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## TRENDS IN THE TRANSLATION OF SLOVENIAN LITERATURE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLISHED WORKS IN 16 LANGUAGES (1991–2024)

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the circulation of Slovenian literature in the European Union from Slovenia's independence in 1991 through its accession to the EU in 2004 to 2024. By analysing COBIB bibliographic data and interviews with experts on the literary book market, we compare the translation of Slovenian literature into 16 EU languages, divided into four European regions. Our results show that the number and variety of translations increased significantly after EU accession compared to the 1990s, especially into German, followed by Italian, Spanish and French. In addition, an increase and diversification of translations into most of the 12 other, mainly peripheral languages can be observed.*

*Keywords: Slovenian literature, translation, translation flows, European Union, European Union Prize for Literature, central languages, (semi-)peripheral languages*

## TENDENZE NELLA TRADUZIONE DELLA LETTERATURA SLOVENA NELL'UNIONE EUROPEA: UN'ANALISI COMPARATIVA DELLE OPERE PUBBLICATE IN 16 LINGUE (1991–2024)

### SINTESI

*Questo studio esamina la circolazione della letteratura slovena nell'Unione Europea dall'indipendenza della Slovenia (1991) all'adesione all'UE (2004), fino al 2024. Analizzando i dati bibliografici del COBIB e le interviste con gli esperti del mercato librario confrontiamo la traduzione della letteratura slovena in 16 lingue dell'UE, suddivise in quattro regioni. I risultati mostrano che il numero e la varietà delle traduzioni sono aumentati significativamente dopo l'adesione all'UE rispetto agli anni Novanta, soprattutto in tedesco, seguito da italiano, spagnolo e francese. Inoltre, si può osservare un aumento e una diversificazione delle traduzioni nella maggior parte delle altre 12 lingue, perlopiù in quelle periferiche.*

*Parole chiave: letteratura slovena, traduzione, flussi di traduzione, Unione Europea, Premio letterario dell'Unione Europea, lingue centrali, lingue (semi-)periferiche*

INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Europe's cultural richness depends to a great extent on translation, which enables European cultural and creative works, values and ideas to reach wider audiences and markets, both within Europe and globally (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2022). This article explores literary translation as a crucial form of the intercultural transmission of fiction (Grosman, 1997, 11) beyond the boundaries of its original language. Through translation, readers gain access to a wealth of narratives, insights and artistic expressions that would otherwise remain inaccessible. Literary translation plays an important role in preserving national cultural identity and promoting different languages and cultures, especially those that are endangered or underrepresented. The reputation of a national literature is greatly enhanced by the number of works translated into foreign languages (Moder, 1993, 16), which facilitates its entry into the global literary space and establishes its international presence.

This article examines the circulation of literary translations from Slovenian into various languages of the European Union (EU). Literary exchanges between cultures depend on numerous factors (e.g. historical and political) that influence its intensity and continuity. According to Heilbron (1999), the position of a language in the international translation system is determined by the proportion of its literature translated into other languages. A central position indicates a high number of translations from that language, while translations from peripheral languages are less frequent (Heilbron, 1999). In Heilbron's model,<sup>2</sup> languages are categorised into four positions: hyper-central, occupied by English with 55–60% (Heilbron, 2010, 2)<sup>3</sup> of all books translated worldwide; central, with 10–12% of the international translation market; semi-peripheral, with 1–3%; and peripheral, with less than 1% (Heilbron, 1999, 9–10; 2010, 2).

To analyse the extent of translations of Slovenian literature into different EU languages, we have selected languages from different geographical regions. We hypothesise that geographical proximity to Slovenia influences literary exchange and that languages within the same geographical region may show similar patterns. Following the EuroVoc classification (Publications Office of the European Union, n.d.), our study focuses on western, eastern, northern (including languages of Nordic and Baltic states) and southern European languages. We examine translations in 16 languages categorised

1 This article is the result of research carried out in the research programme P6-0265 *Intercultural Literary Studies*, co-funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS) in 2019–2024.

2 Similar, albeit less complex, models for classifying languages within the global language system have been proposed by scholars such as de Swaan (2001; 2010), who ranked languages based on the number of non-native speakers, and Casanova (2002; 2004), who integrated the number of non-native speakers and language users with the number of literary translators working to and from a language. However, Heilbron's approach is the most suitable for this study, as his classification criterion focuses on the number of book translations.

3 This proportion could be even higher, as Heilbron (2020, 137) states that in 2002 over 60% of all book translations worldwide originated from English.

as central (French, German), semi-peripheral (Italian, Spanish, Swedish) and peripheral (Bulgarian, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, Greek, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian) according to Heilbron's world system of translation (van Es & Heilbron, 2015, 297). Our results will show whether translation flows from Slovenian into these<sup>4</sup> languages correspond to Heilbron's model.

This comparative analysis of literary translation flows from Slovenian into 16 languages<sup>5</sup> examines bibliographic data on book translations (prose, poetry, drama)<sup>6</sup> from the Slovenian COBIB bibliographic database.<sup>7</sup> The study begins in 1991, the year in which Slovenia became an independent state, thereby losing part of the former Yugoslav translation market and seeking integration into the wider European literary sphere (Bučar & Udovič, 2023; Leben, 2023, 460).

With Slovenia's accession to the EU in 2004, the country's visibility gradually increased. One of the main objectives of this research is to determine whether European integration has increased interest in Slovenian literature in EU Member States compared to the pre-2004 period, and whether it has led to a greater quantity and diversity of literary translations from Slovenian. The study collects data on published translations from 1991 to June 2024 and analyses them by decade (1991–2000, 2001–2010 and 2011–2020). For the period 2021–2024, the focus is on the average number of books published per year to enable a comparison with previous decades. In addition, the collected data is supplemented by interviews with experts on the literary book market, which shed light on how the Slovenian book market has responded to European integration.

The EU encourages literary translation to make the diverse literary heritage of its Member States accessible to all European citizens. This initiative not only enriches the

- 
- 4 Certain languages, such as English and most Slavic languages – with the exception of Bulgarian due to its geographical proximity to Romanian – were excluded from the study, as their inclusion would go beyond the scope of this article. Moreover, the translation of Slovenian literature into many of the omitted languages has already been addressed in previous research (cf., e.g., Pokorn et al., 2023). For further analyses of translations into Slavic languages, including Czech, Polish and Slovak, cf. Žbogar (2014).
  - 5 Our analysis shows some discrepancies with statistical data for 10 (semi-)peripheral languages collected by Mikolič Južnič and Pokorn (2023, 908). For six other languages, descriptive overviews of published translations can be found in Pokorn et al. (2023).
  - 6 Only translations published in book form, including ebooks, are considered in this article, while translations published in literary magazines and unpublished dramatic works commissioned by theatres are excluded. Anthologies and reprints are also included in the analysis.
  - 7 According to the Institute of Information Science (2024), the COBIB database most likely does not contain all translations of Slovenian literature published abroad, as foreign publishers are not always required to submit copies of their publications to a repository, in our case the National and University Library of Slovenia (NUK). However, the NUK strives to acquire as many translations of Slovenian authors published abroad as possible in order to include them in the national Slovenika collection, which contains "all works which were either edited or published in Slovenia, refer to Slovenia [and Slovenians], and were written in the Slovenian language or [...] by Slovenian authors" (National and University Library, n.d.). In addition, authors often donate copies of their translations to libraries, which leads to the creation of bibliographic records, or they may request the creation of such records to facilitate the compilation of a bibliography (Institute of Information Science, 2024). In this sense, we believe that the translations recorded for this study represent the vast majority of all translations published in Slovenia as well as abroad.

European literary landscape, but also fosters a deeper appreciation of the continent's cultural diversity. The main mechanism for supporting "the translation, publication, distribution and promotion of works of fiction" from both EU Member States and non-EU countries is the Creative Europe programme (European Commission, n.d., Circulation of European Literary Works). This programme "supports over 500 book translations every year in more than 40 original and 30 target languages" (European Commission, n.d., Books and Publishing).

The programme also funds the European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL), which is awarded annually to "the best emerging fiction writers<sup>8</sup> in Europe" (European Union Prize for Literature, n.d.). Since the prize was introduced in 2009 and up to 2017, "almost 1,000 translations have resulted from the award" (Wischenbart et al., 2020, 53), which corresponds to an average of around 125 translations per year. The Creative Europe programme encourages the translation of works that have been awarded the EUPL by providing translation grants to publishers. Without the EUPL, authors who write in peripheral languages and come from smaller markets would probably receive far less international visibility and fewer translation opportunities (Wischenbart et al., 2016, 42f.).

So far, four Slovenian authors have received the EUPL: Nataša Kramberger (*Heaven in a Blackberry Bush: Novel in Stories*, 2010), Gabriela Babnik (*Dry Season*, 2013), Jasmin B. Frelih (*In/Half*, 2016) and Anja Mugerli (*Bee Family*, 2021). Tina Vrščaj also received a special mention in 2024 for her novel *On Slope*. According to the COBIB database, these authors did not have any of their works translated before receiving the award.<sup>9</sup> Another aim of this study is therefore to investigate whether the EUPL Prize has influenced the translation of these Slovenian authors' works into the observed languages.

## CHARTING SLOVENIAN LITERATURE'S TRANSLATION FLOWS INTO 16 EU LANGUAGES

### Western European languages (Dutch, French and German)

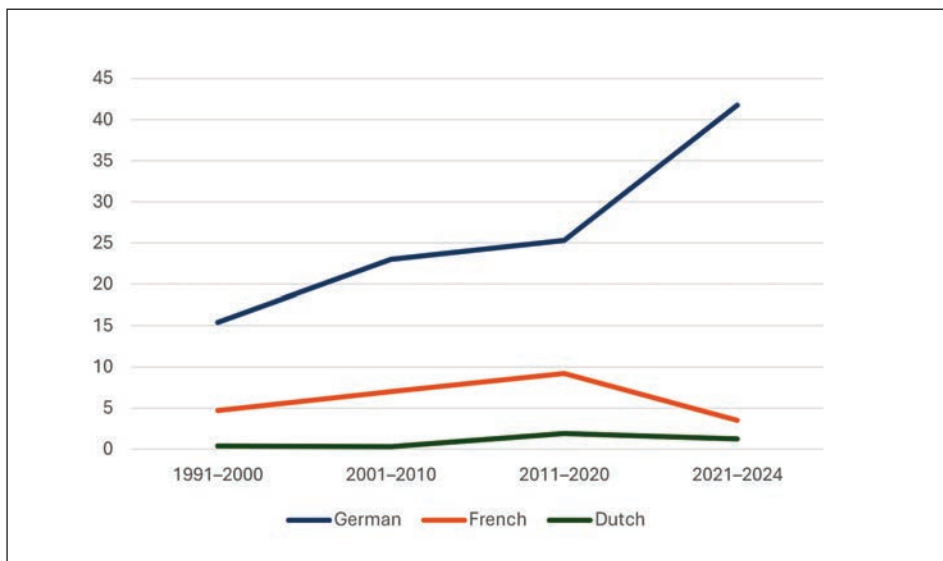
Among the western European languages, translation activity into German has been the highest since 1991 (804 published book editions), followed by French (223), while the figures for Dutch (31) are significantly lower. Translations into German and French recorded steady growth between 1991 and 2020. Over the three decades, the share of German translations increased from 24.2% in 1991–2000 to 36.1% in 2001–2010, and further to 39.7% in 2011–2020. Similarly, the share of French translations increased from 22.5% to 33.5% and then to 44%, respectively. In contrast, translations into Dutch

8 In addition to a cash prize of €5,000, each EUPL prizewinner receives institutional support for the translation and promotion of their work.

9 However, prior to receiving the award, some of their short stories or excerpts from novels had been published in literary magazines or anthologies, usually featuring non-award-winning works.

were initially minimal, with only four editions in the first decade and three in the second. However, the period 2011–2020 saw a sharp increase, with 19 editions accounting for 73.1% of the total. The average annual number of translations (Chart 1) into German increased significantly from 25.3 books per year in 2011–2020 to 41.75 books per year in 2021–2024. Conversely, the number of translations into French fell from an average of 9.2 books per year to 3.5 books per year in the same periods. There was also a slight decline in translations into Dutch, from an average of 1.9 books per year in 2011–2020 to 1.25 books per year in 2021–2024.

In the first decade (1991–2000), prose accounted for the largest share of translations into German, while poetry had the highest share (38%) compared to other periods. This was partly due to the 10 publications of the Slovenian Romantic poet France Prešeren, which were mainly published by Slovenian publishers and the Austrian Hermagoras Society. Other frequently translated poets were Kajetan Kovič (7 editions), Srečko Kosovel (5) and Gustav Januš (4). Among prose authors, Ivan Cankar (8) took the lead ahead of contemporary authors such as Drago Jančar, Florjan Lipuš and Žarko Petan. Poetry was translated most often into French, led by France Prešeren (8 editions), followed by Dane Zajc (3), Boris A. Novak (3), Tomaž Šalamun (2) and Veno Taufer (2). Among the prose authors, Boris Pahor (4), Kajetan Kovič (3) and Vladimir Bartol (2) were translated most often. Translations into Dutch included only two novels by Drago Jančar and two volumes of poetry by Tomaž Šalamun and Veno Taufer, which were co-financed by the Slovenian Trubar Foundation.



*Chart 1: Average number of translations per year from 1991 to 2024 in some western European languages.*

In the next decade (2001–2010), prose continued to dominate in German and poetry in French, while the diversity of literary genres increased. The classic authors began to fade, although Ivan Cankar remained represented with six editions in German and France Prešeren with four editions in French. Contemporary authors dominated the translations: Boris Pahor (12 editions in German, 8 in French), Florjan Lipuš (10 in German) and Lila Prap (9 picture books in German, 5 in French). Other frequently translated authors were Drago Jančar (7 in German, 5 in French) and Tomaž Šalamun (6 in German, 4 in French). Only three prose works were published in Dutch: two by Lojze Kovačič and one by Vitan Mal.

During the third period (2011–2020), translations into German, French and Dutch reached their peak. Prose continued to dominate in the German translations, and surpassed poetry for the first time in French, doing so to such a degree that prose titles ended up outnumbering the French translations of poetry for the overall 33.5-year period examined in this study. In Dutch translations, poetry increased, as did the number of novels (6 each). The range of genres widened, with more picture books in German (51) and French (15) and the first picture books (3) and a comic book in Dutch. The number of comics in German (6) and French (4) also increased due to their growing popularity alongside graphic novels (Kac, 2024). The most important authors in German included Drago Jančar, Florjan Lipuš, Evald Flisar and Mojca Stubelj Ars (7 editions each), as well as Lila Prap and Prežihov Voranc (6 each). In French, the most important authors were Drago Jančar (13), Boris Pahor (6), Vladimir Bartol (4) and Lila Prap (4). After 2010, Dutch translations focused on established authors such as Pahor and Kovačič, reflecting an international trend towards autobiographical novels (Zamida, 2024). After 2014, contemporary Slovenian poets (e.g. Andrej Hočevár), comic authors (Ciril Horjak and Rok Jurič), picture books (e.g. Helena Kraljič) and fairy tales (Tanja Galli) were translated into Dutch, along with internationally recognised authors such as Drago Jančar (3 books).

Translation activity from Slovenian into German has increased significantly in the last four years (2021–2024), which is largely due to Slovenia's status as Guest of Honour at the 2023 Frankfurt Book Fair, bringing greater visibility and better sales for the publishers (Stergar, 2024). Prose remained the genre most often translated into German, with translations of picture books just ahead of novels. Prežihov Voranc was the author most often translated into German, with five editions appearing in collaboration with Carinthian publishers (Wieser, Drava) and a Trieste publisher (Založništvo tržaškega tiska). Contemporary authors such as Jana Bauer, Drago Jančar, Božena Boža Lesjak, Anja Štefan, Aleš Šteger and Goran Vojnović were also frequently translated. In French, poetry (8 editions) surpassed prose (6). In addition to Drago Jančar and Florjan Lipuš, the lesser-known writers Mojca Stubelj Ars and Agata Tomažič were also translated into French. Five books were translated into Dutch during this period, including a novel by Jančar, three picture books and an anthology of Slovenian folk tales.

Approximately one third of all translations into German, French and Dutch were published in Slovenia, with the majority published abroad (68% for German and Dutch translations, 64% for French). More than a third of the Dutch translations were sponsored by the Slovenian Book Agency and/or the Trubar Foundation.

### Southern European languages (Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish)

The analysis of the bibliographic data on literary translations from Slovenian into Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Greek between 1991 and 2024 shows that Italian is the predominant language among the southern European countries. With a total of 558 translated works, Italian far outstrips Spanish with 268 translations and is well ahead of Portuguese (42) and Greek (36).

Over the first three decades (1991–2020), the number of translations into these four languages increased significantly. Italian translations rose from 23.1% (1991–2000) to 34.6% (2001–2020) and finally to 42.3% (2011–2020). Spanish translations increased from 13.7% to 32.7% and finally to 53.5% in the same periods. Portuguese translations rose from 9.1% (3 books) to 18.2%, eventually reaching 72.7% (24 books), while growth in Greek rose from 9.5% (2 books) to 28.6%, reaching 61.9% (13 books) in 2011–2020. From 2021 to 2024, however, there was a slight decline in the average number of translations per year (Chart 2): Italian fell from 20.5 (2011–2020) to 18.25, Spanish from 12.1 to 10.75 and Portuguese from 2.4 to 2.25. In contrast, translations into Greek rose from 1.3 to 3.75 published books per year.

In the first decade after Slovenia's independence (1991–2000), poetry was the genre most often translated into Italian, mirroring the trend in other western European languages. Notable poets include France Prešeren (6 editions), Kajetan Kovič (5, including a novel), Srečko Kosovel (4) and Marko Kravos (3, including a picture book). Among the prose authors, Dušan Jelinčič had three editions. In the 1990s, 77% of Slovenian translations into Spanish were poetry, with 62.5% published within Slovenia (e.g. Kajetan Kovič, Boris A. Novak, Dane Zajc). Only two editions (by Alojz Ihan and Tomaž

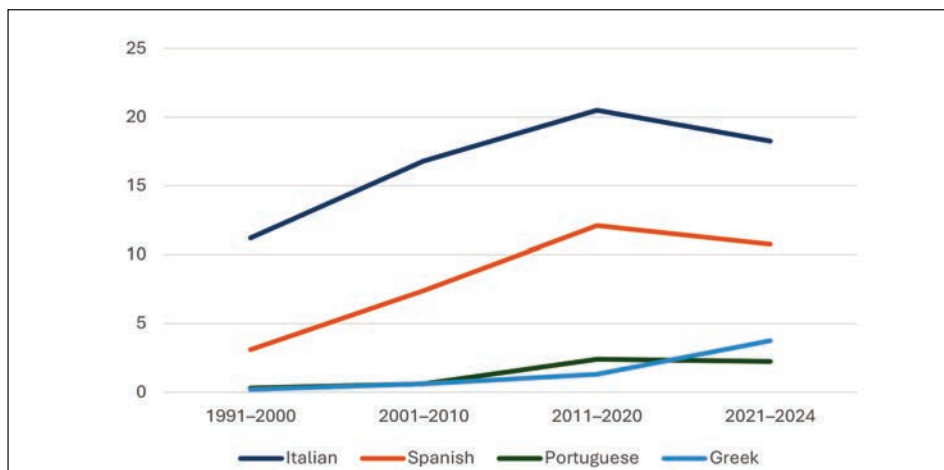


Chart 2: Average number of translations per year from 1991 to 2024 in some southern European languages.

Šalamun) were published in Spain, and two in Argentina by members of the Slovenian community (Igor Moder and Tone Rode). Slovenian prose translations into Spanish were limited: only one work by Andrej Blatnik was published in Spain, the rest were published in Slovenia or Italy by the Slovenian national minority. During this period, only two works by Petan were translated into Greek and published in Athens, while three anthologies of Slovenian poetry and other genres were translated into Portuguese and published in Ljubljana.

Between 2001 and 2010, translations of Slovenian poetry into Italian increased considerably, as did those of picture books and comics. Contemporary authors are translated most often, led by Boris Pahor<sup>10</sup> with 17 editions, followed by Dušan Jelinčič (8), Marko Kravos (5) and both Lila Prap and Brane Mozetič (4 each). Prose and poetry are almost equally represented among the translations into Spanish. A large proportion of these translations (35.1%) were published in Slovenia, and many also in Latin America (32.4%) and Spain (31.1%). Lila Prap is the author most often translated into Spanish, with nine editions of her picture books, mainly in Latin America. She is followed by Vladimir Bartol (4 editions of *Alamut*) and two volumes of poetry each by Srečko Kosovel, Brane Mozetič and France Prešeren, most of which were published in Spain. Other notable Slovenian authors published in Spain include Drago Jančar, Lojze Kovačič and Boris Pahor, while Alojz Gradnik, Svetlana Makarovič and Tomaž Šalamun were published in Latin America. Slovenian publishers have also contributed to the publication of works by Miha Mazzini, Tone Pavček and several anthologies.

Translations into Portuguese have doubled in this decade (to 6 editions), including three picture books by Lila Prap published in São Paulo and works by Ivan Cankar and Brane Mozetič in Portugal. Translations into Modern Greek increased from two to six, including mainly contemporary prose (e.g. by Evald Flisar, Boris Pahor and Brina Sviti). In addition, an anthology covering various genres was published in Greek in Slovenia.

Between 2011 and 2020, translations into Italian, Spanish and Portuguese reached their peak. Numerous works by Ivan Cankar, a key figure of Slovenian modernism, were translated into Italian (9 editions in Slovenia or in the Trieste region). He was followed by Boris Pahor and Srečko Kosovel (7 editions each), and other frequently translated authors were Marko Kravos (6), Alojz Rebula (6), Dušan Jelinčič (5) and Mojca Stubelj Ars (5). Translations into Spanish were published in Slovenia (37.2%), Latin America (30.6%) and Spain (27.3%). Prose surpassed poetry, partly due to the increase in translated picture books by Helena Kraljič (8 editions), Peter Svetina (7) and Jana Bauer (6). Brane Mozetič was the leader in adult literature with nine editions, followed by Karel Destovnik, Drago Jančar and Goran Vojnović (2 editions each).

The Portuguese translations grew mainly due to the picture books published in Brazil, especially by Helena Kraljič. There was a balance in translations into Greek

10 On the translations of Pahor's prose into Italian and French, cf. Mezeg and Grego (2022).

between poetry (by Aleš Jelenko, Aljaž Koprivnikar, Brane Mozetič and Srečko Kosovel) and prose, including children's literature by Maša Ogrizek and two novels published in Athens by Gabriela Babnik and Drago Jančar.

Since 2021, picture books have been the genre most often translated into Italian, which is probably due to Slovenia's role as Guest of Honour at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2024. However, in contrast to the increase in German translations after the Frankfurt Book Fair, there was no comparable increase in Italian translations. According to Stergar (2024), the Bologna project did not produce the expected results. Only one Slovenian publisher, KUD Sodobnost, has significantly increased its translations (16 editions). Nevertheless, Stergar (2024) remains optimistic about the future impact of the Bologna project. Notable translations in the last four years include picture books by Tadeja Pirnat (published in Ljubljana) and works by Marko Kravos (3 editions each) as well as Peter Svetina and Goran Vojnović (2 editions each).

The more recent translations into Spanish are predominantly prose, with children's literature, which is mainly published in Slovenia, being translated more often than adult literature. The proportion of translations published in Slovenia has risen to 58.1%, while the proportion of translations published in Latin America is less than 10%. Around a third (32.6%) is published in Spain, including prose for adults by Miha Mazzini and Goran Vojnović, picture books by Helena Kraljič, comics by Damijan Stepančič, poetry by Gorazd Kocijančič, Brane Mozetič and Lucija Stupica and a drama by Tone Partljič.

The number of translations into Portuguese remains low and is mainly focused on children's literature, which is mostly published in Brazil (e.g. Manica Klenovšek Musil, Ida Mlakar Črnič) or Portugal (Peter Svetina). Around a third of the Spanish translations relate exclusively to poetry published in Slovenia, including an anthology and works by Samo Dražumerič and Srečko Kosovel. The translations into Greek are mainly contemporary prose, divided almost equally between literature for adults and children. The adult literature includes works by Jasmin B. Frelih, Drago Jančar, Evald Flisar (2 works), Lojze Kovačič and Marko Sosič. In children's literature, three works by Brane Mozetič have been translated into Greek.

In the 33.5-year period analysed, translations into Greek have the highest percentage of publications within their home country (78% published in Greece). Italy follows with 62.5% of translations published there, while 31% of translations into Italian are published in Slovenia. Slovenia also plays an important role in translations into Spanish: 42.8% are published in Slovenia, compared to 27.5% in Spain and 25.6% in Latin America, which emphasises the strong influence of Slovenian local initiatives. The geographical distribution of Portuguese translations shows a different pattern: only 19% are published in Portugal, while 31% are published in Slovenia. Brazil is an important hub, with 50% of translations into Portuguese published there, demonstrating the global reach of Slovenian literature.

## Languages of Nordic (Danish, Finnish, Swedish) and Baltic (Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian) states

The data show different trends in Slovenian literary translations into northern European languages, with Swedish leading the way with 28 translations, followed by Finnish and Lithuanian with 21 and 20 translations, respectively. Danish and Latvian have 13 and 12 translations, respectively, while Estonian has the fewest translations (6). Translation activity was modest in the first decade, but increased significantly between 2001 and 2010: translations into Finnish rose from two to 10, into Swedish from two to nine, into Danish from one to eight and into Lithuanian from two to four. In the third decade (2011–2020), translations into Finnish and Danish fell to four and three, respectively, while translations into Swedish and Lithuanian rose to 14 and 11, respectively. This period also saw the first translations into Estonian (4) and Latvian (5). A comparison of 2011–2020 with 2021–2024 shows a significant increase in the average annual number of translations (Chart 3) into Latvian (from 0.5 to 1.75) and Finnish (from 0.4 to 1.25) and a slight increase into Estonian (from 0.4 to 0.5). In contrast, translations into Swedish and Lithuanian fell (from 1.4 to 0.75 and 1.1 to 0.75, respectively), as did those into Danish (from 0.3 to 0.25).

Between 1991 and 2000, a volume of poetry and a novel by Maja Novak were translated from Slovenian into Finnish, poems by Tomaž Šalamun and Dane Zajc into Swedish, and poems by Šalamun and a fairy tale by Polonca Kovač into Lithuanian. While Danish received a translation of an anthology, there were no translations into Estonian and Latvian.

During 2001–2010, the number and variety of Slovenian literary translations increased significantly. The Finnish translations included prose by Evald Flisar, Boris Pahor and Vladimir Bartol, while the number of poetry translations was smaller (an anthology and poems by Tomaž Šalamun and Aleš Debeljak). More poems (by Aleš Šteger, Lucija Stupica and Šalamun) were translated into Swedish and less prose (Fran Levstik, Aleš Šteger, Alojz Rebula). Danish translations increased mainly due to the picture books by Lila Prap, Mojca Osojnik and Cvetka Sokolov. Translations into Lithuanian doubled (to 4 editions), including anthologies and poems by Aleš Debeljak. No Slovenian literary translations were made into Estonian or Latvian during this period, even though these countries joined the EU together with Slovenia in 2004.

In the third decade, the Danish translations were exclusively fiction prose (e.g. Feri Lainšček, Nataša Kramberger). In Finnish translations, prose (e.g. Drago Jančar) predominates over poetry (Srečko Kosovel), while Swedish translations include picture books (Lila Prap, Tina Orter, Brane Mozetič), comics (Iztok Sitar, Tanja Komadina) and novels (Boris Pahor, Goran Vojnovič). Translations into Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian have focused mainly on picture books by authors such as Majda Koren, Peter Svetina and Jana Bauer, as well as some prose for adults by Gabriela Babnik (Latvian) and Vladimir Bartol and Goran Vojnovič (Lithuanian).

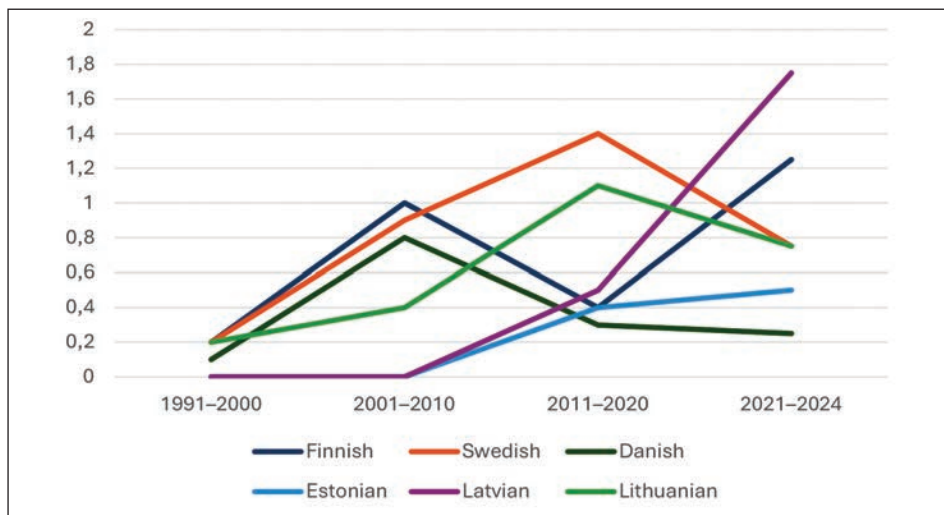


Chart 3: Average number of translations per year from 1991 to 2024 in some northern European languages.

Between 2021 and 2024, translations into Finnish and Latvian increased, mainly through picture books (Jana Bauer for Finnish and Latvian; Andreja Peklar for Finnish, Ida Mlakar Črnič for Latvian) and novels (Drago Jančar for Finnish; Evald Flisar and Vinko Möderndorfer for Latvian). Poetry translations were less frequent, with notable works including Bratko Brelih's poems in Finnish and an LGBT anthology in Latvian (2022). Two children's books have been translated into Estonian, including Josip Jurčič's *The Goat Trial of Višnja Gora*, which was also published in Danish (2014), Latvian and Lithuanian (2021) in Slovenia. Translations into Swedish, Danish and Lithuanian have declined. Notable Swedish translations include Katja Perat's *The Masochist* and Lucija Stupica's poetry. Jančar's *I Saw Her That Night* was translated into Lithuanian (2021) and Danish (2022), while Vojnovič's *The Fig Tree* was only translated into Lithuanian.

Since Slovenia's accession to the EU, most translations have been published by Nordic and Baltic publishers. The average number of translated books per year has increased very slowly and still does not reach one book per year in most languages, except Finnish and Latvian.

### Eastern European languages (Bulgarian, Hungarian and Romanian)

From 1991 to 2024, translations from Slovenian into Hungarian were the most common (94), followed by those into Bulgarian (68) and Romanian (28). The number of Hungarian translations rose from 19.5% (1991–2000) to 48.3% (2001–2010) and then fell to 32.2% (2011–2020). The number of Bulgarian translations increased

steadily from 2.1% (1991–2000) to 18.75% (2001–2010) and then rose to 79.2% (2011–2020). The number of Romanian translations rose steadily from 8.7% (1991–2000) to 34.8% (2001–2010), reaching a peak of 56.5% (2011–2020). From 2021–2024, the average annual translation figures (Chart 4) for Hungarian (from 2.8 to 1.75) and Romanian (from 1.3 to 1.25) decreased, but increased for Bulgarian (from 3.8 to 5).

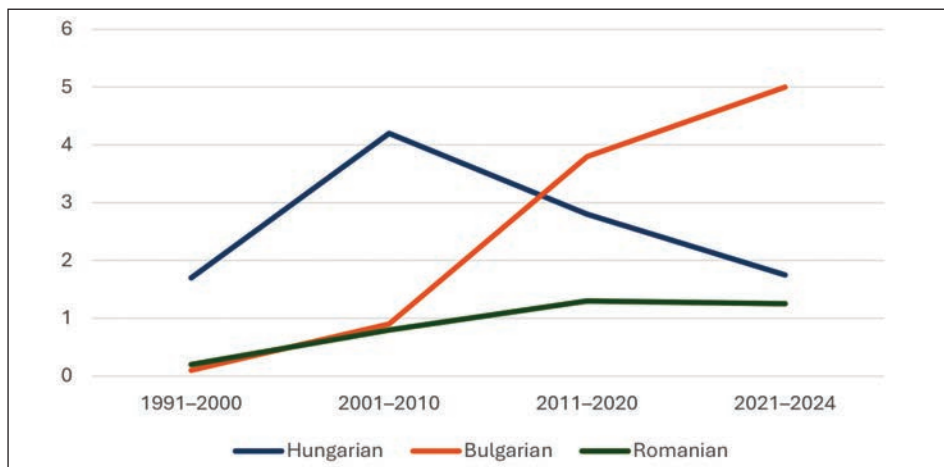
In the 1990s, both prose (e.g. by Drago Jančar, Feri Lainšček, Kajetan Kovič) and poetry (e.g. by Aleš Debeljak, Edvard Kocbek, Janko Messner, France Prešeren, Tomaž Šalamun) were translated into Hungarian. It is noteworthy that about 30% of these translations were published in Slovenia, reflecting a significant Slovenian initiative. In particular, the Slovenians facilitated the publication of two volumes of poetry by Kajetan Kovič and one by France Prešeren, as well as prose works by Ivan Bizjak and Feri Lainšček. In contrast, translations into Romanian and Bulgarian were rare, with only two Romanian translations (works by Žarko Petan and Prežihov Voranc) and one Bulgarian translation (poems by Cvetka Lipuš).

Between 2001 and 2010, translations from Slovenian into Hungarian, Bulgarian and Romanian increased in various genres. In Hungarian, poetry (e.g. by Srečko Kosovel, Aleš Šteger, Dane Zajc) slightly outweighs prose (e.g. two novels by Drago Jančar and *Alamut* by Vladimir Bartol). Several picture books (e.g. by Barbara Hanuš, Mojca Kumerdej, Lila Prap, Svetlana Makarovič) have been published, mostly in Slovenia or Austria, with the exception of Lila Prap's *Miért? (Zakaj?/Why?)* published in Budapest. Poetry collections (e.g. by Tone Dodek, Štefan Huzjan, Feri Lainšček, Janko Messner) were also mostly published in Slovenia or Austria. Overall, 78% of the translations were published in Hungary, including a drama by Evgen Car and several anthologies.

The increase in Bulgarian translations is mainly due to contemporary poetry (e.g. by Ivan Dobnik, Kajetan Kovič, Brane Mozetič, Aleš Šteger), while only two prose works (by Drago Jančar and Slavko Pregl) were published during this decade. Romanian translations increased mainly due to children's books (e.g. by Desa Muck, Marjeta Novak-Kajzer, Ela Peroči, Anja Štefan), but also poetry (by Srečko Kosovel, Tomaž Šalamun) and an anthology of prose.

In the decade from 2011 to 2020, Hungarian translations declined, mainly due to a significant decrease in translations of poetry. These were mainly published in Hungary and included works by Aleš Debeljak and Tomaž Šalamun. Prose translations remained stable, with 39% published in Slovenia, including children's literature and short prose by Sandi Horvat. Hungarian publishers focused on contemporary authors (e.g. Gabriela Babnik, Jasmin B. Frelih, Drago Jančar, Lojze Kozar, Miha Mazzini, Dušan Šarotar, Suzana Tratnik) and also published two dramas by Evald Flisar and an anthology of various genres.

In the Bulgarian language area, translations of poetry (e.g. by Ivan Cankar, Aleš Debeljak, Iztok Osojnik, Josip Osti, Tomaž Šalamun, Aleš Šteger) remained stable. There was a significant increase in prose in particular, which rose from



*Chart 4: Average number of translations per year from 1991 to 2024 in some eastern European languages.*

two works in the previous decade to 25. Drago Jančar was the most frequently represented author with five works. Other contemporary Slovenian writers who were translated into Bulgarian were Vladimir Bartol, Evald Flisar, Tadej Golob, Slavko Pregl, Janja Vidmar and Goran Vojnović. Some children's literature (e.g. by Helena Kraljič, Frane Milčinski) was also published. Romanian translations mainly included prose for adults (e.g. by Boris Pahor, Goran Vojnović) and picture books by Helena Kraljič, while translations of poetry were rarer, with notable exceptions such as Aleš Debeljak and Jana Putrle Srdić.

From 2021 to 2024, translations into Bulgarian increased significantly, averaging five works per year. Around 90% of these translations were prose, including novels by contemporary authors (e.g. Drago Jančar, Anja Mugerli, Suzana Tratnik, Goran Vojnović, Bronja Žakelj). In addition, numerous picture books (e.g. by Špela Frlic, Helena Kraljič, Desa Muck) and only two volumes of poetry by Esad Babačić and France Prešeren have been translated into Bulgarian. Translation activity into Romanian has declined slightly. Notable translations include two editions of fairy tales by Jana Bauer and a novel by Suzana Tratnik. In contrast, the number of translations into Hungarian fell to less than two books per year, of which only three were published in Hungary: prose by Borut Kraševac, Feri Lainšček and Anja Mugerli.

Overall, a significant proportion of translations into Hungarian (28%) were published in Slovenia, which can be due to the fact that Hungarian is recognised there as a minority language. In contrast, most translations into Bulgarian and Romanian were published abroad (96% in Bulgaria and 86% in Romania).

# DIVERGENCE IN TRANSLATION: CENTRAL VS. (SEMI-)PERIPHERAL EU LANGUAGES

An overview of translation activity for all the languages shows that a total of 2,253 translations of Slovenian literature have been published since 1991 (Chart 5). Four target languages had a significantly higher number of translations compared to the others – first and foremost German as the central language (804), followed by two semi-peripheral Romance languages, Italian (558) and Spanish (269), and another central Romance language, French (223).

Fewer translations were published in the other, mostly peripheral languages, with the highest number in Hungarian (94) and Bulgarian (68). Languages with 20 to 45 editions include Portuguese (42), Greek (36), Dutch (31), Swedish (28), Romanian (28), Finnish (21) and Lithuanian (20). Fewer than 15 works were translated into Danish (13), Latvian (12) and Estonian (6) in the last 33.5 years.

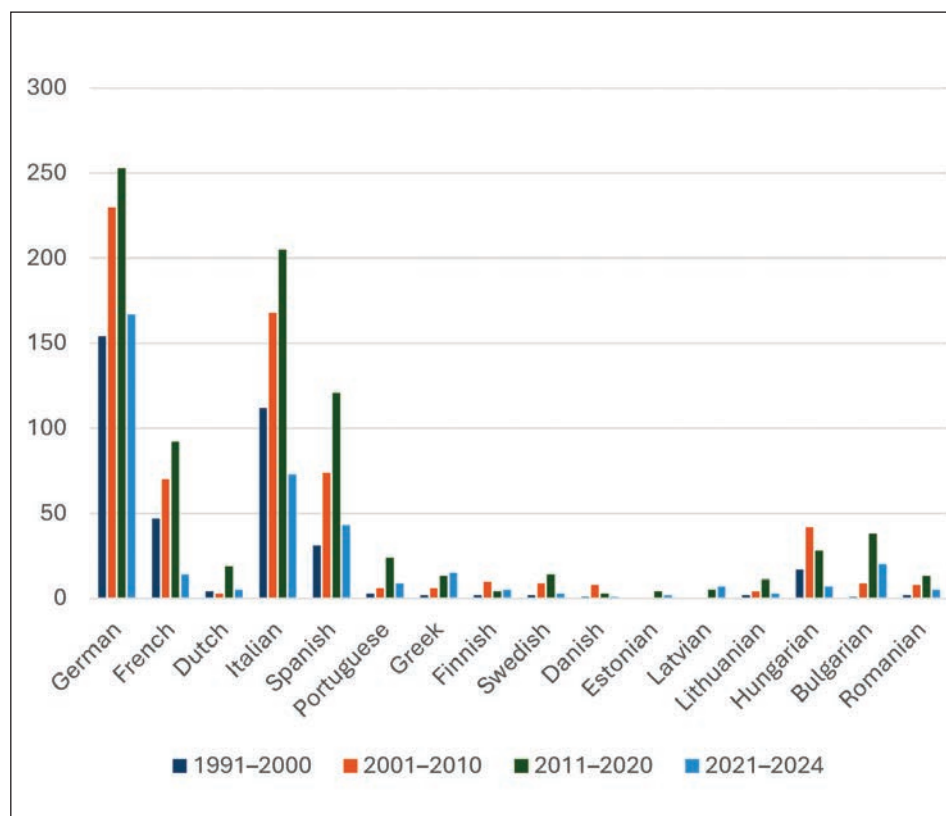


Chart 5: Total number of translations from 1991 to 2024 in all languages observed.

The analysis of the average number of translations published per year shows that such activity has increased for most of the 16 languages since 1991 and up to 2011–2020. The exceptions are translations into Estonian and Latvian (first published in 2015), Danish and Hungarian (declining since the 2010s) and Finnish and Dutch, where translation activity has fluctuated. Translation trends since 2021 show that Slovenian literature is experiencing increasing growth in some languages (German, Latvian, Finnish, Estonian, Greek, Bulgarian), while this trend is reversed in others (French, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Lithuanian, Danish, Hungarian, Romanian). It should be noted that there were also COVID-19 lockdowns during this period, which led to book publications being postponed or cancelled due to lower sales (Kovač & Gudinačičius, 2020, 20–22).

After Slovenia's accession to the EU, translation activity increased in all the languages surveyed (Chart 6). While we recorded no translations into Estonian and Latvian before 2015, there were six and 12 published editions, respectively, in the subsequent period. In other, mostly peripheral languages, there was an average of less than 0.5 translations per year before 2004. After 2004, for some of these (Danish, Finnish, Lithuanian) the number of translations increased minimally to less than one per year after 2004 (around 0.5–0.8). In other cases (Dutch, Swedish, Romanian, Greek, Portuguese) an average of between one and 1.85 translations were published after 2004, while in Bulgarian an average of around three translations were published per year. Although there was some increase recorded in translation activity in these languages, the total number of translations from 1991 to 2024 was still very low for each language, ranging from 13 to 68 (Chart 5). In contrast to the

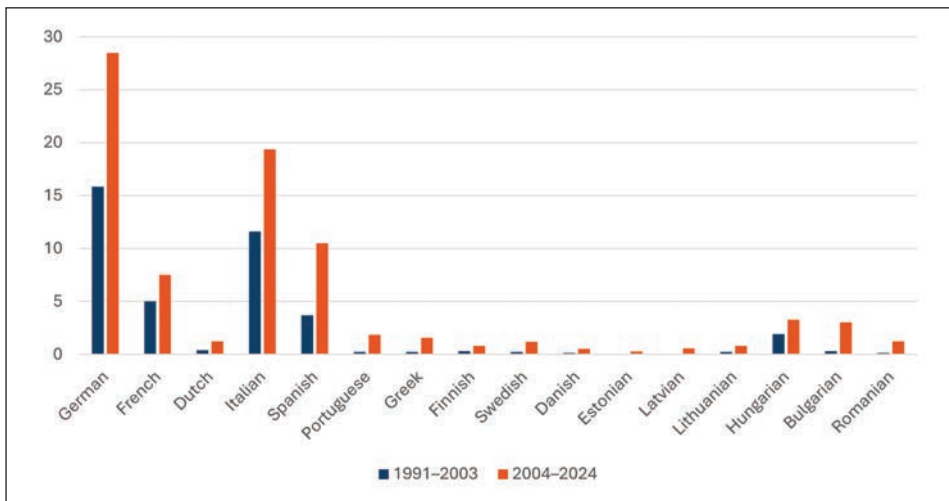


Chart 6: Average number of translations per year in the periods since Slovenia's independence and after joining the EU in all observed languages.

other peripheral languages, Hungarian had a higher average number of published translations per year before 2004 (1.9), but recorded a smaller increase after 2004, with around 3.3 published translations.

The largest increase in the average number of translations per year after Slovenia's accession to the EU was recorded in the countries with the highest total number of translated editions. In first place is central German, where translation activity almost doubled after 2004 (an increase from almost 16 books per year to almost 29). This is followed by semi-peripheral Italian (an increase of almost 8 books) and Spanish (an increase of almost 7 books). Slovenia's accession to the EU had the least impact on translations into central French, where around 2.5 more translations per year were published after 2004.

An analysis of the distribution of translations of Slovenian literature into 16 different languages since 1991 leads to some interesting observations. For example, 35.7% of all translations were into German, which shows that this language is the most central and thus also the main target language for Slovenian literary export. Italian (24.8%) and Spanish (11.9%), which belong to the semi-peripheral languages in the international translation system, have a more central position for Slovenian literature than French (9.9%). In the case of Slovenian literature, however, all four languages are central, as translations in each language account for more than 10% of the total. Between one and about four percent of the translations were published in semi-peripheral Swedish (1.2%) and some peripheral languages – Hungarian (4.2%), Bulgarian (3%), Portuguese (1.9%), Greek (1.6%), Dutch (1.4%) and Romanian (1.2%) – which means these languages are semi-peripheral for Slovenian literature. In contrast, the smallest number (less than 1%) was translated into other peripheral languages – Finnish (0.9%), Lithuanian (0.9%), Danish (0.6%), Latvian (0.5%) and Estonian (0.3%). In other words, the position of some languages has changed in the case of translated Slovenian literature compared to the global translation system (Heilbron, 1999), as some of them have moved more to the centre (Italian, Spanish) or semi-centre (Hungarian, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Greek, Dutch, Romanian). Translations into more central languages play a very important role, as they can stimulate translations into peripheral languages (Heilbron, 2020, 141). However, this trend can also work in the opposite direction, as translations into peripheral languages can be seen as a kind of confirmation of quality for publishers in more central markets, and this can lead to more translation rights being sold there (Kac, 2024).

The analysis shows that translated authors and genres have changed over time. In the 1990s, classic authors and poetry took centre stage, but in the period after 2001, and especially after 2011, prose by both established and emerging contemporary authors and new genres such as picture books, fairy tales and comics were strongly represented. Among the translated authors are also four Slovenian EUPL laureates, whose award-winning and non-award-winning works were translated into various languages after receiving the prize. Looking at the

translations into 16 languages examined in this article,<sup>11</sup> Gabriela Babnik stands out with eight editions in seven different languages (French,<sup>12</sup> German, Italian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Latvian, Greek). Nataša Kramberger follows with five translations in three languages (2 translations into German,<sup>13</sup> 2 into Italian, 1 into Danish). The most recent laureates, Jasmin B. Frelih and Anja Mugerli, each have three translations in three different languages (both in Hungarian and Italian, Frelih also in Greek and Mugerli in Bulgarian).

An overview of the translations of Slovenian EUPL authors into the 16 languages shows that 10 editions were published in semi-peripheral (Italian) or central (German, French) languages, thus only slightly exceeding the number of translations into peripheral languages (9). All translations were published abroad, with the exception of the two French translations, which were published in Slovenia. Looking at the additional translations beyond the 16 languages discussed here (cf. footnote 11), most were translated into peripheral languages (58%). The translations based on the works of Slovenian EUPL authors account for a relatively small proportion, namely 1.5% of all translations into the 16 languages since 2011.

## CONCLUSION

Following Slovenia's accession to the EU, the desire of the Slovenian literary market to promote its literature throughout Europe increased significantly. This can be seen in the rise in published translations in all 16 languages examined, as well as in the wider range of translated authors and literary genres. This trend has been particularly noticeable since the 2000s.

Since 2004, the average number of published translations per year has risen in all languages. This growth has been strongest in German (almost 13 additional books per year), Italian (almost 8 additional books) and Spanish (almost 7 additional books), where translation activity was already strong before 2004. Moderate increases of between one and three additional books per year were observed in Romanian (+1.09), Greek (+1.34), Hungarian (+1.36), Portuguese (+1.62), French (+2.52) and Bulgarian (+2.73). In contrast, the increase was minimal (less than 1 additional book per year) in most peripheral languages (in descending order: Swedish, Dutch, Lithuanian, Latvian, Finnish, Danish and Estonian), which have maintained a modest total number of translations since 1991.

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- 11 In addition to the 16 languages observed, Slovenian EUPL authors were also translated into English (5 editions), Serbian (4), Croatian (4), Czech (2), Polish (1) and Macedonian (1).
  - 12 In addition to the printed book, the French translation was also published as an ebook, both times by the Slovene Writers' Association in Ljubljana.
  - 13 The German publisher of Nataša Kramberger's non-award-winning books *Comparable Hectares* (2021) and *Mauerpfeffer (Kdo bo z mano prosil za dež?/Who Will Ask for Rain with Me?)* (2023) reported that the first book sold very well, partly because the author was already known in the network of literary houses after winning the EUPL (Listau, 2023).

The strongest translation activity for Slovenian literature was observed in German and Italian, which can be attributed to the geographical proximity and cultural, historical and political connections between Slovenia and the countries of the target languages, and partly also to the presence of Slovenian minorities in Austria and Italy (cf. Mezeg et al., 2024, 214f.; Rozman et al., 2023). This supports the trend that authors from peripheral languages are often translated into “a cultural centre that is not too dominant and that is geographically ‘close to home’” (Heilbron, 2020, 141). However, although Slovenia and Hungary are neighbouring countries, access to the Hungarian book market has proven difficult. According to Senja Požar (2024), it is more difficult to penetrate the Hungarian market than the French one. This difficulty is attributed to the Hungarian perception that Slovenia is too close to Hungary and that Slovenian books are less attractive due to the abundance of similar literature already available in Hungary (Požar, 2024). This perception may have contributed to the decline in translations into Hungarian since the 2010s. Despite these challenges, Požar (2024) managed to sell rights for some adult literature, excluding picture books, in preparation for the 2023 Frankfurt Book Fair. The hypothesis about the influence of geographical proximity on literary exchange is thus only partially confirmed. In most of the languages observed, around a third or less of the translations were published in Slovenia, with Spanish standing out with 42.8% of the translations being published in Slovenia, which indicates strong local initiatives to translate Slovenian literature into this language.

The predominant position of German translations is also due to the Frankfurt Book Fair, where Slovenia was the Guest of Honour in 2023. As part of this initiative, the Republic of Slovenia and EU (through the European Regional Development Fund) provided funding to increase the number of translations into German and promote them in German-speaking countries (JAK, 2019, 25, 31; 2024). Conversely, the translation and publication of Slovenian literature into French largely depends on the efforts of individual translators and other literary intermediaries, rather than a targeted translation policy (Lück Gaye, 2024). In addition, penetration of the French publishing market is hampered by the fact that some Slovenian literary agents do not speak French, and French publishers know little about Slovenia and show even less interest in its literature (Kac, 2024; Kavčič, 2024). Finally, the relatively low level of translation activity for languages of Nordic and Baltic states can be attributed to the lack of translators from Slovenian and the absence of a systematic translation support system (Petrič, 2024).

Translation projects under the Creative Europe programme provide important financial support for the publishing industry, enhancing the publication of translated Slovenian literature and increasing the international visibility of lesser-known Slovenian authors (Copetti, 2024; Kac, 2024). Although translations of works by Slovenian EUPL authors account for only a small proportion of all translations into the 16 languages examined, the prize encouraged their first translations into various target languages. This shows that the EU mechanisms work and effectively promote the dissemination of books beyond their place and language of origin, thus contributing to cultural and literary diversity in Europe.

TRENDI PREVAJANJA SLOVENSKE KNJIŽEVNOSTI V EVROPSKI UNIJI:  
PRIMERJALNA ANALIZA OBJAVLJENIH DEL V 16 JEZIKIH (1991–2024)

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## POVZETEK

Članek obravnava prevajanje slovenske književnosti v 16 jezikov EU od osamosvojitve Slovenije 1991 do junija 2024. Namen raziskave je ugotoviti, ali sta se z evropsko integracijo povečali količina in raznolikost prevedenih del ter ali je na prevode vplivala tudi nagrada EU za književnost (EUPL). Proučevali smo jezike iz različnih delov Evrope (sever, jug, vzhod, zahod). Bibliografske podatke smo pridobili iz COBIB in podkrepili z intervjuji s strokovnjaki. Analiza kaže, da se je po 2004 povečala količina prevodov v vse jezike, zlasti v nemščino (skoraj 13 knjig več na leto), italijanščino (skoraj 8 knjig več) in španščino (skoraj 7 knjig več). Zmerno povečanje (1–3 knjige na leto) smo zabeležili v romunščini, grščini, madžarščini, portugalščini, francoščini in bolgarščini, minimalno povečanje (manj kot 1 knjiga na leto) pa v švedščini, nizozemščini, litovščini, latvijščini, finščini, danščini in estonščini – v teh jezikih je bilo sicer v 33,5 letih objavljenih manj kot 30 prevodov. Trendi zadnjih štirih let kažejo rast prevodov le v centralni nemščini in nekaterih perifernih jezikih. Rezultati delno potrjujejo vpliv geografske bližine na literarno izmenjavo in kažejo, da je bila približno tretjina prevodov ali manj objavljena v Sloveniji, z izjemo španščine (42,8 %), kar kaže na močne lokalne pobude za prevajanje slovenske književnosti. V devetdesetih so prevladovali klasični avtorji in poezija, po 2001 in zlasti 2011 pa proza sodobnih avtorjev in novi žanri (slikanice, pravljice, stripi). Med prevodi so tudi dela štirih slovenskih nagajencev EUPL, ki sicer predstavljajo le 1,5 % vseh objavljenih prevodov, vendar potrjujejo, da mehanizmi EU delujejo in torej prispevajo h kulturni in literarni raznolikosti v Evropi.

*Ključne besede:* slovenska književnost, prevajanje, prevodni tokovi, Evropska unija, nagrada Evropske unije za književnost, centralni jeziki, (pol-)periferni jeziki

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