

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Miriama Sokoláková</b>
<b>Advisor:</b>	<b>PhDr. Lenka Šťastná, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>The Impact of European Funding on Learning Outcomes of Pupils in Slovakia</b>

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT** (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

## Short summary

The thesis analyzes determinants of educational achievement of pupils in Slovak primary and secondary schools. Educational outcomes are measured using the nation-wide test scores of pupils in 9th grade of primary schools and matura exam scores for students at secondary schools. While the main focus of the thesis is the effect of school subsidies from European Funds (for education and reconstruction), the author also considers other socio-economic variables, school-specific and district (or town)-specific variables. Results suggest that there is no significant effect of subsidies on educational performance.

## Contribution

There are many studies analyzing determinants of educational outcomes, but probably none of them focuses on the effect of EU funds. In addition, to my knowledge, it is the first comprehensive study on this topic in Slovakia. The analysis required to match manually data from several datasets – EU projects, schools' test results and socio-economic data, which was a demanding process.

## Methods

The author works with panel data and estimates the fixed effect model. However, the explanatory power of the model is very low. The author is aware of that and proceeds further with the OLS model where she works with observations averaged over several time periods. As this model shows association of the dependent and explanatory variables and not causal relations, the author estimates one more model – difference-in-difference model where she compares performance of schools that did and did not receive EU subsidies. The major limitation of the DID model is that the treatment is defined just as a dummy variable, so this model neglects the size of subsidies. I missed the discussion of this limitation in the thesis.

## Literature

The author demonstrates good command of recent literature on EU funding and on determinants of educational outcomes. The author quotes relevant literature in proper way.

## Manuscript form

The thesis is well-written, has a clear structure and is typeset in LaTeX. Graphs with maps are highly appreciated as they provide an interesting information not only about spatial distribution, but also about correlation of certain variables with (under or over) performance. There are several minor shortcomings. Font size is too small in Figure 3.3 and in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. Table 4.4 shows the maximum of the share of citizens with university education as 609% - is that a typo or a mistake in the data? Also, it is not clear enough what are under and over-performing schools in graphs in Section 4 (based on a certain percentile?).

## Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

This thesis is a very nice piece of work and reflects significant effort Miriama put into writing it. The topic is relevant, and despite some limitations given by data and methodological approaches, results provide an interesting insight into drivers of educational performance in Slovakia. In my view, the thesis fulfills the requirements for a bachelor thesis at IES, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles

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University, I recommend it for the defense and suggest a grade A. The results of the Turnitin analysis do not indicate significant text similarity with other available sources.

Question for the defense:

One of the findings is that the use of ICT improves pupils' performance (almost consistently found in the thesis). Do EU funds support also ICT at schools? Could the effect of ICT be partly the effect of subsidies for supporting ICT at schools? Is there any correlation between use of ICT and EU subsidies?

## **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	28
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	26
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	20
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	18
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> (max. 100 points)	<b>92</b>
<b>GRADE</b> (A – B – C – D – E – F)	<b>A</b>

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** *PhDr. Lenka Šťastná, Ph.D.*

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** *May 30, 2023*

*Digitálně podepsáno (30.5.2023)  
Lenka Šťastná*

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**Referee Signature**

