vienna and the first quantitative data concerning the concrete number of Slovaks in Austria comes from 1844, when there are supposed to have been 6.667 persons from Slovakia in Austria. The highest number of Slovaks residing in Austria was reported in 1900 und amounted to approximately 60.000, depending on the dataset considered. Prior to the World War I, the number started to decline considerably, reaching only 20.000 Slovaks in 1914 (2008, pp. 44–47). Just to mention a few migration-related milestones, the 20<sup>th</sup> century (seasonal migrants) and the time after the World War II (political emigration) represent an era of numerous migrations of Slovaks to the neighbouring country (2008, p. 43). To conclude, the number of Slovaks in Austria has undergone many changes in its development, predominantly due to economic and political situation (2008, p. 54).

Another crucial aspect undermining the hypothesis of inseparability of Austro-Slovak relations is involved in education and employment. Austria is a popular destination of Slovak students. Rydlo mentions the long history of teaching Slovak language and culture at the University of Vienna (2008, p. 50).

One of the objectives of the empirical part of this article is to evaluate the occurrence of intercultural conflicts. Or, more precisely, to assess empirical experience of the involved in the survey with culture-based conflicts. In our opinion, since for many Slovaks and Austrians mutual interaction takes place on a daily basis, an intercultural conflict is likely to occur, at least occasionally. Besides others, intercultural conflict belongs to the topics discussed by Morgensternová, M., Šulová, L. et al. They put emphasis on the fact that not every conflict emerging between representatives of distinct cultures is necessarily an intercultural one. What distinguishes a general conflict from

an intercultural one, are the cultural differences behind acting or thinking of the parties engaged in the conflict situation (2007, p. 126).<sup>5</sup>

The psychological aspect is considered by Průcha (2004). On the one hand, he summarizes the theoretical background regarding the discipline intercultural psychology. On the other hand, he deals with psychological characteristics of cultures (e.g. differences in values), prejudice, stereotypes, linguistic and communication aspect, as well as relations and conflicts among nations.

## Results of the empirical research analysis

In the previous part we attempted to summarize values and characteristic traits of Slovaks referring to three sources (Hofstede, Lewis, the comparative report). In order to gain more information, we conducted online interviews with several Austrians. The questions that were supposed to be answered were either open question requesting a statement from the side of the respondents, or multiple-choice questions. One question had a form of a semantic differential. Our main intention was to collect data regarding empirical experience of the respondents concerning their cooperation with Slovaks, encounters, impressions or perception of Slovaks. All the respondents were aged 18–25, or 26–35, respectively. As far as their occupation is concerned, they were either students (high school, university students, or PhD candidates) or employees in the private sector. We were also interested in the frequency of their contact with Slovaks. According to the responses, the respondents meet or encounter a Slovak citizen on a monthly basis, or several times a year, and all of them have already met a Slovak citizen at school or at the workplace. Similarly, all the participants also stated that they had visited Slovakia before, mostly due to a trip to the capital, or because of nature and culture.

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5. For clarification, they state an example of an argument between a wife and a husband with distinct origin. In such a case, the conflict does not need to be an intercultural one (2007, p. 126).

Especially positive is the fact that, to the question *Have you experienced a conflict / an unpleasant situation with a person from Slovakia, which was based on differences between the two cultures?* everybody provided the answer „No“. Furthermore, none of the interviewees reported a negative experience with Slovak citizens and nobody is bothered by the situation regarding the relatively high number of Slovaks working, studying or living in Austria.

In the following, we provide an overview of the other open questions and relevant responses with additional commentaries. However, it needs to be emphasised that the responses in the Figure 5 below are concretely cited (or stylistically adjusted) answers of individual respondents, not their aggregated values, although some answers repeat.

**Figure 5. Overview of open questions and related answers and comments**

Question	Answers	Comment
What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word „Slovakia“?	Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, Twin City region, friendly people, ice hockey, cheap food and drinks	The answer „Bratislava“ occurred in every single response.
What Slovakia-related do you like the most? (nature, towns, food...)	Bratislava (or towns in general), food, nature	Again, the answer „Bratislava“ occurred very frequently.
What is usually your first impression when you encounter a Slovak citizen?	Friendly, open-minded, nice people, quiet, sometimes a bit loud; nice conversations	We can conclude the responses are rather positive. Interesting is the contrasting view of Slovaks regarding the volume of speech.
In my opinion, Slovaks are...	Friendly people with heart in the right place, nice, kind, helpful and pleasant people	Also, these responses demonstrate a very positive approach towards Slovaks.

<p>As far as I am concerned, the most typical characteristics of Slovaks is...</p>	<p>Happy, positive attitude, cannot specify one</p>	<p>On the one hand, we can say that the responses are positive, on the other hand, not everyone is aware of a typical attribute of Slovaks. We therefore suppose, the stereotypes are not necessary widely spread, or in some cases, no significant divergences are perceived.</p>
<p>How would you describe the Slovak communication style?</p>	<p>Sometimes a bit loud, emotional, friendly, nice and formal, indirect; Slovaks generally like conversations</p>	<p>When contemplating the answers in depth, we can see certain connection to the model of Lewis analysed above, according to which Slovaks tend to be more multi-active. To multi-active cultures, characteristics such as talkativeness and people-orientation may be ascribed.</p>
<p>I consider the Slovak language to be ....</p>	<p>Hard to learn, good, similar to Czech language</p>	<p>We assume, the way one perceives a language may have impact on their approach to a culture, or, for instance, willingness to travel to a country where the language in question is spoken or to interact with speakers of that language. Answers „hard to learn“ and „good“ occurred repeatedly.</p>
<p>What famous / well-known Slovak person from the history or from the present day do you know?</p>	<p>Ján Kollár, Martin Škrteľ, Marek Hamšík, none</p>	<p>Within the majority of answers, no reference to a well-known personality was offered. As we can see, association with Slovak sportsmen exists. However, generally speaking, we can conclude, certain niches in knowledge regarding the other culture/facts is missing.</p>

Source: own elaboration.

As it can be seen in the Figure 5. above, we shortly included also the linguistic aspect. Another question related to linguistics was included due to the fact that communication incompetence may result in failure of a communication process. We attempted to find out how the respondents find the knowledge of German language of Slovaks. Their responses were rather satisfactory, as responses were either *Slovaks speak German sufficiently for everyday communication*, or *Slovaks speak German very well, also with regards to business proficiency*. To some extent, this corresponds with the findings of our recent empirical research, when 60% of a survey respondents (Slovaks) reported at least a certain level of their German language knowledge (Čiefová, 2016, p. 186).

Within the semantic differential, 12 spectra of characteristic traits were included. The scale consisted of 7 areas of choice. The fields marked in the darkest colour represent the mostly chosen areas. Sometimes, the opinions of the participants were totally contrasting, as it is to be seen in the Figure 6 below. We suppose, this fact may be ascribed to distinct empirical experience or standpoints of the respondents.

**Figure 6. Semantic differentials with attributes**

rational								emotional
career-oriented								family-oriented
modern								conservative
friendly								unfriendly
polite								impolite
optimistic								pessimistic
reliable								unreliable
individualistic								collectivistic
tolerant								intolerant



hard-work- ing								lazy
open-mind- ed								stiff
direct								indirect

Source: own elaboration.



We can say that some attributes represent a pair of characteristics, whereby one can be marked as a positive and the other one as a negative trait. Apart from that, certain scales correspond either to cultural dimensions or to other cultural divisions. For example, according to Hofstede’s dimensions, the index regarding Individualism – Collectivism was 52/100. In our case, the average is located approximately in the middle of the spectrum, as well. A positive finding is that Slovaks are mostly perceived as friendly, rather open-minded people. They are also seen as rather conservative, family-oriented people and emotional. Emotionality, for instance, agrees with the model of Lewis.

However, it needs to be emphasised that filled questionnaires were submitted by younger generation, also with higher level of education. It is estimated that this fact significantly impacted the results. Therefore, it is recommended to apply the same methodology on a more diverse social group, the final picture might demonstrate different tendencies.

## Conclusions and final remarks

We are aware of the fact that the research presented in this paper has certain limitations. First, not all of the theories regarding cultural similarities and differences or cultural values were applied. The research could be extended by,

for instance, the work of Alexander Thomas (cultural standards), or Edward T. Hall. Secondly, only several aspects of mutual Austro-Slovak relations were highlighted. The part concerning historical background includes only a few milestones related to migration tendencies. A much wider outline of the mutual history could be included, even though the common history did not represent the core of the research. Thirdly, we were interested in empirical experience and standpoints of the individual respondents. To be able to generalize the outcomes, a quantitative approach to the research would need to be adopted.

In conclusion, we would like to express our hope that the present contribution may motivate other scholars and experts to conduct similar research, or to extend this work by new remarks, perspectives or other theories.

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