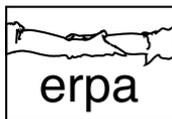


# SLOVAKIA ON THE WAY TO GENDER EQUALITY

**BRATISLAVA 2006**

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**BRATISLAVA 2006**



european roma employment agency



Institute for Sociology  
of the SAS

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## Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental right and democratic value. It ranks among important indicators of democratic development and application of democratic principles in the community. Other aspects of gender equality are also important, namely the new challenges of sustainable economic development, economic growth and social cohesion. Present development and future development even more, depends primarily on creation of new and quality jobs. The fact that as many as three-quarters of the new jobs generated in Europe in the past five years were filled by women is an interesting development.

It must be said that many positive changes in use of the human assets, as represented by women, have taken place. Legislation, above all, launched the development of a framework favourable to advancement of gender equality in day-to-day life. New concepts such as gender mainstreaming or gender budgeting have enriched our vocabulary. Despite all of these positive changes, there still is a lot of social inequality between men and women.

There is a strong need to strengthen gender equality in the area of labour. Just a handful of facts: the employment rate of women is far below the employment rate of men; women have a higher unemployment rate and mainly women suffer from long-term unemployment; there is an unjustified gender pay gap; and women are disproportionately poorly represented in management positions. This brief list of issues alone is a good reason for our decision to take a closer look at gender equality in Slovakia in the labour market and employment. We assumed that within that particular area there is the melting pot of: rooted gender stereotypes; issues related to transformation of the labour market; and the need for new approaches to reconcile work and private life.

This book presents the work done by a team of authors who participated in the project Slovakia on the Way to Gender Equality. The project was performed under PD IS Equal from June 2005 through to December 2006.

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The team chose to produce a work with broader scope than a plain research report. The authors outline the historical background of the status and position of women in our society with specific emphasis on the labour market. The first paper discusses the social and political contexts of gender equality in Europe and stresses its importance in the light of the European Union agenda. The next paper offers a historical journey through the development of women's position in Slovakia and casts light on certain facts not commonly known in this area. Part two of the book covers the research conducted under the project. Various techniques were used and several surveys were conducted. The research consists of three relatively independent parts that have internal and logical links.

Part one of the research is a quantitative, empirical survey of a relatively large sample of respondents from all regions of Slovakia. The findings outline certain general, as well as specific, trends at both the national and local levels.

Part two of the research is a qualitative survey conducted through in-depth interviews in six districts of Slovakia. There were two target groups. Group one consisted of experts from labour offices, self-government authorities, and activists working with unemployed people. The other target group was long-term unemployed women who shared their individual stories and background information on their unemployment with the interviewers. Comparison of the responses of the two target groups outlined (in addition to other things) the potential elements of problems in the work of labour offices and in their collaboration with clients.

Part three of the research was of a qualitative nature and was highly specific. It analyzed the position of social partners in their role as agents involved in the process of promotion of gender equality and analyzed collective bargaining and collective agreements as tools of (non) implementation of equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life.

The annex offers a comprehensive review of EU and national legislation related to gender equality. The review clearly indicates something that can be deemed to be a notorious attribute of our society, namely that the development of the national legislation was driven

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and shaped mainly by legislative measures and requirements of the EU.

The authors of the research work drafted certain recommendations to help overcome the existing barriers in the labour market that hamper the implementation of gender equality.\*

In conclusion it can be said that the research results indicate that for a further economically effective life of dignity for all individuals, there is a need for a new social covenant between men and women and between the corporate sector (employers) and the state that will permit a better and fairer reconciliation of work and family life.

Magdaléna Piscová  
editor

Bratislava, November 2006

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\* The final set of draft measures are not included in this book. Its completion is in progress and is pending on communication with the relevant entities.

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# Implementation of the Principle of Equality between Women and Men in the Labour Market

Erika Kvapilová

## 1. Gender equality as an objective

Equality between women and men ranks among the fundamental rights, democratic attributes and expressions of social justice in most developed countries of the world, including Slovakia. Equality of women and men is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Slovakia became signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993<sup>1</sup>, and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention in 2000. CEDAW is generally accepted as the most important international instrument on women's rights.<sup>2</sup> Slovakia is a European Union member state since 2004, and the EU primary law<sup>3</sup> explicitly defines equality of women and men as one of the core values of the Community. The transposition of the so-called EU gender directives into national legislation in recent years has considerably strengthened the equality principle between women and men especially in employment and in the labour market.

This paper summarizes the most important measures to advance equal opportunities for men and women in employment and the labour market, including active labour market policies and equal pay. The primary aim is not describing the relevant changes but rather in assessing how those specific measures have been implemented in real life. The paper discusses particular strategic government/departmental documents closely related to gender equality in the labour market

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<sup>1</sup> Slovakia acceded to the contract as a successor after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993.

<sup>2</sup> By May 2006 CEDAW was ratified by 183 countries of the world. International conventions have precedence over the national legislation under the Constitution of SR. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family drafted Periodical reports 2 and 3 on CEDAW for the years 1998 – 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The Amsterdam Treaty became valid on 1 May, 1999.

and employment that have already been approved by the government or are under the comments-giving process.

Slovakia joined EU relatively recently and therefore it would be premature discussing long-term trends or identify significant qualitative changes drawing a sharp line between Slovakia's history before and after the EU accession. Slovakia's membership, however, provides a) a comparative view on member states' policies in the field of gender equality; and b) enables to see implementation of gender equality (or lack of implementation) in various spheres of life in Slovakia in a more comprehensive way as compared to the SR's accession to EU.

In the conclusion we present some general recommendations which – we believe, and evidence from some EU countries confirms that – could improve the implementation of the principle of equality between women and men in employment and in the labour market. This paper is far from comprehensive or exhaustive and we realize that the proposed general recommendations deserve more detailed clarification.

## **2. The most important legislative measures to advance gender equality in the labour market and employment**

### **2.1. Measures to promote equal opportunities**

The most important legislative measures to promote equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market include those that ban direct or indirect discrimination on grounds of gender and which establish equal treatment of men and women. Those measures are related mainly with the transposition of the Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions. These measures are reflected in the Labour Code (No. 433/2003 Coll. of laws) especially in the Fundamental Principles, Art. 16, and Part One: General Provisions under § 13.

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*"Men and women shall have the right to equal treatment with regard to access to employment, remuneration and promotion, vocational training, and also with regard to working conditions. Women shall be provided working conditions which enable them to partake in work with regard to their physiological capacity, and with regard to their social function of motherhood, and also women and men with regard to their family obligations in the upbringing and care of children.(Fundamental Principles, Art. 6)*

*"The employee shall have the rights resulting from the labour relations without any restrictions or direct discrimination or indirect discrimination from reasons of sex, marital status, family status, race, colour of skin, language, age, health, belief and religion, political or other conviction, trade union activity, national, ethnic or social origin, property, lineage or other status, unless stipulated by law or there is a substantive reason that dwells in prerequisites or requirements and the nature of work to be done by the employee. (Part One: General Provisions, § 13).*

## **2.2. Measures to promote equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value**

Through transposition of Council Directive 75/117/EEC of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women, namely Part 4, Wage and average earning, §119/3 reads:

*"Wage conditions must be equal for both men and women without any discrimination on grounds of sex. Women and men shall be entitled to equal wages for work of an equal level of complexity, responsibility and difficulty, performed under the same working conditions and upon achievement of the same efficiency and work results".*

## **2.3. Measures to help reconcile work and family responsibilities of employees**

### **2.3.1. Parental leave**

The demand of the European legislation to support measures to help reconcile work and parental responsibilities of men and women<sup>4</sup> was transposed in §166 of the Labour Code under which – besides maternity leave (28 weeks, in principle is granted to a woman worker) – introduces an equal right for either the woman or man, parents of a small child, to draw parental leave up to age three of the child:

*"In order to deepen the care of a child, the employer shall be obliged to provide a woman and man by their request, with parental leave until the child reaches three years of age. If this concerns a long-term seriously disabled child requiring exceptional care, the employer shall be obliged to provide a woman and man, on their request, with parental leave until the child reaches six years of age. Such leave shall be provided to the extent to which the parent requests; generally, always for a period of one month at least".*

The drawing of the parental leave is considered as time of service for pension insurance purpose and an employee is protected from a dismissal notice from employment while s/he is on parental leave. The Labour Code provides the right to leave for care of a child and a special law on parental allowances (No. 280/2002 Coll.) sets the amount of the state benefit (universal, paid from all tax money, that is not bound to any previous job of the recipient) to which a parent taking care of a child younger than three is entitled under conditions stipulated by law.

### **2.3.2. Working time arrangements for employees with family responsibilities**

The Labour Code permits certain employment arrangements that may in theory suit the needs of certain groups of workers with family responsibilities. The regulations permit arrangements such as part-time work (§49) or the so-called home workers (§52). Under § 164 of

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<sup>4</sup> Enshrined in the Council Directive 96/34/EC of June 1996 on a framework agreement on parental leave.

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the Labour Code, the employer shall enable a worker with a child younger than 15 to work part-time upon his/her request.

#### **2.4. Active labour market policies from gender perspective**

The active labour market policy is defined in the law on employment services (No. 5/2004 Coll.). The active labour market policy measures are gender neutral in the law, yet certain definitions are very important to address a specific situation which women face much more frequently than men. The specific situation is related to the definition of a disadvantaged job seeker, namely "a citizen, parent ... taking care of three or more children or a single citizen, taking care of a child".

The law offers a number of measures to help the disadvantaged citizen find a job or increase his/her qualifications and chance to get a job<sup>5</sup>, although the reality is – precisely due to presence of a disadvantage – quite different. The data of the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family show that 3,442 disadvantaged job seekers, of whom almost 60% were women, got jobs in the year 2005. Nevertheless, the data do not specify a number of men and women taking care of children less than three years old as a share of those who found a job.

It is worth mentioning that under the law active labour market policy measures also cover programs and initiatives funded by EU funds, especially the European Social Fund. Of special importance here is the EQUAL Initiative which is aimed at promoting employment for disadvantaged groups. Numerous measures and activities funded under EQUAL are specifically targeted at disadvantaged groups of women. An analysis of these programs and their real impact in terms of elimination of discrimination against women and men in the labour market and in terms of advancement of equal opportunities deserves special attention. These programs are very much needed, yet they cannot be considered systemic measures. They should be rather seen as targeted support measures and/or pilot projects, which – if successful – could be a blueprint for development of systemic measures of active labour market policies.

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<sup>5</sup> The labour office can grant those job seekers benefits if they, for example are under counselling or retraining, allowances for travel to school/courses and preparation for work, allowances for family services if the child is in pre-school care or is taken care of by another authorised person while the child's parent is in school or training.

### 3. Governmental strategies

A brief reference should be made at this point of certain important government documents related to equality of women and men in the labour market and employment.

The Strategy document on equal opportunities for women and men ("Konceptia rovnosti príležitostí žien a mužov") (2000) was the basis for action plan and also served as a reference framework for mainstreaming gender in other government strategies. The Strategy document attributed much attention to the issue of equality of women and men in the labour market since at the time of adoption there was a need to transpose the EU "gender" directives<sup>6</sup> into the SR's national labour legislation. Looking at the strategy now, one can say that the document gave a quite accurate and comprehensive identification of gender equality related problems that are (still) present in the labour market and outlined certain important measures intended to eliminate or reduce unjustified inequalities between men and women in employment and in the labour market. The document recommended measures such as regular monitoring and securing implementation of equal pay for women and men for equal work and work of equal value or securing equal conditions for employment of men and women with family responsibilities. The document stressed the importance of cooperation with trade unions and employer associations. The fact is that the years that followed after adoption of the Strategy document were witness to various difficulties in tripartite cooperation that culminated in abolition of the tripartite law and the partners were left only with bargaining powers in the traditional issues such as wages and working conditions (the labour code, minimum wage, collective agreements, etc.) leaving the issues of equal opportunities for men and women in the second rank. That is partly why many recommendations outlined in the Strategy document did not materialize in the following years.

The National Action Plans on Employment (NAPE) rank among important government documents directly related to the position of men and women in the labour market and employment. The current plan (for the years 2004 – 2006) in its section on measures outlined to

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<sup>6</sup> Most of those directives are related to the labour market and employment.

advance gender equality addresses especially the social partners asking them to *"incorporate into collective bargaining the issues of gender equality and non-discrimination and inclusion of relevant provisions on equal opportunities into collective agreements"*.<sup>7</sup> The NAPE also stresses the role of businesses to promote gender equality and more efficient control over equal pay for men and women.<sup>8</sup>

A document produced by the Ministry of Finance in the previous election term, the so-called Lisbon Strategy for Slovakia, deserves attention as well. Increasing employment, including female employment by the year 2010 ranks among the main objectives of the Lisbon Strategy (2000), yet minimum attention is paid to this issue in its Slovak pendant. The entire "gender" area is reduced to the issue of addressing demographic changes and to a rather immaterial proposal "to secure effective promotion of reconciliation of work and family life for parents with small children: during the short period when one of the parents is not able to be at work, the parents shall have the strongest possible support from the society and real access to childcare services". The absence of measures to advance equal opportunities for men and women in the Lisbon Strategy for Slovakia presents significant deficiency since equality between men and women ranks among the main tasks of the EU and is an integral part of accomplishment of the Lisbon Strategy objective, namely the world's most competitive economy. Achieving this goal is not possible without effective use of all human resources. Ignoring the persistent inequality in the labour market and in employment between men and women in Slovakia indicates that advancement and utilisation of human resources to accomplish the goal is not effective or gender-sensitive and from this perspective, this belongs to major shortcomings of the document.

<sup>7</sup> NAP on Employment (2004 – 2006), Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> An analysis of implementation of these recommendations requires a separate examination of, for example, collective agreements, and goes beyond the framework of this chapter. The summary in this paper of recommendation put forward in the government documents seeks to point out that the government has shifted a substantial portion of responsibility for implementation of equality of men and women in the labour market and employment onto the social partners, and rather scarcely outlines tasks in its strategic documents that should be carried out by the government itself or by its institutions (for example, the National Labour Inspectorate with its powers to cover certain areas of this agenda, yet it has no funds or capacities for regular monitoring). Ministries and state agencies in many countries have their action plans on advancement of gender equality and the state sets an example to other employers.

For the sake of objectiveness it must be noted that the measures seeking to promote reconciliation of work and family life, just roughly outlined in the Lisbon Strategy for Slovakia, were then further developed before the end of the term of Prime Minister Dzurinda's cabinet, in the document Draft measures for reconciliation of work and family life for the year 2006 with prospects till 2010 (hereafter referred to only as "Draft") developed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR and approved by the SR government in June 2006<sup>9</sup>. The primary objective of the Draft is to *"promote growth of employment and employability of persons with family responsibilities and to reduce the risk of these persons facing the job versus family dilemma or becoming the victims of discrimination in the labour market and employment because they need to take care of their families..."*<sup>10</sup> The document makes a specific reference to the need to meet the Lisbon Strategy objectives (60% employment rate for women by the year 2010) and the European Council's conclusions (2002, Barcelona) related to securing childcare services for working parents.<sup>11</sup> The document contains a number of practical recommendations and measures whose implementation in day-to-day life is dubious because the newly formed government might revise the document, but what is more important the measures are not accompanied with analysis of resources (legislation, human as well financial resources) that are inevitable to make these measures real. Despite this, the Draft can be considered a strategy developed with a reasonable level of detail and a choice of alternative strategies (although not always supported by appropriate analyses that would support feasibility of these measures).

The new Slovak government, in contrast, undertook in its *Program Declaration* of August 2006 just a very general commitment to promote social inclusion of women – mothers through their integration into the labour market, promotion of reconciliation of work and family life, including better accessibility of pre-school and out-of school child care services. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR sub-

<sup>9</sup> Resolution No. 560/2006 approved by the cabinet of the Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda.

<sup>10</sup> Draft, p.1

<sup>11</sup> The Council adopted a strategy following up the Lisbon Strategy implementation, namely to create prerequisites for daycare services for at least 90% of all children younger than three up to the start of school attendance, and at least 33% of children younger than three by the year 2010.

sequently announced certain measures that are a reason for concern that instead of advancement of the principle of equality of men and women, the principle will grow weaker in the labour market as well as in other areas (division of roles in the family and effects on social participation of women, including the political participation of women, etc.). We specifically have in mind the promised successive increases in parental benefits up to the minimum wage level (by the year 2009). The increasing of the state benefit itself is not the concern. The problem is the increasing amount combined with the eligibility criteria (the possibility to stay at home with a child younger than three years or secure another (physical or legal) person providing care of the child) and factual absence of affordable and accessible child day care facilities for children younger than three years of age. As a result of the measure many women, especially those with low qualifications or those who work at low wages, may prefer to take care of their children "full time", depending thus on still relatively low state benefit. This may have adverse implications on their capacity to re-enter the labour market and can in fact increase the gap between women and men in the labour market (employment, pay...). In other words, the measure alone does not tackle the referred-to issue of reconciliation of work and family life – to the contrary, in many cases it may increase the existing gap between paid work and family, with adverse effects on women and gender equality.

Special attention is paid to the issue of equality of men and women in the Program Declaration of the Government SR of August 2006. The government committed itself to regular monitoring of equal opportunities for men and women, probably covering additional areas to the labour market and employment. The government also promised to establish institutions to secure gender equality, yet it is unclear at what tier (government, ministries, local level) and what the relation of the new institutions to the already existing structures such as the Family and Gender Policy Division of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR or the cabinet of the vice-premier covering the issues of human rights, including minority rights and women's rights will be.

All proclamations in the Program Declaration are now of an immaterial nature that will have to be transformed into specific actions in the

course of the next years. Only then a competent analysis and evaluation can be made; and then it will be possible to assess the effects of specific measures on gender equality in the labour market and other areas.

## **4. Reality and opportunities for strengthening of the principle of equality of men and women in the labour market**

### **4.1. Implementation of the principle of equal opportunities for women and men**

General anti-discrimination clauses in the essential labour legislation are extremely important, yet their implementation in day-to-day life is usually complex and insufficient. There are several causes, mainly the following:

- Unclear interpretation of certain fundamental concepts (direct and indirect discrimination, equal treatment, equal pay for women and men for work of an equal level of complexity, responsibility, and difficulty, performed under the same working conditions, and upon achievement of the same efficiency and work results, and the like) that make the process of providing proof of gender-based discrimination difficult;
- Poor preparedness of judges to practically apply the new legislation and inadequate administrative capacities to enforce that legislation;
- Poor knowledge of the new legislation by the general public.

On top of that, the mentioned principles only cover those persons who already have a job, whereas in real life there are incidents of discrimination against men or women, mothers and fathers of small children who seek jobs.

*The National Labour Inspectorate conducted an extraordinary national screening of hiring of potential workers—mothers and workers—fathers in regard to potential discriminatory practices.<sup>12</sup> The inspectors identified many employers violating the law under § 41 of the Labour Code when in questionnaires they require the applicants to*

*complete, they ask about the applicant's family status, including the number and age of children. The National Labour Inspectorate staff suspects that that kind of information may encourage the employer not to hire a worker due to potential absence from work to take care of small children. There is no need to stress that the "victims" of those employers' decisions are mainly women because the (stereotype-based) assumption and experience of employers is that predominantly mothers go home to take care of their sick children. That kind of discrimination is hard to prove, of course.<sup>13</sup>*

The situation could be remedied with a more accurate definition of concepts in order to avoid different interpretation and secure a consistent implementation of EU anti-discrimination directives in the national legislation. There also is a need to strengthen competent administrative capacities for implementation of this legislation. The implementation is not only a matter of courts; the other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR, trade unions, and non-governmental organizations should also be involved. It is important, for example, that worker representatives in companies, including trade unions, make workers aware of their rights and let them know how to assert or invoke their rights, if necessary, through legal action. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR, which is responsible for gender equality, should take initiative and support awareness campaigns or other activities to communicate anti-discrimination legislation to the public. Information must be disseminated on how to invoke one's rights in the event that a worker believes that s/he was disadvantaged on grounds of gender. Cooperation with NGOs may play an important role in this respect, since NGOs frequently have better capacities and experience in similar actions. As for the funds to support those activities, the use of money from the European Social Fund should be re-considered, since the funds can be effectively used for this area as well. In regard to the judiciary, a number of

<sup>12</sup> An extraordinary Slovak national screening conducted by the National Labour Inspectorate, task No.107/03 Strengthening the equal opportunities – reconciliation of work and family life. Source: Draft measures for reconciliation of work and family life for the year 2006 with prospects to 2010, document approved in the government SR, 21 June 2006.

<sup>13</sup> The National Labour Inspectorate is conducting another screening at present (2006) that will collect up-to-date information.

experts have for some time been suggesting the establishment of special labour courts in order to give workers more opportunities to invoke their rights, including those related to non-discrimination at work on grounds of sex and to potentially reduce the time needed to hear individual cases.

## **4.2. Equal pay for work**

Statistical comparisons of EU countries indicate that Slovakia ranks among the countries with the largest pay gap.<sup>14</sup> Between the years 1998 and 2003 the average wages of women in the current 25 EU countries were 85% of men's wages. The difference was 24% in Slovakia (that means the wages of women represented just 76% of men's wages), ranking Slovakia as the third highest EU country in terms of the gap between men's and women's pay.<sup>15</sup>

The general causes of the gender pay gap are differences in education between men and women, segregation of occupations (traditionally female or male occupations or industries), and wage settlement. Another important factor is career interruption in order to take care of children or other dependants or the share of men and women working part-time. Social standards and stereotypes play an important role and may influence the choice of school or occupation taken by girls and boys and expectations of family roles (taking care of children and house versus (financially) supporting the family. The degree/role of individual factors in the gender pay gap differs between countries. A closer look at the comparative statistical data may indicate the primary causes of the persistently rather large gender pay gap in Slovakia. The "rough" statistics sometimes fail to offer a reasonably complete explanation of the gap. The data need to be complemented with information from quality surveys on a permanent basis.

When it comes to differences in education between men and women in Slovakia and the EU average, the ratio of men and women with secondary education is almost the same (over 90% in the 20 – 24 olds) which ranks Slovakia first in this indicator. The share of women in tertiary education (over 53%) is close to the EU average

<sup>14</sup> The so-called gender pay gap: difference between the average hourly earnings of women expressed as the percentage of average gross hourly earnings of men.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Eurostat

(54.6%). Thus, that indicator cannot be considered as one of the major causes of a rather large gender pay gap when compared to the EU average. Similarly, differences in part-time work between men and women most likely have no major influence on the gender pay gap in Slovakia. The average share of female part-time workers is 32.6% and of male part-time workers is just 7.3% in the EU and in Slovakia only 3.9% of women and 1.2% of men work part-time.<sup>16</sup>

What are the most likely causes of the big gender pay gap in Slovakia?

One of the causes is that the kind of education has a considerable influence on the kind of occupation and wage. There is strong segregation of occupations and a high concentration of women in low-pay industries and occupations such as services, education and health care in Slovakia. The other causes deserve a closer examination, but lack of data only permits making certain hypotheses. The reasons may be the following:

- Women take care of small children. Parents in Slovakia can enjoy one of the longest paid parental leaves in the world. On top of that, the law permits parents (usually it is the mother) to stay at home and take care of children up to the age of three, with wages partially compensated with a state benefit – parental benefit. In a situation when there actually are no available crèche-like facilities in most municipalities, and the opportunity to reconcile work and child care responsibilities is close to none, many women prefer to take full time care of their children, many time until the child is three years old. The return to work after a longer absence has certain effects on specific job position of the concerned worker, on promotion prospects, and thereby a better paid working position.
- The gap in many cases is the result of stereotypes and discriminating assumptions that men are better and more prospective workers than women; make better decisions; and are willing to take risks; and all that should be reflected in their wages and promotion opportunities. Many people still perceive men as family breadwinners who bear more responsibility than their female colleagues for financial provision of their families.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Eurostat

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A substantial reduction in the gender pay gap ranks among the objectives of the European Employment Strategy to which Slovakia committed itself. In practical terms that means promoting measures seeking to eliminate the causes of the current condition. Besides the measures mentioned above, the government and all stakeholders should, for example:

- Find ways to attract men to the typically women's areas of study and occupations, and vice versa. There are many examples of relevant strategies in the EU.
- In regard to parental leave, there is need to reconsider and amend the current legislation in order to make it primarily an effective instrument for reconciliation of work and family life which is the principal intention of the EU directive on parental leave of 1996. The directive sets a minimum standard for parental leave (three months) but also offers much flexibility (the leave can be drawn up to eight years of the child's age). The parental leave in Slovakia is quite generous in terms of time allocated (three years) but it lacks flexibility because the parent can draw it only as long as the child is younger than three years of age. The combination of a long parental leave that is limited with the child's age and generally rather poor access to quality and available day care for toddlers intensifies the risk for certain group of women (low skilled women living in high unemployment regions, etc.) ending up in a parental leave trap. The leave, instead of helping to reconcile work and family life, may result in yet a bigger gender gap in the labour market, employment or family.
- As for stereotypes and discrimination in pay, there are many successful examples, especially from the Scandinavian countries, of both public and private sector employers and their social partners developing company action plans seeking to eliminate gender-based discrimination, advance equal opportunities for men and women, female and male workers. A survey of good practices, however, goes beyond the scope of this study.

### **4.3. General shortcomings and their elimination**

*A poor statistical database* with systematic coverage of the position of men and women in various areas is a general shortcoming in Slovakia and many other countries of the European Union. There is absence/insufficiency of data to monitor (horizontal and vertical) segregation in occupations; there is shortage of good data on pay for men and women; particularly in the private sector it is rather difficult to get data on distribution of higher management positions between men and women; and there still is not enough knowledge of gender-based incidents and specific forms of discrimination. Equally important, there is need of systematic qualitative data to help identify and better understand and explain factors causing the persistent inequality of men and women in the labour market. Measuring progress in elimination of unjustified differences in the position of men and women in the labour market and employment, analysing their causes, developing and adopting measures to improve the situation are not possible unless there is a quality data base.

It is good – in this respect – that the government undertook in its Program Declaration to monitor gender-based differences between men and women. The most suitable way of securing reliable and regular data collection and evaluation is extension of gender data collection by the Statistical Office SR (in addition to data collection demanded by EUROSTAT). The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR has specialized units that could and should gather and evaluate quality data.<sup>17</sup> A certain caveat with these institutions is that they are subject to the Ministry and there is no solid guarantee of unbiased research, in contrast to the Slovak Academy of Sciences, universities, or the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. There also is the opportunity to promote calls for projects on these topics that could be covered by grant schemes for science and research. The above arrangements would channel information to the database needed for competent development of measures to advance gender equality in Slovakia with special emphasis on the labour market and employment. That – as a matter of fact – also depends on composition of specialized commissions making calls for projects. Some data can be collect-

<sup>17</sup> We refer specifically to the National Labour Inspectorate, research units or institutes with the Ministry, and the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

ed only at a municipal level (data on areas of competence that were shifted during decentralization process to local level, such as social services, etc.).

*The institutional background* is very poor in Slovakia to secure implementation of the principles of equality of men and women. The only standard unit at government level is the family and gender policy division of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR, which is formally responsible for the issues of gender equality, especially in the labour market. The division has no specific powers in this respect that would go beyond the agenda and powers of the ministry. Moreover, the division has been long-term understaffed. There have been attempts under twinning projects at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR to start focal points for gender equality at other ministries, but there is uncertainty about their future powers and voice in development of policies and measures by the respective ministries.

The government made promises in its Program Declaration to establish institutional structures to support gender equality, yet there is no clarity in what those institutions would look like and what their powers and level of independence would be.

## **Conclusion**

In the mid-90s, during the accession process of Slovakia to the EU many measures were transposed into the national legislation that strengthened the legal equality of men and women in the labour market. There still persist certain shortcomings such as absence of explicit prohibition of sexual harassment at work. There is absence of an explicit sexual harassment ban or consistent implementation of the directive on equal pay for equal work/for work of equal value. Slovakia participated in the EU Framework Strategy of the Community for Gender Equality and has utilised resources from the European Social Fund to promote activities and projects seeking to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the labour market and to improve gender equality.

The accession to EU also brought new legislative and financial tools. The degree of their utilisation for promoting gender equality is

also a matter of consistent and responsible and accountable policies that seek to systematically eliminate unjustified differences between men and women: not only in the labour market but also in other areas such as political participation or elimination of gender-related stereotypes in day-to-day life. In that respect, Slovakia lags considerably behind the old, as well as many new, EU member states. The gap is visible in areas such as absence of a working mechanism to secure implementation of the principles of gender equality, absence of funding for a systematic implementation of gender equality, and – in many cases – failure to understand the principle of gender equality as an indicator of democracy, social justice and human rights law at the top political level.

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# The Social Status of Women in the History of Slovakia

Tünde Lengyelová

Gender equality is a concept, which does not have a long tradition in the history of Central Europe. In the past centuries the social position of women was determined primarily by their class status as well as the inherent biological function of the mother. Woman and family were strongly interconnected and there was no alternative for a woman other than family or a convent. Culture, legal system and family status determined how much or little freedom women could enjoy. If we leave out the historically unreliable theories about matriarchy, the whole history dwells on a single gender principal – patriarchy, the family system headed by man.

## 1. Social status of women in the feudal state

Gender-based society did not consider women to be legally competent, and certain authors compare their status to the status of objects. One of the possibilities to gain a woman was rape, but most women were given in marriage as soon as they were sexually mature. In fact it was a business transaction – the heads of the families arranged purchase or sale of a bride. After successful negotiations about the price, the bride was handed over to her husband and the marriage was materialized in consummation of the marriage (intercourse). The price of a woman did not depend solely on money, but also on other movables such as livestock, slaves, horses or furs.

Dissemination of Christianity brought important changes, because the church rejected the rape as an anachronism of the heathen past and asserted the principle of consensus – the agreement of both parties. Buying of the bride vanished as well; the only thing that remained was the form and symbols – the dowry, trousseau, and gifts<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> DVORÁKOVÁ, Daniela: Život ženy – šľachtickej v Uhorsku na prelome 14. a 15. storočia. (The Life of Noblewomen in Hungary at the End of the 14th and the Beginning of the 15th Centuries.) In: Žena a právo. Právne a spoločenské postavenie žien v minulosti. (Ed. T. Lengyelová). Bratislava AEP 2004, pages 9-23.

In the medieval Hungarian state a woman was primarily the object of law. For the first time woman became legally competent, though to a limited extent, under the acts of king Stephen (997 - 1038) which allowed widows or abandoned women to use the property of their late husbands. In the 13th century the property/title rights of women were further amended and extended<sup>2</sup>. The Hungarian common law<sup>3</sup> clearly shows that in many regards the rights of women were not the same as those of the men. Children could inherit nobility rights only from their noble father, not from their mother, because - as the statutory provision reads, "man is the procreator, woman only gives the form".<sup>4</sup> This discriminating statute determined that the child of a noble father and a non-noble mother had the rights of the father, but the child of a noble mother and a non-noble father did not inherit the class rights. The reason why women could not inherit the property gained for services was that "the country surrounded by enemies has to be defended by men with swords in their hands, but women and maidens do not go to war".<sup>5</sup>

The age of adulthood for girls was 12 years and for men (boys) 14 years. Men were considered of age after completing the 24th year and women after the 16th year unless they married earlier, because with matrimony they gained the lawful age. In real life this did not mean much to girls, because before getting married they were subordinate to the decisions of their fathers (or the guardian) and after marriage to their husbands. The girls could theoretically dispose of the inherited properties from 16 years of age, but we know of no such case. Single women did not have the right to decide for themselves, or become tutors (legal guardians) of their younger siblings, since "*their thinking is less moral and often leads them the wrong way*".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These acts regulated the property titles of noblewomen. A city enjoying royal privileges could pass its own law, drawing from the Nurnberg or Magdeburg law, in case of Žilina the Teschen law. The villein citizens were probably covered analogically by certain acts used by the nobility.

<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian common law was codified in a Tripartitum (WERBÖCZI, Stephanus: Tripartitum opus juris consuetudinarii incltyi regni Hungariae...Wienna 1517. Ed. Kolosvári, S. - Óvári, K. Budapest 1897). But the code was only a collected and printed version of common law, which had been already used for several centuries with certain provisions still valid at the beginning of the 20th century.

<sup>4</sup> Tripartitum, Part 1, Article 7

<sup>5</sup> Tripartitum, Part 1, Article 18

<sup>6</sup> Tripartitum, Part 1, Article 91

But it happened quite often, that widows became the guardians and administrators of the estates of their minor children.

There were a lot more acts regulating the subordinate position of women. Taking into account the mentality of that historical period it must be said that a lot of them did not seek the subordination of women, but were understood as a mechanism to defend the "weaker" women and children. The origin of the conviction about the "weaker sex" could certainly be found in actual physical differences, which meant that the usually physically stronger men were intended to fight and defend the others. Further interpretation of the physically lesser strength resulted in its application to mental faculties, and the concept was strongly promoted by the mizoginae manifestations of certain fathers of the church. Domestic violence was so common, that it was not considered anything extraordinary and was supposed to be dealt with in the family (the woman was expected to give in and obey). A husband was not prosecuted<sup>7</sup> unless he killed or seriously crippled his wife.

Fortunately, the discriminating acts and opinions could not wholly force women into background. The reality was often different from the rigorous regulations. There were a lot of women in history who succeeded to overcome all restrictions and to assert themselves not only in their personal life, but also even in public spheres untypical for women. In politics mainly queens could display their equality. Defending castles in the wars with Turks and during the anti-Habsburg uprisings women had shown that warfare is not solely male domain. Women were equally active also in delinquency.<sup>8</sup> Punishment for common delinquency was equally tough, except adultery, where the man was not punished at all, while the woman was expelled, or even executed.

<sup>7</sup> LENGYELOVÁ, Tünde: Násilie páchané na ženách a možnosti obrany v období raného novoveku. (Violence Committed on Women and the Possibilities of Defense in the Early Modern Period.) . In: Žena a právo. Právne a spoločenské postavenie žien v minulosti. (Ed. T. Lengyelová). Bratislava, AEP 2004, pages 205-217

<sup>8</sup> SZEGHYOVÁ, Blanka: Žena a zločin vo východoslovenských mestách v 16. Storočí. SEGEŠ, Vladimír: Žena ako subjekt a objekt kriminality v stredovekej Bratislave. (Women and Crime in the East Slovakian Towns in the 16th century. SEGEŠ, Vladimír: The Woman as Perpetrator or Victim of Crime in Medieval Bratislava.) Both studies in: Žena a právo. Právne a spoločenské postavenie žien v minulosti. (Ed. T. Lengyelová). Bratislava. AEP 2004, pages 66-84, 55-65

The political and military situation of the medieval and early modern Hungary forced men to spend most of their time in battlefields and political missions. The administration of huge estates was taken over by wives who were quick to learn how to manage and develop the assets. In this area women were certainly becoming equal partners to men. In comparison to the medieval literature<sup>9</sup>, the period of Renaissance in Hungary brought in a new, much more positive view of mental abilities of women and their social role.

The most important aspect leading to the assertion of women was undoubtedly education. Until the second half of the 18th century there was no mandatory school attendance and deciding about education of children was an exclusive power of parents (guardians). The nobility and the burghers very soon realized this need, but there was no general education. The wives of craftsmen helped in workshops, did the bookkeeping and some of them owned small shops. After the craftsman's death, the widow could take over the workshop and do the trade for one year. Then she could either remarry or sell the workshop. But we have a lot of evidence that many women remained independent for a long time or permanently and performed the craft of their dead husbands. There was a need to communicate with the town authorities, business partners, the guild and customers. Women not only had to be able to read and write well, but to be good in arithmetics and needed many other skills.<sup>10</sup>

Women in serfdom had much less opportunities. Their life was strictly determined by their restricted mobility because serfs were absolutely forbidden to move until the year 1514.<sup>11</sup> The level of education of serf was extremely low. Woman did not have much choice except but get married, work (mainly in agriculture and the household), deliver and bring up children and in the end live up their life in seclusion as widows. The life of a serf widow was much harder, especially when she had dependent children. A widow could run the farm

<sup>9</sup> LENGYELOVÁ, Tünde: Žena očami svetských a cirkevných autorov v Uhorsku v období raného novoveku. In: Tzv. dejiny žien aneb Evropská žena od stredoveku do 20. stoley v zajeti historiografie. (Women in the Works of Civil and Religious Authors in the Early Modern Hungary.) Pardubice, 2006 (in press)

<sup>10</sup> MAREKČOVÁ, Marie: Podnikateľské aktivity samostatných žien v Bardejove. In: Žena a právo. Právne a spoločenské postavenie žien v minulosti. (Business Activities of Independent Women in Bardejov.) (Ed. T. Lengyelová). Bratislava. AEP 2004, pp 196 – 204.s.a však často menil, zmierňoval i nedodržiaval.

of her deceased husband until the children came of age. The financial, in kind and labor duties for the landlord remained the same as those of the late husband. That is why it is natural, that despite the frequent cruel treatment and bad experiences, women preferred a bad marriage to being on their own with limited means. Single farming women were a very rare and unusual exception.<sup>12</sup>

## **2. Enlightenment and the rise of the women's rights movement**

The 18th century is considered a century of the Enlightenment, a time of many progressive ideas, and significant scientific and technological progress. It is a paradox, that though the ideological foundations of women's emancipation draw from the Enlightenment, that period also brought the "scientific" reasons for their inferiority. On the one hand, the issue of "women" was formed and demands of women's rights to education and political rights were formed, on the other hand especially the medical science supplied arguments for the so-called "secondary serfdom of women". That reasoning used a "rational" scientific argument, which tried to replace the metaphysical and religious reasons and to prove that women's inferiority was natural. The Enlightenment definition of woman was built on a new definition and interpretation of the human body and the psychological differences between men and women.<sup>13</sup> The Enlightenment philosophers tackled the issue of the basis of legal relationship between women and men, that is marriage. The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel divided the space into the public and domestic areas. The former represents autonomy and general activity, science, the state and

<sup>11</sup> After suppression of the peasant uprising led by Juraj Dóža the conditions for free movement were tightened and serfs were confined to land. But this prohibition was often amended, mitigated or not enforced.

<sup>12</sup> KOHÚTOVÁ, Mária: Právne a sociálne postavenie poddaných žien. (Legal and Social Status of Serf Women.). In: Žena a právo. Právne a spoločenské postavenie žien v minulosti. (Ed. T. Lengyelová). Bratislava, AEP2004. Pages 218 – 225

<sup>13</sup> TINKOVÁ, Daniela: "Přirozený řád" a ideologie oddelených sfér. Příspěvek k otázce konstruování "přirozené role ženy" v pozdně osvícenské vědě. (The "natural order" and the Ideology of Divided Areas. Paper on the Issue of "the natural role of women" in Late Enlightenment Science.) In: Kontext: časopis pro gender a vědu, 3-4/2003, web: [http://www.cec-wys.org/kontext/fedc59ef/1\\_Tinkova.pdf](http://www.cec-wys.org/kontext/fedc59ef/1_Tinkova.pdf)

work, while the latter is based on passivity and aims at family and morals. In practical terms this meant that man was the head of the family and exclusion of women from professional or political life. Nevertheless, the emancipation process in Europe could not be stopped. The leading agents were educated women interested in politics. Many women's magazines were established and the women's issues were discussed in the intellectual centres of that period - drawing rooms.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of the 19th century many modern civil codes were adopted under the influence of the Napoleonic Code Civil (1804). In the Austrian part of the monarchy a civil code was adopted as early as 1811, the paragraphs 44 – 136 were dedicated to family and matrimonial law. The most important provisions concerning the status of women regulated the so-called political consent, to marry a man – the applicant; providing he could prove that (besides other capacities) he is able to sustain himself and the family. The aim was to prevent poor men who had no income from propagating the population dependent on public care. The concept of matrimony was based on unequal status of women. The man was the head and the woman subordinate to his power. She had to follow her husband, help him run the house, keep the house and obey his commands.<sup>15</sup> The truth is that women had no other choice anyway. Since they were not economically active, those who did not have sufficient inherited estate did not have a chance to live in dignified conditions by themselves. Nevertheless, in certain cases the law permitted breakup of the marriage.

In Hungary the civil code was drafted as late as the end of the 19th century and submitted to the parliament in 1915. Until then only several acts were adopted upon certain private initiatives. Paradoxically, that had certain positive consequences. The preserved feudal privileges of the nobility kept in validity the aforementioned provisions concerning rights of women to dispose of property during marriage

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<sup>14</sup> LENDEROVÁ, Milena: Počátky hnutí emancipace žen. Nepublikovaná přednáška z konference Jakou Evropu ohlašovala bitva u Slavkova (2005) (The beginnings of the Women's Rights Movement. Unpublished paper from the conference What kind of Europe arised from the battle of Slavkov) (2005)

<sup>15</sup> MALÝ, Karel – SIVÁK, Florián: Dejiny štátu a práva v Česko-Slovensku do roku 1918. (The History of State and Law in Czecho-Slovakia prior to the year 1918.) Bratislava, Obzor 1992, pages 320-322

and the property title for widows.<sup>16</sup> Legal autonomy advanced under the act 23 of the year 1874 which regulated that a woman of age (24 years) was no longer under the authority (guardianship) of her father and was considered an independent citizen until she married. From this point of view the Hungarian law was extremely liberal – in Upper Leitha (Austria) and in most of the west European countries the woman was permanently under the authority of her father and then came under the guardianship of her husband who had the right to dispose of her property. Nevertheless, both parts of the monarchy had the same arrangements concerning parental rights – the mother had legal power over her child just in case of an illegitimate child or when she was a widow. If the husband did not determine otherwise in his will, in Hungary the guardianship was automatically taken over by the mother, whereas in Austria it was the grandfather and the mother came in only after him.<sup>17</sup>

The act 31 amending the matrimonial law was adopted in 1894. Until then every denomination had its own regulations, and a uniform compulsory civil marriage was real progress. Its major implication was the possibility to dissolve a problematic marriage. Nevertheless, it would be quite unrealistic to think that women used this institute often – the reason to remain married was once again the economic dependency.

Besides the traditional ideals and restrictions thereof, the greatest problem for women's autonomy was their insufficient education and competence. In a world where all clerical and occupational positions were taken by men with adequate qualifications, women were left to work only as private governesses. Though the compulsory school attendance was established long before, it had a minimum impact on girls. Most of them went to elementary schools, but further schooling was a matter of the family and its financial potential. Even if the girl got higher education, she was not expected to work independently. The priority was housework and handcraft alongside arts and languages. Those were skills to guarantee the future ability of the girl to

<sup>16</sup> DUDEKOVÁ, G.: Právne postavenie ženy v 19. storočí. Hranice a limity. In: Sféry ženy. Sociológia, etnológia, história. Eds. J. Darulová – K. Košťal'ová. Fakulta humanitných vied Univerzity Mateja Bela – Sociologický ústav AV ČR, Banská Bystrica 2004, s. 380.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, page 383.

do housekeeping in accordance with her social status. Under the influence of a national movement in the 40's of the 19th century the opinion of the need to educate girls arised. Their role was looked upon as the role of the future mothers expected to bring up children for their country.

Ján Nepomuk Bobula presumably held the first public speech about women's emancipation in a lecture in the National-democratic Slovak society in Pest at the end of 1868. At that time his demands only aimed at improving quality of the most inherent role of a woman - bringing up children. At the beginning of the 70's an interesting discussion developed on the pages of the National newspaper and the Slovak newspaper. The authors (both men and women) still saw the role of women in maternity, but also in patriotism. That is why they criticized men rejecting women's education: "If there are such men amongst the educated ones, who want their wives to be only the head servants in the house, who can cook, clean and run the farm well, they are unfair, selfish and not worthy of a wife..."<sup>18</sup> For example, in comparison with Czech women, the disadvantage of the Slovak women was absence of a big town with strong Slovak background in Slovakia. From the 40's on the National movement was committed to establishing different types of schools for girls, from Sunday schools to secondary schools, with Slovak as the language of instruction. But their assertion was difficult. Though the enlightened patriots dedicated a lot of energy to their establishment, in the end those schools struggled with the lack of students. The consequence was naturally their closure. There were no occupations or opportunities for women to make use of their education and qualifications. After marriage most women were housewives, or helped with the family business. Paid occupation was necessary for women who did not get married. The reason usually was the inability of parents to give their daughter sufficient dowry. After graduating from a professional course, women had to search for a job, which was at that time considered respectable, for example a dressmaker or a post clerk. In the upper

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<sup>18</sup> KAČÍREK, Ľuboš: Vnímanie emancipácie žien v slovenskej spoločnosti v 60. a 70. rokoch 19. Storočia. (The Perception of Women's Emancipation in Slovakia in the 60's and the 70's of the 19th Century.) In: *Sféry ženy. Sociológia, etnológia, história*. Eds. J. Darulová – K. Košťal'ová. Banská Bystrica 2004, pages 392-394

girls' schools or teacher training institutes, which were established in Hungary only from the 60's on, the languages of instruction were Hungarian and German and the positions for the graduates were scarce. Societies tried to contribute to the educational process. Though they never crossed the borders of a region and their influence was only limited, their contribution was considerable. The only national society was Živena led by Elena Maróthy-Šoltéssová. At first Živena planned to establish vocational and educational institutes for girls and women, but soon gave the plan up and only continued organizing cultural activities with the support of the Old school – Slovak national party. New research shows that we had underestimated the role of other societies which were neither exclusively women's nor exclusively Slovak. Women were also members of other types of societies and these gave them the opportunity for assertion and independent activity in public life.<sup>19</sup> There were educational societies and also other institutes for management of charitable institutions (children's nurseries, orphanages) in which women performed not only the traditional representative function, nursing and educational work, but also management, bookkeeping and editorship. In this way they got much experience, which helped them to engage in other areas of public life such as healthcare, education and vocational organizations. Their engagement and activities in mature women's movement rich in opinions and ideas paved their way to higher political ambitions.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In greater detail in: MANNOVÁ, Elena: Ženské spolky v plurikultúrnom prostredí. Na príklade Slovenska v 19. Storočí. (Women Societies in Multicultural Environment. On the Example of Slovakia in the 19th Century.) In: Stowarzyszenia kobiece i kobiety w stowarzyszeniach. Przemiany form uczestnictwa w życiu publicznym na ziemiach polskich do 1918 roku na tle porównawczym, Warszawa 2006 (in print). E. MANNOVÁ – M. CZÁKY (eds.): Kolektívne identity v strednej Európe v období moderny. (Collective Identities in Central Europe in Modernism), Bratislava, AEP 1999, pages 195-512

<sup>20</sup> In greater detail in: DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela: Radikálky alebo konzervatívky? Nové výskumy v oblasti dejín ženského hnutia na Slovensku. (Radicals or Conservatives? New Research of the History of Women's Movement in Slovakia.) In: Tzv. dejiny žen aneb žena od stredoveku do 20. století v zajetí historiografie, Pardubice 2006 (in print)

### 3. The struggle for political rights for women

It was complicated to achieve women's political rights, especially suffrage. The strongest impediment was once again the traditional conservative image of woman as mother and woman as keeper of the domestic hearth. Women themselves were not always convinced that political issues belonged within their responsibilities. For example, there was the conservative attitude of the Union of opponents of suffrage in England, which opposed the efforts of the militant suffragettes and defended the "domestic tabernacle" with an argument that "women are illogical and incapable to think about public issues".<sup>21</sup> In Hungary, and thus in Slovakia, where men did not have a general suffrage, the problem was even more complicated. Živena and the Christian-social streams in the women's movement sharing their political views soon gave up the idea of suffrage. The social democrats and the civic radicals were groups demanding suffrage with the strongest voice. In 1904 the Feminist society was established which was in close contact with international movement and soon was joined by enthusiastic men united in the League for Women Suffrage (1905).<sup>22</sup> In the end the, suffrage for women was adopted in the constitution of the newly established Czechoslovak republic.

Though adoption of suffrage for women was an extremely important step, the route to women's participation assertion in politics and many other occupations was still long. Professional participation in paid positions demanding higher education was possible only for the generation of women studying or supplementing their studies after 1918. Though subsequent acts tackled many other issues regarding equal position of women, real life did not always follow decrees. There always were (and are) shortcomings when it comes to adherence to laws and regulations that are caused by the petrified old traditional opinions of the role of women and also by women's ignorance of law and their lack of courage to assert and invoke their rights.

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<sup>21</sup> BAHENSKÁ, Marie: Počátky emancipace žen v Čechách. Dívčí vzdělávání a ženské spolky v Praze v 19. století. (The Beginning of Women Emancipation in Bohemia. Education of Girls and Women Societies in Prague in the 19th Century.) Prague, Libri/Slon 2005, page 124

<sup>22</sup> DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela: Právne postavenie ženy v 19. Storočí, c. d. (Legal Status of Women in the 19th Century, c.d.), page 386

## Conclusion

Based on the period in which we examined written documents, we conclude that in comparison with the male part of the population, the position of women was not equal. Nevertheless, their position could not be called illegal. Though their work conditions were not covered by codes, women were active and enterprising and work offered them space for self-realization, mental development and sometimes economic independence. In their own families, homes, farms and businesses they were confident, ambitious and strong. Even from the formal point of view they exercised certain rights and could benefit by being considered as the weaker sex who, a priori, meant inexperienced and ignorant.

In class society, class status was superior to gender status, meaning a noblewoman was considered more important than a man belonging to the middle classes or serf class. In civil society the unequal position of women was underpinned scientifically and philosophically and women were more or less excluded from public life. Women had rights in theory, because they were often ignorant of them. The only possible way to their equality was education, courage to speak their opinion and an ability to persistently pursue it. But neither the cultural determinants, nor the patriarchal view of the leading forces in society which succeeded in keeping women in the background for many centuries, could limit the personal strength of educated, confident women even under the worst circumstances. Legal awareness and courage to voice their demands were the basic factors leading to changes in the quality of their status.

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# **Gender Equality and the Labour Market in Slovakia. Report on a Representative Survey<sup>1</sup>**

Miloslav Bahna

The issues of gender equality and gender equality in the labour market in Slovakia were the topics of various surveys. Certain questions related to this topic were included in the survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Institute in February 1991. The survey "Women in family, work and society" of a sample of 1069 respondents that was conducted by the Women of Slovakia Alliance in summer 1995 was the first more comprehensive project on the topic. Examples of recent research are: "Potential of active public involvement of women" conducted by IVO institute in 2002; and "Family and changing gender roles III" international ISSP survey conducted in 2002 by the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

The report sums up findings of a representative survey taken under the project OD IS EQUAL 81 / 04-1 / 33 - 4.1 Slovakia on the way to gender equality. The survey was conducted by the MVK Agency over a quota sample of 2,521 respondents older than 18 selected from the adult population of Slovakia. The quota indicators were such as sex, age, education, nationality (ethnic group), region, and residence category. A comparison of the master population and the sample confirmed that the sample was representative in all quota indicators. The data were acquired through standardized face-to-face interviews recorded in questionnaires.

The data were collected in two stages, namely: 2,431 questionnaires were completed between 23-29 May 2006, and the remaining 90 questionnaires were completed by the MVK Agency's interviewers between 8 -12 June 2006, about a week before the 17 June 2006 parliamentary elections.<sup>2</sup> The field data collection was made by 506

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<sup>1</sup> The study is an integral part of the VEGA No. 2/5106/25 project "The contemporary family in the context of social and individual transformation".

<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that the elections had no major effect on the outcome of the survey as women's issues were absent from the pre-election campaign topics.

trained interviewers of the MVK Agency in 319 towns or villages of all districts of Slovakia. Given the size of the sample, the survey was the largest sociological survey on this topic ever taken in Slovakia. The aim of the survey was to analyze the gender equality issue with special emphasis on inequality in the labour market of Slovakia. Certain questions that had been used in past surveys on gender equality issues<sup>3</sup> were reintegrated in the questionnaire in order to identify trends. The survey focused on the following topics:

- General perception of social status of women,
- How should the position of women change and what institutions should be the drivers of the change,
- Position of women in terms of their remuneration, career and political promotion, and access to education and training,
- Individual experience with preferential treatment of the opposite gender at work or school,
- Opinion of uniform retirement age for both genders,
- How and what help should be given to socially or other disadvantaged people.

Two questions for the international EQUAL project were added in the questionnaire, namely computers, the Internet and their use in households. The same questions were used in a survey conducted by our Italian partners.

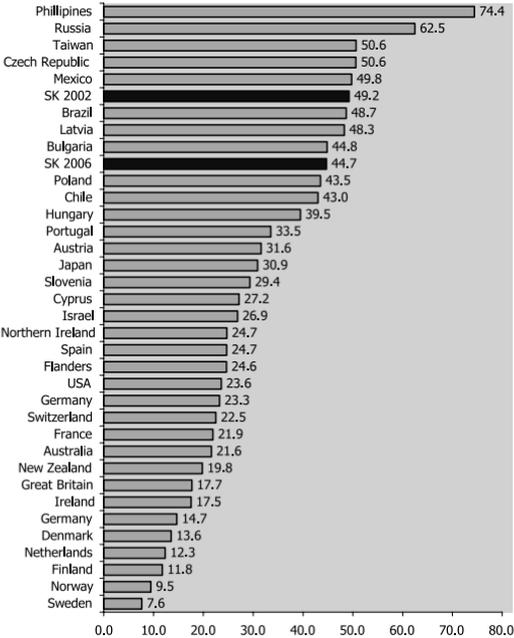
## **1. Men, women and the labour market – international comparison of Slovakia**

The degree of agreement with “the role of men is earning money, and the role of women is to take care of the house and family” is represented in chart 1. That question was also included in the ISSP 2002 international survey on “Family and changing gender roles III”. This question was intended to show how “traditional” opinions are about the position of women in the labour market.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically the IVO survey of 2002 “Potential of active public involvement of women”, and ISSP survey on “ Family and changing gender roles III” of 2002.

Chart 1 illustrates the responses and ranking of Slovakia and the Czech Republic in 2002 among the countries where almost half of the population agree with the “traditional” distribution of gender roles as outlined in the question. Inclusion of the same question permitted a comparison of opinions of the years 2002 and 2006 in Slovakia. During that period there was a slight shift in opinion (from 49.2% to 44.7%) away from the traditional perception. Yet it can be said that Slovakia very likely ranks among European countries with a rather conservative perception of the social role of women.

**Chart 1: Earning money is the role of men, taking care of the house and family is the role of women. I agree or somewhat agree. <sup>4</sup>**



Source: ISSP 2002

Specific information on areas with prevalence of the traditional idea of the position of men and women in the labour market can be found further on.

<sup>4</sup> The changed ranking of Slovakia is relative because responses represented in Chart 1 are of the 2002 surveys.

## 2. General perception of social position of women

Perception of social position of women was surveyed through the following questions: "There is a lot of discussion on equality /equal rights for men and women. Do you think that life is easier for men than for women?"; and "Do you think that women in Slovakia assert their rights sufficiently? Responses can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

Slightly more men (29.2% to 24.4%) and many more women (63.1% to 14.1%) agree that men have an easier life than women. Women and men are treated equally in the opinion of 41.1% of men and 19.7% of women. People younger than 24 responded a little more frequently that men and women are treated equally (34.7%). Women with two children more frequently responded that women's life is harder than men's (67.9%), women with no children more frequently responded that both genders are treated equally. Both differences are statistically significant.

A comparison with responses to a similar question asked in a survey taken in 2004 shows a high degree of correlation with the results of our survey.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1: There is a lot of discussion on equality / equal rights for men and women. Do you think that life is easier for men than for women?**

	Sex		Number of children, women only				Total
	Men	Women	0	1	2	3 or more	
Yes	29.2	63.1	56.0 [- -]	62.4	67.9 [++]	64.7	46.7
Equal	41.0	19.7	23.9 [+]	19.2	16.7 [-]	20.1	30.0
No	24.4	14.1	15.6	16.7	13.1	11.2	19.1
Can't say	5.4	3.1	4.5	1.6	2.3	4.0	4.2

N = 2521, Nwomen = 1301, differences between responses of men and women were statistically significant, statistically significant deviations from the expected numbers based on adjusted residues were marked: ++ / - - significance 0.01, + / - significance 0.05

<sup>5</sup> The title of the survey was National identity in Slovakia & ISSP 2003 / April 2004, and the relevant question was "Do you think that life is easier for men than for women?", whereas the survey included also the opposite question, namely: "Do you think that life is easier for women than for men?"

A slightly different image is outlined by responses to the question whether women sufficiently assert their rights. Most men thought that women sufficiently assert their rights, namely 47.3% of men. A smaller number of men (42.8%) thought that women do not sufficiently assert their rights. Women, to the contrary, clearly stated that they do not sufficiently assert their rights (69.4%). It has to be noted, though, that there are far less women who strongly agree with that statement than those who "Somewhat agree" (19.1% to 50.3%). Respondents with no children more often stated that women assert their rights. Opinions of women on this question did not vary by the educational level of the respondents.

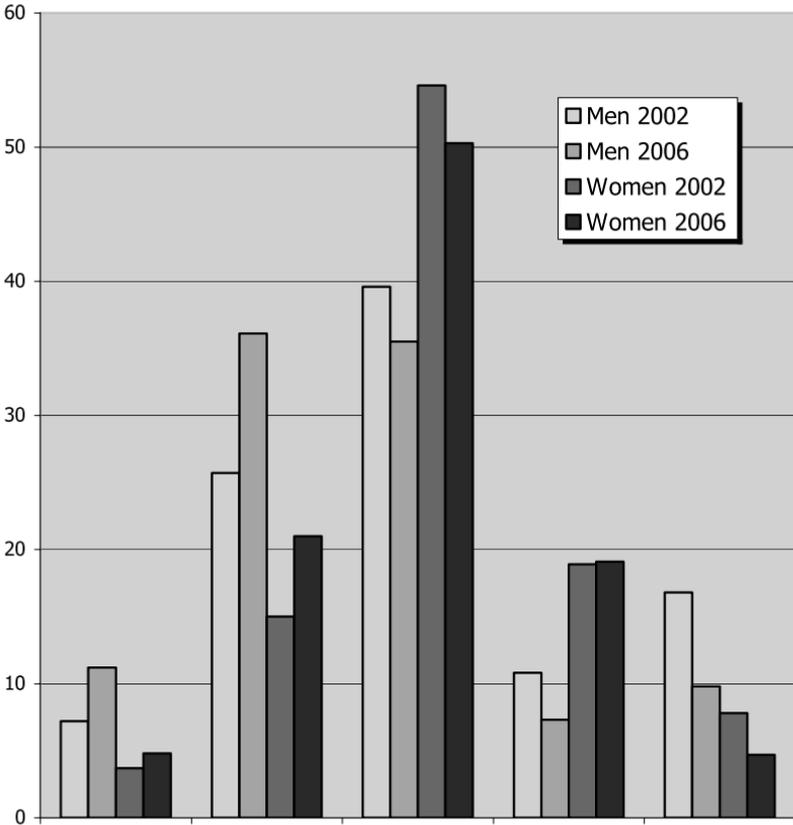
**Table 2: Do you think that women in Slovakia sufficiently assert their rights?**

	Sex		Number of children, women only				Total
	Men	Women	0	1	2	3+	
Certainly yes	11,2	4,8	5,1	7,8 [+]	3,3	4,5	7,9
Somewhat yes	36,1	21,0	26,1 [++]	19,2	21,1	14,7 [-]	28,3
Somewhat no	35,5	50,3	49,1	48,6	51,3	52,2	43,2
Certainly no	7,3	19,1	13,9 [- -]	20,0	20,2	24,1 [+]	13,4
Don't know	9,8	4,7	5,7	4,5	4,2	4,5	7,2

N = 2521, N<sub>women</sub> = 1301, differences between responses of men and women were statistical significant, the statistically significant deviations from the expected numbers based on adjusted residues are marked: ++ / - - significance rate 0.01, + / - significance rate 0.05

Men have apparently noticed media campaigns of women's NGOs (such as The Fifth Woman, Let's Do It!) and women's issues are discussed, so they believe that women assert their rights. On the other hand, women – perhaps in the light of their own experience – conclude that women do not sufficiently assert their rights.

**Chart 2: Do you think that women in Slovakia sufficiently assert their rights? Change: 2002 – 2006**



N<sub>2002</sub> = 1875, N<sub>2006</sub> = 2521

Source: "Potential of active public involvement of women", IVO June 2002

Chart 2 offers an interesting comparison between responses of men and women to that question in years 2002 and 2006. There is a noticeable shift to more respondents believing that women assert their rights. In 2006, there were clearly more responses "Somewhat yes" and fewer responses "Somewhat no" given by both men and

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women. The move in the responses “Certainly yes” and “Certainly no” was less prominent – but with a visible shift among men and a minimum shift among women (beyond the survey’s statistical accuracy rate), namely from 3.7% “Certainly yes” responses in 2002 to 4.8% in 2006. There also were fewer people who “could not say” or “had no opinion” on the issue in 2006 as compared with 2002.

The above mentioned assumption regarding the effects of media campaigns seems to be true and offers indirect evidence of media influence on public opinion. On the other hand, there is a slightly stronger shift in the male respondents of our sample which may confirm the aforementioned sceptical opinion of women about the concrete benefit of such campaigns on women’s position. This assumption is also underpinned by the minimum shift in the “Certainly yes” and “Certainly no” response categories by women.

### **3. How should the position of women change and what institutions should be the drivers of the change**

This survey section consisted of three questions to identify institutions that are perceived by the respondents as the ones that best help to implement an equal social position of women and to elicit ideas about changes that are needed to make the life of women better in our society.

Table 3 lists institutions ranked by the respondents among the defenders of an equal social position for women. The responses show that NGOs (45.1%) and the European Commission (37.1%) ranked first. A rather high percentage of respondents Did not know (21.9%), with no statistically significant differences between men and women. The unions, schools, National Council of SR, and the government followed next among the institutions advancing women’s equality.

**Table 3: What institutions in our country advance and promote equal social position of women? Choose maximum three!**

	Sex		Education				Total
	Men	Women	Elementary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	University	
NGOs	44.2	46.0	3.3	39.9	51.9	56.6	45.1
European Commission	36.1	38.0	26.9	34.1	41.1	49.6	37.1
Can't say	20.9	22.8	26.9	24.6	19.5	11.9	21.9
Unions	16.5	19.3	19.6	17.1	19.1	15.2	17.9
Schools	15.5	14.6	13.3	14.6	16.0	16.0	15.0
National Council SR	15.7	11.1	10.6	15.2	12.3	12.7	13.3
Government SR	15.1	10.8	17.8	12.7	11.6	11.5	12.9
Ombudsman	14.5	11.5	10.9	12.7	12.6	18.0	12.9
Churches	10.7	9.8	15.1	11.8	7.2	8.2	10.3
Courts	10.7	9.1	10.0	10.5	8.7	10.7	9.8
Police	5.1	3.8	4.8	5.0	4.1	2.9	4.4
Army SR	4.1	2.2	2.1	3.5	3.4	1.6	3.1

N = 2521, No statistically significant difference between men and women, statistical difference present in responses broken down by education

Total of responses over 100%, multiple responses were possible!

The responses show that citizens mostly relate women's agenda with NGOs and the European Union. No major differences were found between responses given by men and women except for responses by men who attribute a stronger role to the government and the national council– but the difference is statistically marginally significant. The breakdown by education clearly shows that the higher the education, the more respondents relate women's equality with NGOs, the European Commission and ombudsman.

Tables 4 and 5 represent answers to questions on changes needed to improve the social status of women. The first question (Table 4) was more general, the second question was on specific measures needed in work and family life arrangements (Table 5).

**Table 4: What specific changes should be made to improve the life of women in our society? Choose maximum three alternatives!**

	Sex		Total
	Men	Women	
Eliminate social indifference to domestic violence	58.9	61.9	60.5
Sensitize public opinion to equal rights issues	43.5	44.5	44.0
Improve awareness among women of their rights and opportunities	39.4	47.0	43.5
Identify and criticize violations of women's rights	37.3	36.2	36.7
Teach boys to approach women as equal partners	31.6	35.4	33.6
More emphasis on self-awareness and self-respect in education and upbringing of girls	28.9	32.8	31.0
Make counselling services more available	17.0	16.1	16.5
Can't say	2.2	0.5	1.3

N = 2382, statistically significant differences between men and women  
 Response totals exceed 100%, multiple answers were possible!

Regarding the general “measures” to improve the social life of women, as shown in Table 4, the most frequent response (60.5%) was “Eliminate social indifference to domestic violence”. That “measure” was considered the most important measure by both men and women. That may be due to the success of NGOs campaigns against domestic violence. This assumption is supported by a comparison to responses in a survey conducted by IVO “Potential of active public involvement of women” of 2002 to a similar question with an identically worded measure related to domestic violence (only 19.3% of men and 26% of women).<sup>6</sup>

The second ranked most important “measure” was sensitization of public opinion to equality issues (44.0%), followed by better awareness by women of their rights and opportunities (43.5%). The need for better awareness was reported slightly more often by women (47%) than by men (39.4%). It should be mentioned that women

<sup>6</sup> The caveat is that the responses are not directly comparable. The wording of questions about domestic violence was identical but the other alternatives were not. The difference then can also be due to different gravity of the alternative responses in the two surveys.

attribute more importance than men to both “measures” related to upbringing, namely “Teach boys to approach women as equal partners” and “*More emphasis on self-awareness and self-respect in education and upbringing of girls*”.

**Table 5: Please identify specific measures related to work and family life that could advance better life of women in our society. Specify maximum three alternatives!**

	Sex		
	Men	Women	Total
Work arrangements to reconcile work and family life	65.5	63.0	64.1
More state financial support for families	60.1	56.3	58.1
Better pay for women	46.4	65.6	56.6
More and financially available services	29.0	25.9	27.3
Higher representation of women in public and management positions	20.5	22.4	21.5
Not favouring men in hiring and terminating employment	15.2	23.8	19.8
Public criticism of expressions of male superiority	8.6	13.0	11.0
Encouraging women to undertake technical studies	11.6	5.4	8.3
Improving the preparation of women for public and political positions	7.2	6.3	6.7
Can't say	1.6	0.4	1.0

N = 2415, there were statistically significant differences between responses of men and women.

Totals for responses may exceed 100% owing to multiple response possibility!

Both men and women (65.5% and 63.0%, respectively, Table 5) attribute most importance to work arrangements that permit reconciliation of work and family life. Many respondents also believe that more state financial support for families (58.1%) and better pay for women (56.6%) are important. The remaining measures were far less frequent in the responses. The breakdown by sex shows interesting differences. As many as 65.6% of women and only 46.4% of men believe that women should be better paid. Similarly, not favouring men in hiring and in terminating their employment was deemed necessary by 23.8% of women, and just 15.2% of men. Encouraging

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women to pursue technical studies is recommended by more men (11.6%) than women (5.4%), confirming how “well established” female prevalence is in certain industries or areas.

The identified differences between men and women indicate that women are aware of their inequality in pay and access to the labour market (hiring and termination of employment) and these will be subject to a more detailed analysis further on.

#### **4. Opinion of the position of women in pay, career and political promotion, and access to education**

The opinions of respondents were surveyed regarding the position of women in the following six areas:

- a) Applying for a job,
- b) Pay for work,
- c) Keeping one’s job during redundancies,
- d) Career promotion,
- e) Access to nomination and offices in political parties,
- f) Access to secondary or university education.

Tables 6\_A to 6\_F represent opinions of men and women regarding the position of women in the above situations. Most women and men responded that there is gender equality only in access to education. Otherwise most women and men shared the opinion that preference is given “certainly” or “somewhat” to men. Women tended to respond that “men are certainly” preferred, whereas men tended to choose that “women and men are treated equally”.

**Table 6\_A: Do you think that women and men in Slovakia are treated equally (equal chances, equal opportunities) or do you think that women are disadvantaged or – to the contrary – at advantage to men?**

A: When people apply for a job:  
Preference is given to:

	Sex		
	Men	Women	Total
Certainly men	17.0	34.3	25.9
Somewhat men	36.1	40.3	38.3
Women and men equally	38.2	19.8	28.7
Somewhat women	3.3	1.0	2.1
Certainly women	0.4	0.2	0.3
Can't say	5.0	4.5	4.7

N = 2521, there were statistically significant differences between the responses of men and women

There also is a clear difference between men and women in admitting how much preference is given to men or women. The ratio between women who responded that men are certainly preferred and those who thought men are somewhat preferred was 4 to 5. The same ratio for men is 2 to 5. In other words, if there is a general agreement on preference given to men in a specific situation, men tend to use a softer expression, namely men are somewhat preferred, whereas women tended to choose a more explicit response, namely that men are certainly preferred.

The breakdown of responses by economic background of respondents did not show any statistically significant difference in any of the surveyed areas. There was a general accord in the opinion of the position of men and women. The expected major differences in answers of younger and older respondents were not found in the survey. Even if we work with a purely female subpopulation, there is no demographic feature indicating a statistically relevant difference in responses of women to this question.

**Table 6\_B: Do you think that women and men in Slovakia are treated equally (equal chances, equal opportunities) or do you think that women are disadvantaged or – to the contrary – at advantage to men?**

B: When it comes to wages or pay for work  
 Preference is given to:

	Sex		Total
	Men	Women	
Certainly men	18.1	39.3	29.0
Somewhat men	46.9	44.5	45.7
Women and men equally	28.2	11.9	19.8
Somewhat women	2.0	0.2	1.1
Certainly women	0.3	0.0	0.2
Can't say	4.4	4.1	4.2

N = 2521, there were statistically significant differences between the responses of men and women

Most respondents, namely 65.0% of men and 83.8% of women, thought that men are somewhat or certainly preferred when it comes to pay for work (Table 6\_B). A similar response was given to the question whether preference was given to one sex when people apply for a senior management position, namely 64.4% of men and 82.8% of women think preference is given to men (Table 6\_D).

**Table 6\_C: Do you think that women and men in Slovakia are treated equally (equal chances, equal opportunities) or do you think that women are disadvantaged or – to the contrary – at advantage to men?**

C: When they seek to keep their jobs at the time of redundancies  
Preference is given to:

	Sex		Total
	Men	Women	
Certainly men	10.1	24.5	17.5
Somewhat men	32.9	35.6	34.3
Women and men equally	41.1	27.4	34.0
Somewhat women	7.5	4.0	5.7
Certainly women	1.1	0.7	0.9
Can't say	7.3	7.8	7.6

N = 2521, there were statistically significant differences between the responses of men and women

A little less strong, yet clearly in favour of men, were answers of respondents to the question of preference given to men in hiring or termination of employment. Men are preferred in hiring according to 74.6% of women and 53.1% of men (Table 6\_A) and 38.2% of men and 19.8% of women thought that men and women are equally treated. Employed women with no children slightly more frequently agreed with the statement that men and women are treated equally in hiring.

**Table 6\_D: Do you think that women and men in Slovakia are treated equally (equal chances, equal opportunities) or do you think that women are disadvantaged or – to the contrary – at advantage to men?**

D: When they seek to be promoted to a higher management position at work  
Preference is given to:

	Sex		Total
	Men	Women	
Certainly men	20.7	38.1	29.7
Somewhat men	43.7	44.7	44.2
Women and men equally	26.6	12.1	19.1
Somewhat women	3.6	1.4	2.5
Certainly women	0.5	0.2	0.3
Can't say	5.0	3.6	4.3

N = 2521, there were statistically significant differences between the responses of men and women

Preference given to men at the time of redundancies was reported by 60.1% of women and 43% of men. Men and women are equal in this situation according to 27.4% of women and 41.1% of men (Table 6\_C).

A representative survey conducted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights in November 2005 covered the issue of discrimination in hiring and termination of employment in more detail. The findings of that survey indicate that in regard to gender equality in hiring and employment termination there are the following critical issues:

- a) The employer interviewing a job applicant inquired about the age and number of children (15% of men and 25.2% of women reported their individual experience),
- b) The employer gave preference to a man although the woman applicant was satisfying the set criteria better than the male candidate (4.8% of men and 14.8% of women reported their individual experience),
- c) Termination of employment after a parental leave (1.8% of men and 5.0% of women had their individual experience).

The survey also confirmed individual experience with preference given to a younger candidate (11.9% of respondents) and termination of employment because of older age (6.7%). The experienced discrimination of employees on grounds of age was the same in both

men and women (Final report on the project: Field survey into equal treatment in beginning and end of labour relation of selected population categories, 2006).

No-response was given by 71.9% of women and 57.6% of men to the question whether women have equal chances to men when they seek to be listed as political party candidates and elected for an office.

**Table 6\_E: Do you think that women and men in Slovakia are treated equally (equal chances, equal opportunities) or you think that women are disadvantaged or – to the contrary – at advantage to men?**

E: When they seek to be listed as political party candidates  
Preference is given to:

	Sex		Total
	Men	Women	
Certainly men	20.0	31.9	26.1
Somewhat men	37.6	40.0	38.9
Women and men equally	28.0	15.3	21.4
Somewhat women	2.0	1.2	1.6
Certainly women	0.9	0.1	0.5
Can't say	11.5	11.5	11.5

N = 2521, there were statistically significant differences between the responses of men and women

The last question was on admission to secondary schools or universities. This was the only question with very close responses between men and women, namely both men (81.5%) and women (76.4%) agreed that men and women are treated equally in this area. A slightly smaller percentage of women who thought that men and women are treated equally was driven mainly by respondents older than 60. When this group is not considered, the difference between responses of men (81.3%) and women (78.6%) is statistically insignificant.

**Table 6\_F: Do you think that women and men in Slovakia are treated equally (equal chances, equal opportunities) or do you think that women are disadvantaged or – to the contrary – at advantage to men?**

F: When they apply for enrolment in secondary schools or universities Preference is given to:

	Sex		Total
	Men	Women	
Certainly men	1.1	3.8	2.5
Somewhat men	3.6	7.0	5.4
Women and men equally	81.5	76.4	78.9
Somewhat women	4.1	1.8	2.9
Certainly women	1.3	0.2	0.7
Can't say	8.4	10.9	9.7

N = 2521, there were statistically significant differences between the responses of men and women

## Summary

The surveyed situations (except for the last one) are perceived by both men and women as relatively problematic situations in which women and men do not have equal chances or opportunities. The degree of the perceived concern to respective situations was significantly different in men and women. Depending upon on how strong the agreement or disagreement with the statement that men are certainly or somewhat given preference in the specified situation, the concerns analysed above can be put into three groups:

- a) Major concern** – about 2/3 of men and 4/5 of women agreed that men were given advantage, namely in:
- a. higher pay than for women;
  - b. career promotion opportunities.

**b) Intermediate concern** – about 1/2 of men and 2/3 of women agreed that men are given an advantage when:

- a. they seek to be hired for a job;
- b. they run for political positions;
- c. there are redundancies.

**c) Areas of no concern** – over 3/4 of men and women believe that men and women are treated equally when:

- a. they seek to study at secondary schools or universities.

The perceptions in the aforementioned areas of inquiry have not changed since the 2002 survey conducted by IVO 2002 with the same kind of questions. Neither the ranking of concerns nor the degree of their perception as concerns have undergone any changes measurable by sociological research.

**Table 7: If your response was that preference is given to men in employment, how do you assess that fact?**

	Sex		Education, women only				Total
	Men	Women	Elementary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	University	
That is all right, it is natural	10.7	2.3	1.9	2.2	2.6	2.3	6.4
I don't like it, but things cannot be changed	21.4	23.5	29.0	27.9	19.5	15.0	22.5
I don't like it, things should be changed	28.7	55.1	46.3	54.6	57.2	63.2	42.3
I don't think it concerns me	34.7	15.9	17.3	12.9	18.1	15.8	25.0
Don't know	4.5	3.2	5.6	2.4	2.6	3.8	3.8

$N = 2521$ ,  $N_{\text{women}} = 1301$ , differences between responses of men and women, and differences in responses of female respondents with different education background were statistically significant.

In addition to eliciting opinions of opportunities of men and women in the above analysed situations, the respondents were asked to assess preference given to men in the labour market. Table 7 shows the question and responses. Preference given to men in employment is perceived as natural by only 10.7% men and 2.3% women. To the contrary, a small majority of men (50.1%) and as many as 78.6% of women do not like preferences given to men in employment. The majority of those who did not like the situation

believe things must be changed. The determination to change things among women – in contrast to men – grows stronger with their education (elementary education – 46.3%; university education – 63.2%).

## 5. Individual experience of respondents with preference given to the opposite sex at work and school

The survey was intended to elicit opinions regarding the situation of men and women and their specific experience with preference given to their male or female colleagues. Women reported that kind of experience much more often.

To the question “Have you ever had a personal experience of preference being given to your male/female colleague at work?” 61.9% of women and only 30.4% of men responded yes, repeatedly or sporadically. The survey did not show any major age-related differences. The slightly growing percentage of older men and women who had an individual experience in preference given to their male or female colleagues can be due to their longer experience at work/years of service in comparison with younger respondents.

**Table 8: Have you ever had a personal experience of preference being given to your male colleague/colleagues:**

At work

	Age groups						Total
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45- 54	55 - 59	60 +	
Yes, repeatedly	16.0	30.2	30.5	38.0	36.0	37.4	31.5
Sporadically	17.6	31.4	34.5	33.9	41.3	28.8	30.4
Has not occurred to me	24.5	26.1	27.3	18.8	20.0	19.9	23.1
Does not concern me	34.6	3.3	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.9	6.0
Can't say, can't remember	7.4	9.0	6.9	9.4	2.7	12.9	9.0

N = 1301, Question for women only, differences in responses between age groups are statistically significant

In the group of employed women the experience of preference given to male colleagues was more frequently reported by university educated women (77.9%), whereas in the groups of women with upper secondary school, women with secondary education, and women with elementary education the percentages were 67.9, 66.2, and 44 per cent, respectively. Employed mothers with two children were the group with the fewest number of respondents claiming that they had not experienced preference given to their male colleagues. As many as 67.7% of full-time employed women reported that their male colleagues were repeatedly (31.7%) or sporadically (36%) preferred to women. Only 33% of employed men reported that experience.

**Table 9: Have you ever had a personal experience of preference being given to your female colleague/colleagues:**

At work

	Age groups						Total
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 +	
Yes, repeatedly	6,9	7,9	10,0	10,8	10,3	10,5	9,3
Sporadically	15,2	15,0	29,3	23,2	26,4	19,5	21,1
Has not occurred to me	38,2	63,8	52,9	52,4	46,0	58,1	53,0
Does not concern me	28,9	1,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,1
Can't say, can't remember	10,8	12,2	7,9	13,5	17,2	11,9	11,5

N = 1220, Question for men only, differences in responses between age groups are statistically significant

Women working in public or state institutions reported a slightly lower rate of experience in preferences being given to their male colleagues. The survey also indicates a clear disparity between men and women regarding employment situations and schooling / studies. The same questions concerning preference given to the opposite sex in schools did not show any major difference between responses of men and women. Our findings also are in accord with findings from the survey conducted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights that confirmed the existence of individual experience with preference given to colleagues of the opposite sex at work. The final report on the

Centre's survey notes that this kind of behaviour is more frequently targeting at women than men (The Final report on the project, Field survey into equal treatment in beginning and termination of labour relations in selected population categories, 2006)

The next question was about respondents' feeling disadvantaged to other employees, regardless of their gender. The question actually was intended to elicit general feelings of dissatisfaction with underestimation or disadvantage amongst staff. The respondents most frequently complained about additional work that they had to do in comparison to their colleagues (44.7%). They almost equally frequently felt underpaid (43.2%). 18.1% of the respondents reported unfair treatment from their boss and 4.9% respondents reported other kinds of disadvantage.

**Table 10\_A: Have you ever been disadvantaged during your working life, for example:**

A: Were you underpaid compared to other staff members?

	Age groups						Sex		Total
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 -54	55 - 59	60 +	Men	Women	
Yes	31.7	44.4	43.5	52.2	32.2	22.2	41.3	45.2	43.2
No	60.0	47.8	47.3	36.5	56.7	77.8	48.3	46.9	47.6
Don't know	8.3	7.8	9.1	11.4	11.1	0.0	10.4	8.0	9.2

N = 1216, Full-time employed respondents only; differences in responses between respective age groups were statistically significant, differences in responses between men and women were statistically insignificant.

The principal finding is that gender is not a significant differentiating factor in the above stated question and that other differentiating factors come to the fore. That change is due to a more specific wording of the question<sup>7</sup>, and to the fact that other staff members (in certain industries or services in which mostly women work) are likely to be persons of the same sex. For example, 41.3% of men and 45.2% of women believed they were underpaid. The difference between genders in the group of the full-time respondents is statistically insignificant. The difference between genders was even smaller

when the respondents reported whether they had an impression that they had to work more than the others.

**Table 10\_B: Have you ever been disadvantaged during your working life, for example:**

B: You had to work more than others?

	Age groups						Sex		Total
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 +	Men	Women	
Yes	36,6	44,1	44,8	52,2	40,0	22,2	43,2	46,2	44,7
No	58,6	47,5	47,1	36,9	50,0	66,7	49,6	43,8	46,8
Don't know	4,8	8,4	8,1	11,0	10,0	11,1	7,2	10,0	8,6

N = 1216, Answers of respondents working full-time only; differences in responses between respective age groups were statistically significant, differences in responses between men and women were statistically insignificant

There were interesting differences in the answers of employed respondents in each age group. The feeling of being underpaid grows from the youngest employees' age (18 – 24) through to the 45 – 54 age group where it culminates, and then drops down. Similar trends can be observed in the remaining three survey questions regarding disadvantage.

In the 45 – 54 age group respondents of both genders seem to feel underpaid and overloaded. That feeling may be caused by several factors that might coincide at a tough stage of life. There are life cycle –related factors such as teenage children who need more money. There may be a feeling of relative deprivation in people who see younger, better paid or higher rank colleagues or superiors. That age group already starts to realize their poor prospects, yet retirement is rather distant to them. These feelings can also be underpinned with statistics on income breakdown by age groups that show this generation of men with less income than the next younger group of the 30 – 44 olds (BULLETIN I. Selected gender statistical indicators by regions SR, 2006). Interestingly, the report on a survey on equal treat-

<sup>7</sup> It probably is easier to respond to a generally worded question about preference given to your male or female colleague, especially when our questions cannot capture certain more subtle kinds of preferential treatment.

ment in hiring people and terminating their employment conducted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (Final project report on Field survey into equal treatment in beginning and termination of labour relation of selected population groups, 2006) arrived at a conclusion that the middle generation is the bearer of a higher incidence of unequal treatment. That finding does not seem to be specific just for Slovakia. Similar conclusions were indicated by the results of work done by Čermáková (2006) in the Czech Republic.

**Table 10\_C: Have you ever been disadvantaged during your working life, for example:**

C: Your supervisor was constantly dissatisfied with your work even though you did it on time and in quality comparable to others

	Age group						Sex		Total
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 +	Men	Women	
Yes	14,5	18,3	18,5	22,0	12,2	0,0	18,7	17,5	18,1
No	73,8	74,2	71,1	60,8	74,4	88,9	69,2	71,8	70,5
Does not concern me	1,4	0,0	1,8	1,2	0,0	0,0	1,1	0,8	1,0
Don't know	10,3	7,5	8,6	16,1	13,3	11,1	11,0	9,8	10,4

N = 1216, Full- time employed respondents only; differences in responses between respective age groups were statistically significant, differences in responses between men and women were statistically insignificant.

There were interesting differences between respondents with no children and with several children regarding the feeling of being disadvantaged. Only 36.8% of childless men and 33.3% of childless women and as many as 53.1% of men and 52.3% of women with one child felt underpaid in the full-time employed (younger than 40) respondents,. Men or women with two or more children, in contrast, were less frequently dissatisfied with their earnings than the respondents with a single child.

A breakdown of responses by regions did not show any major difference. Neither was education a significant factor in those who experienced disadvantage.

## 6. The opinions about a uniform retirement age

The survey also asked opinions about a uniform retirement age. Making the retirement age uniform for both sexes is an issue where a gender equality approach puts women at a disadvantage compared to the currently valid legislation.

The opinions of a uniform retirement age for both genders were mostly negative in both women and men. 69% of men and 85% of women strongly or somewhat disagreed with that measure. In contrast, 25.9% of men and just 12.3% of women strongly or somewhat agreed with that measure. The proportion opposing the measure was slightly less when compared with survey results in 2002.<sup>8</sup> The percentage of respondents against was 82.6% in 2002 compared with 77.3% of negative responses in 2006.

**Table 11a: Gender equality for men and women is also applied to pension reform under which there will be a uniform retirement age for men and women. How do you feel about this change, namely both men and women retiring at the age of 62?**

	Age groups						Sex		Total
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 +	Men	Women	
Strongly agree	5.6	4.4	7.4	7.7	6.2	5.6	7.5	4.8	6.1
Somewhat agree	20.4	14.4	11.7	10.1	12.3	9.0	18.4	7.5	12.8
Somewhat disagree	37.0	31.1	34.8	27.3	25.9	28.9	35.8	27.4	31.5
Strongly disagree	29.1	45.5	43.6	52.3	53.1	53.7	33.2	57.6	45.8
Can't say	7.9	4.6	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.8	5.0	2.8	3.8

N = 2521, Differences in responses between age groups and differences in responses between men and women were statistically significant

<sup>8</sup> The IVO 2002 survey had a slightly different wording of the question, namely: "How do you assess the following measures of the social policy in Slovakia?" in which one of two assessed measures was "Harmonization of men's and women's retirement age (there should be the same retirement age for women and men in future)." The response options were "Strongly positive", "Somewhat positive", "Somewhat negative", and "Strongly negative".

Table 11a indicates that opinions on this issue also depend on age. The opinions in favour and against are almost in equilibrium in the youngest age group. The next age group, though, clearly outlines a negative attitude to the uniform retirement age.

**Table 11b: Gender equality for men and women is also applied to pension reform under which there will be a uniform retirement age for men and women. How do you feel about this change, namely both men and women retiring at the age of 62?**

	Number of children				Total
	0	1	2	3 and more	
Strongly agree	7.0	6.3	5.1	6.4	6.1
Somewhat agree	17.7 [+++]	13.5	10.8 [-]	6.7 [- - -]	12.8
Somewhat disagree	31.9	35.8 [+]	30.8	27.2 [-]	31.5
Strongly disagree	36.4 [- - -]	42.8	50.9 [+++]	56.7 [+++]	45.8
Can't say	7.1 [+++]	1.6 [-]	2.4 [-]	3.0	3.8

N = 2521, statistically significant deviations from expected numbers based on adjusted residues with signs: +++ / - - - significance level 0.001, ++ / - - significance level 0.01, + / - significance level 0.05

Table 11b presents response breakdown by number of children. There is a clear relation. Respondents with no children were the strongest supporters and the respondents with three or more children were the strongest opponents of an uniform retirement age.

**Table 11c: Correlation between approval of retirement age at 62 and number of children: women**

Controlled variables			Approval of retirement age at 62 years	Number of children	Age
None	Approval of retirement age at 62 years	Correlation	1.000	-0.137	-0.088
		Significance level		0,000	0,002
	Number of children	Correlation	-0.137	1.000	0.417
		Significance level	0,000		0,000
	Age	Correlation	-0.088	0,417	1.000
		Significance level	0,002	0,000	
Age	Approval of retirement age at 62 years	Correlation	1.000	-0.110	
		Significance level		0,000	
	Number of children	Correlation	-0.110	1.000	
		Significance level	0,000		

N = 1265, Women only

Table 11c presents correlation tests between 'Agree' responses on a uniform retirement age and age and number of children of respondents. The correlation between the number of children and 'Agree' responses to uniform retirement age is stronger than the correlation to age. As for the correlation between age – 'Agree' responses, one can see a slight, yet statistically significant negative correlation between 'Agree' response and the number of children of the respondent (-0.11). In other words, the more children a woman has, the less likely she agrees with a uniform retirement age for men and women and that this relation is not caused by a higher age of women with more children.

The relation between responses and education of the respondents is smaller than the relationship to number of children, yet it can be said that support for this measure increases along with education level of the respondents, and reaches its maximum in the university educated group with 23.8% of the respondents who certainly agree or somewhat agree. The trend reflects a different professional structure

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of university educated respondents whose jobs do not require hard manual work and thus can be done at an older age. The university educated respondent group is also likely to be more satisfied in work. Employment for these people frequently is an important element of their identity. The difference also reflects two different views of retirement, namely as a time of “deserved rest” or “being put out to pasture”.

## **7. What would help socially or otherwise disadvantaged people?**

In this part of survey two questions were used to elicit opinions of people about potential measures that might help unemployed persons and opinions about so-called positive discrimination for certain disadvantaged population groups.

Most respondents responded to the semi-open ended question “What specific measure would best help the unemployed in your region?” by choosing one of the offered alternatives and only 3% proposed their own measure. There were no differences in opinions of the offered measures between men and women. The vast majority of men (78.3%) and women (80.5%) thought that more jobs would be the best help to the unemployed. Attaining a higher education level or retraining of the unemployed ranked second among the offered measures, and were chosen by 12.3% of the respondents.

The most frequently chosen open-ended responses were “higher wages, higher minimum wage” (12 responses), and “willingness to have a legal job, stop abuse of the welfare system by informal job holders” (14 responses). Respondents perceiving the unemployed as “deserving”, and respondents perceiving the unemployed as “undeserving” and taking advantage of the social system, were equally represented among those who used the opportunity to propose a measure.

**Table 12: What specific measure would help the unemployed in your region? Make only one choice!**

	Sex		Education				Total
	Men	Women	Elementary	Secondary	Upper secondary	University	
More jobs	78.3	80.5	83.4	82.9	77.1	67.2	79.4
Improvement of public transport	2.5	2.2	3.9	1.9	2.5	2.0	2.4
Attaining higher education level, retraining	12.5	12.1	8.2	9.2	14.9	22.5	12.3
Other (open-ended question)*	3.4	2.6	1.2	3.0	3.0	5.7	3.0
Don't know	3.2	2.5	3.3	3.0	2.6	2.5	2.9

\*"higher wages, higher minimum wage" = 12x; "willingness to have a legal job, stop abuse of the welfare system by informal job holders" = 14x

N= 2521, differences in responses between men and women were statistically insignificant, differences in responses between respondents with different education were statistically significant

A certain shift in the popularity of the proposed measures can be seen in breakdown of respondents by education levels. More jobs is still the most popular measure but the popularity of better education and retraining grow along with a higher education level of the respondents. As many as 22.5% of university educated respondents support that measure in contrast to just 8.2% of respondents with elementary education. The finding may not be surprising since people with higher education levels are more likely to attribute more importance to education. That finding is probably also due to less unemployment in the university educated population – which probably leads to perceiving unemployment as a personal failure that can be remedied with better education.

There were no statistically significant differences between responses of older and younger respondents; but the better transport measure was more frequently chosen by age 55 – 59 respondents (6.2%). That finding may indicate that the pre-retirement population group feels less comfortable with the limited services of the present public transport infrastructure.

The next question was intended to elicit opinions about positive

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discrimination or “temporary compensation measures”. Table 13 presents answers broken down by sex. Two-thirds of respondents (65.4%) identified physically disabled people as the target group for temporary compensation measures. Pensioners were identified by 50.6% of respondents, and the next groups were children with socially disadvantaged background and long-term unemployed. There was no major difference between responses of the two sexes; the only difference was a stronger inclination by women to support children from socially disadvantaged background and incomplete families.

The demographic breakdown of respondents showed interesting variations in who is considered deserving. University educated respondents more frequently wanted to help the physically disabled and less frequently pensioners or unemployed. The respondents with three or more children wanted to help pensioners and families with many children more frequently, and incomplete families less frequently. The younger, age 18 - 24 respondent group, expressed more willingness to help incomplete families (40.6%) than the 60+ age group (27.4%), and to help children with socially disadvantaged background, whereas the willingness to help pensioners increased with the age of the respondents.

Regional differences were present in the responses. The respondents from the Bratislava region were more frequently willing to help children from socially disadvantaged background while the Košice and Banská Bystrica respondents wanted to help the unemployed. Respondents from towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants (9.4%) were the most willing group to help people in Roma settlements.

**Table 13: Which of the following groups should be the target for temporary compensation measures intended to eliminate the differences between those groups and the rest of the population. Pick no more than three, please.**

	Sex		Total
	Men	Women	
Physically disabled	64.6	66.2	65.4
Older people (pensioners)	48.9	52.2	50.6
Children with socially disadvantaged background	39.6	44.9	42.3
Long-term unemployed	41.3	39.7	40.5
Families with many children	37	36	36.5
Incomplete families	30	34.1	32.1
People living in so-called Roma settlements	5.2	5	5.1
People in treatment for addictions	5	2.7	3.8
Asylum-seekers	1.5	0.7	1.1

N = 2521; No statistically significant differences between responses of men and women

The sequence of groups in Table 13 in a way indicates what groups are deemed deserving. People frequently rank themselves in such a group (pensioners). It is quite possible, though, that the respondents understood financial aid under the compensation measures – that may explain the high ranking of pensioners.

The question quite clearly differentiated three groups that were least frequently mentioned by the respondents, namely asylum seekers, people with addictions in treatment, and people living in Roma settlements. The gap between the ranking of these three and the other groups is visible in all breakdowns of the respondents (by age, sex, education level, region, and size of settlement). There was no subgroup with more than 10% of the respondents selecting the aforementioned three groups. That finding attests to the pertaining distance the majority population takes from the Roma, from addicts in treatment, and from asylum seekers. A little higher degree of solidarity with people living in the Roma settlements that was displayed by

people from Bratislava and Košice may be a slightly optimistic sign, yet there still is need to make conservative interpretation of the signal as it is at the lower level of statistical significance.

## 8. Computing equipment, the Internet, and their use in households

Questions about computing equipment, the Internet and their use in households were included in this survey. We did so after consultations with our Italian project partner whose survey had covered information technology use in much detail.

Replies to the question "Do you have a computer or Internet at home?" showed that 22.4% of respondents have a computer with Internet access at home, and 26.4% of respondents only have a computer, and about half of the respondents replied that they have no computer at home.

Internet access at home is more frequent in men (25.2%) than women (19.7%). Computer and Internet access are more frequent in households of people with higher education, younger generation and people from towns. As many as 25.3% of one child respondents have access to the Internet in contrast to only 13.9% of respondents with three or more children. Pensioners (5.0%) and unemployed (7.9%) are the groups with the lowest occurrence of Internet at home, self-employed (55.2%) and students (48.1%) have Internet access at home most frequently. The recently identified stagnation of interest in the government-subsidized scheme "Internet for education" can be due to the fact that almost half of students already have an Internet connection at home.

**Table 14a: Do you have a computer or Internet at home?**

	Education				Sex		Total
	Elementary	Secondary	Upper secondary	University	Men	Women	
PC without Internet	14.5	23.2	33.6	30.7	24.8	27.9	26.4
PC with Internet	10.0	11.7	31.7	52.0	25.2	19.7	22.4
Don't have	75.5	65.1	34.7	17.2	49.9	52.4	51.2

N= 2521; Differences in replies between men and women, and differences in replies between respondents with different education levels were statistically significant.

A more detailed analysis of data on Internet access shows large inter-regional differences. The Bratislava region is the clear leader in use of computers and the Internet in households. The Banská Bystrica and Košice regions have the largest numbers of people with no computer or no Internet access. The lowest Internet access rate is in the Prešov region. Still, that region, with 18.2% of people with Internet access at home exceeds the national average at the end of the year 2004.

**Table 14b: Do you have a computer or Internet access at home?**

	Region								Total
	Bratislava	Trnava	Trenčín	Nitra	Žilina	Banská Bystrica	Prešov	Košice	
PC without Internet	24.1	32.2	29.7	27.8	24.1	23.1	30.2	21.2	26.4
PC with Internet	34.5	18.7	22.7	24.9	20.0	19.2	18.2	21.5	22.4
Don't have	41.4	49.1	47.6	47.4	55.9	57.7	51.6	57.2	51.2

N = 2521; There were statistically significant inter-regional differences in responses of respondents.

Besides the question about a PC and Internet access, there was a question on members of the household using the equipment. The replies confirmed that having a computer does not necessarily mean using it. Women use the home computer a little less than men. In replies to the question "If you have a PC at home, who uses it?" as many as 27.1% of women and only 20.6% of men did not report themselves as users.

A PC in the household is used more by the younger than the older generations. As many as 88% of the younger ones aged 18 – 24 used a computer but only 54% of the 60+ respondents.

**Table 15a: If you have a computer at home, who uses it?**

	Age groups						Total
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 +	
Me	89.0	81.5	77.0	65.1	70.0	54.0	76.1
My spouse (partner)	12.2	56.4	61.2	57.4	47.1	31.7	46.9
My children	2.0	38.5	84.2	87.6	71.4	68.3	55.9
Other relatives or housemates	71.8	28.0	11.4	10.0	15.7	20.6	27.5

N = 1230; Differences in responses by age groups were statistically significant; Totals exceed 100%, multiple choice was possible.

The educational level also has a significant influence on the home PC use rate. If the responses of students are not considered, the home PC is used by 42.4% of respondents with elementary education and by as many as 92% of university graduates. The computer literacy concept is a very obvious issue – having a PC and using it are two different things. The survey also showed what group lags behind in terms of computer literacy – mainly older people with elementary or lower secondary education. Women also lag behind when it comes to use of modern telecommunication technologies. Even if there is a computer in their household, they use it less than men.

**Table 15b: If you have a computer at home, who uses it?**

	Education, except students*				Sex		Total
	Elementary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	University	Men	Women	
Me	42.4	60.1	80.6	92.0	79.4	72.9	76.1
My spouse (partner)	51.5	46.0	52.6	64.5	45.8	48.0	46.9
My children	84.8	68.4	61.3	55.5	53.0	58.6	55.9
Other relatives or housemates	12.1	22.4	20.5	23.0	29.1	25.8	27.5

\*N = 1099; Households with PC and no students  
 N = 1230; Differences in responses between men and women, and responses by different education levels were statistically significant.  
 Totals exceed 100%, multiple choice answers were possible.

## Conclusion

The survey was intended to examine in a relatively comprehensive way perceptions of gender equality in the labour market in Slovakia which – compared with other countries covered by the ISSP 2002 survey - ranks among the countries with a high representation of proponents of traditional gender roles.

A clear majority of women and a slight majority of men agreed that men have an easier life than women. The responses to other questions also confirm that there is agreement between genders about whose life is more difficult. Why the life of women is tougher is indicated by responses of childless women who more frequently than women with children responded that men and women are equal. The two genders did not agree on whether women sufficiently assert their rights. The finding is important in the respect that public opinion, when compared with 2002, moved towards the opinion that women more often assert their rights. This shift can be interpreted as a result of campaigns by women's NGOs whose role was perceived by the respondents as crucial in advocacy of women's agenda. The fact that the European Commission ranked second on the list of advocates of equal social position for women attests that respondents believe that the issue is advocated more by European, rather than national, institutions. The higher the education of respondents, the more importance they attributed to NGOs and to the European Commission. The effects of NGO campaigns were apparently translated into positive responses concerning one of the most important of the generally outlined measures, namely elimination of domestic violence, which has increased in comparison to the 2002 ranking of measures. The respondents also ranked arrangements for reconciliation of work and family life as important measures and women clearly emphasized increasing their pay to the pay levels of men.

Respondents of both genders replied that chances are least balanced between men and women when it comes to equal pay for work and career promotion. Hiring and termination of employment and opportunities for political engagement by women were a gender-related concern too. It should be stressed that both most men and most

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women shared the above concern. The admission to a secondary school or university in terms of equal access is not a concern. A comparison with the year 2002 survey permits a statement that there has not been any shift in regard to importance rating or intensity of perception of the mentioned problematic situations in the last four years. There were differences between men and women in individual experiences with preferential treatment of the opposite gender at work. Women reported about twice as many incidents of individual experience of preference being given to their male colleagues. The occurrence rate of that experience increased with higher education levels, namely it was most frequently reported by educated women with tertiary education and least frequently reported by women with elementary education. Women with two children most frequently experienced, and women with no children least frequently experienced preference given to their male colleagues. The experience of men and women with preference given to colleagues of opposite sex at school was about balanced.

The feeling of being disadvantaged against one's colleagues in pay, work load, and approach of the supervisor, is experienced approximately the same by men and women. A slightly larger experience by women in preferential treatment is at the margin of statistical significance. There are variations of experience in different age groups. An important finding is that the feeling of being disadvantaged in all surveyed aspects starts in the youngest age group, keeps growing stronger with age, culminates in the 45 – 54 age group, and then loses its intensity. The strong feeling of being disadvantaged in those groups could be due to a number of causes, the crucial one may be a certain accumulation of responsibilities such as bringing up children, supporting the family, and a relative deprivation vis-à-vis younger and better paid colleagues. The breakdown of earnings statistics by age groups underpins that statement. The earnings of employees in Slovakia grow up to the 45 – 54 age group, and at that age group it is then less than the earnings of the group younger than 45. The findings from the Czech Republic indicate that the above phenomenon may exist in other countries as well.

Both men and women had a largely negative opinion regarding a

uniform retirement age. Dislike of the idea of a uniform retirement age also significantly depends upon the number of children – respondents with two or more children are the strongest opponents of the idea. To the contrary, the support for the measure grows with higher education levels – that may be related with relatively less involvement with hard manual labour for people with higher education levels and also with a different ‘job – personal identity’ relationship in more highly educated people.

In the opinion of the respondents more jobs is the best measure to address the situation of the unemployed. The role of education and retraining was more strongly accentuated by respondents with university degrees, but that group also ranked more jobs first.

The respondents thought that positive discrimination measures should target mainly the physically disabled and pensioners. The respondents expressed lowest support for compensation measures for asylum seekers, people with addictions in treatment, and people from Roma settlements. A demographic breakdown of the replies indicates a certain trend to help the individual respondent’s own group (pensioners would help pensioners; families with many children would help families with many children, etc.). There is a clear distance between the asylum seekers, people with addiction in treatment, and people living in Roma settlements, and the remaining potential target groups. The finding indicating that residents from Bratislava and Košice are the most willing to help people in Roma settlements was at the verge of statistical significance.

In conclusion it can be said that the feeling of both genders that men’s life is easier is largely rooted in the perception of a disadvantaged position of women in the labour market, shared by both men and women. The tougher life of women is apparently related largely with their motherhood since women with no children less frequently reported a feeling of disadvantage to men. The finding that more people believe that women now assert their rights is encouraging. However, there is a caveat to optimism, namely the finding that neither the ranking nor the intensity of perception of issues of concern has changed over the past four years. Another worrying finding is that

women less frequently than men use information technologies even if they have the equipment at home. That may put women at a disadvantage, for example, in job search or recruitment and hiring.

Findings from our survey indicate a need to more intensively address the issue of disadvantaged women in the labour market, specifically women with children who most frequently experience a disadvantaged position in work. The findings also reveal the issue of potential discrimination against certain age groups in the labour market regardless of gender. There also appears to be a need for better protection of workers in the "vulnerable" group of 45 – 54 years old employees.

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# Gender Equality and Employment Policy Implementation<sup>1</sup>

Magdaléna Piscová

The issue of equal opportunities between men and women or – in other words – gender equality are concepts that have become known in both our vocabulary and day-to-day life. The topic has its place on the political agenda, and brings new issues and new concepts to the agenda of our country and especially of the European Union. Gender equality has become an important tool for development of a fair and prosperous society, and there are good reasons for its presence in almost all documents and instruments of the European Union. The Amsterdam Treaty, in effect since 1999, marked a milestone on our way to a gender-fair community. The Amsterdam Treaty expressed the need for gender equality promotion and made it one of the most important tasks of the European Union. Since then gender equality has been an integral part of all EU measures and policies, which have become more or less binding for the member states including our country.

## Gender equality as a principle and goal

The attention devoted to gender equality is well justified. The need for gender equality promotion can, on the one hand, be defined within the context of strengthening of democracy and democratic principles, which rank gender equality among the most important principles, and indicators of the standard of democratic development of a society. On the other hand, gender equality is interlinked with the challenges of further development and sustainable economic growth. Those challenges were best expressed in the revised Lisbon Strategy interrelating further development of Europe with creation of new and better job opportunities. Gender equality and gender policy rank among the crucial instruments to meet these new labour market challenges. Gender policy – as a matter of fact – boosts the growth of employment, and

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<sup>1</sup> The study was an integral part of the grant VEGA 2/5106/25 "The Contemporary Family in the Context of Social and Individual Transformation".

general economic and social growth. The European Commission published the "Report on Equality between Men and Women" in 2006, claiming that women took three quarters of new jobs that were created in Europe in the past five years. Major differences between men and women in the labour market both in horizontal (inter-sectoral) and vertical (low representation of women in higher or management positions) levels indicate that the productive potential of women – whose competences are perfectly comparable to those of the men – has not been fully tapped in Europe.

There are several causes of the unfavourable situation. Imbalance between work and family or - in other words – the issue of reconciliation of work and family life certainly ranks among the most significant ones. The problem has far reaching consequences, namely it makes individuals – predominantly women – give up one of those two areas. At times it is the family that either never starts or is reduced to just a single child. It is apparent that a low birth rate goes hand-in-hand with the aging population – a very distinct European trend jeopardising the sustainability of social systems...

Much progress has been achieved in gender equality in EU and Slovakia in recent years, for example, legislation in this area, yet many inequalities can still be found. For that reason the European Commission adopted the so-called "Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006 – 2010" in April 2006 intended to be used as a guide by individual member states on their way to authentic equality between both genders. The area of labour plays a crucial role as employment means economic independence and helps to break or eliminate deeply rooted gender stereotypes.

## **Certain data illustrating the position of women in the labour market in Slovakia and in Europe**

Women of Slovakia represent almost 45% of the economically active population. The employment rates<sup>2</sup> of women and men vary between 51 – 52 %, and 62 - 64%, respectively. The women's rate is well below

<sup>2</sup> Employment rate represents the persons in employment (women in this case) as a proportion of total population (all women in this case). The statistical data source is the Eurostat document "Indicators for monitoring of the Employment Guideline 2006 compendium", Latest update 01/08/2006.

the targets of the Lisbon Strategy, which set the women's employment rate at 60%. The women's employment rate has gone down slightly in recent years primarily because of longer occupational training and a slight increase in the number of women on maternity or parental leave. The employment situation is rather unfavourable in the age group of women older than 55 with only about a 15% employment rate. A comparison against the other EU member states (the overall EU average was 33.8% in 2005) shows that the rate ranks the second lowest of the EU countries, after Malta. The trend, however, is a slightly increasing rate for this age category of women (and men alike) if compared with the year 2000. The unemployment rate of women is a little above the men's unemployment rate, and - similar to the total unemployment - ranks among the highest in Europe. The rate for women was 17.3% in 2005 according to Eurostat, which means about 2 percentage points higher than for men. The problem is that the successive slow decrease in short-term unemployment has been accompanied by an increase in long-term unemployment, with women's rates slightly higher than those of men. In 2005 in Slovakia, 12.3% of economically active women, and 11.3% of economically active men were unemployed for over a year. A specific problem is the group of even longer-term unemployed, namely those who have been jobless for over four years. That group accounts for over 40% of all unemployed persons, namely 65,300 men, and 59,400 women in the 1st quarter of 2005.<sup>3</sup> They are a group of people who, in fact, are excluded from the labour market.

The pay gap between men and women is one of the frequently raised labour market issues. Women's average earnings are just 76% of men's average earnings in Slovakia. The differential is large and varies by sectors, industries, professions, and education levels as well as by age and other indicators. That is why it should always be analysed in a specific context. A female labour force is known to dominate in low pay sectors, women do not advance to positions held by men in spite of their competence or skills and women's career advancement is affected by the so-called glass ceiling. Recent detailed analyses indicate that pay inequality occurs more due to "external"

<sup>3</sup> Results of labour force survey data, 1st quarter 2005, Statistical Office SR, Bratislava 2005

factors and that the differential is smaller for women who hold positions comparable to those held by men.<sup>4</sup> The largest pay gap and gender imbalance can be seen in the private sector. The employee and the employer currently agree upon labour relations or working and employment arrangements. Interventions in their relationship may be perceived as a strongly undesirable phenomenon. If the relevant Labour Code provisions regarding wages are respected, it is up to individual workers to decide at what pay they are willing to work. A number of surveys and findings of labour inspectors indicate that women are more willing than men to work for wages lower than appropriate in comparison to their competence.

The lower women's employment rates in Slovakia compared to other EU countries are primarily due to (non) reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. Parenthood or motherhood in particular, has significantly negative effects on employment. The difference between the employment rates of childless women and women with children younger than 6 years of age ranks among the largest amongst the EU countries. There are multiple factors influencing that situation, namely lack of services for families or flexible working time or part time jobs. The percentage of people working part time is extremely low in Slovakia, namely 2% of employees, 1.9% of whom are women. There has been only a very slight increase in part time jobs. The annual increase in such jobs is just 2,000. There are regions in Slovakia where there is no opportunity to work part time at all.

The survey was designed bearing in mind the multitude of labour market issues more-or-less related to gender equality. The survey was divided into quantitative and qualitative areas, in order to cover the broadest possible spectrum of issues. A number of survey instruments were used and will be discussed further in this paper; for the qualitative area, in-depth interviews of labour market experts were conducted.

## **The research methodology**

Labour relations are, perhaps, the area with the greatest need for

<sup>4</sup> Source: BAŠTOVANSKÝ, T.: Rodový rozdiel v SR (Gender gap in SR) presented at the seminar "Rozdiely v odmeňovaní žien a mužov v krajoch SR" (The pay gap between men and women in SR regions), Nitra, April 2006

gender equality implementation. The qualitative portion of the survey aimed at acquisition of as much detailed and specific information on gender equality implementation in the labour market as seen by professionals dealing with the implementation of employment policy in their day-to-day work or who are at least in touch with it in their work. We gathered information from experts from selected regions. The kind of information we obtained from them may have a locally or regionally biased value, yet the profound convergence or divergence of views may help identify essential issues and shortcomings of the triangular interaction of individuals, employers and labour offices or municipalities. To eliminate local bias, experts were selected from six districts of Slovakia that proportionately represented the regions, namely west, central and east Slovakia. The Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Prešov self-governing regions were selected for our survey. The next step was choosing (not on a random basis) the relevant districts. The unemployment rates in respective districts of each region were the selection criteria. Two districts were selected from each region, namely a district with the lowest and a district with the highest unemployment rate. Experts from the following districts were included in the selected sample:

- Nitra region: Nitra and Levice districts;
- Banská Bystrica region: Banská Bystrica and Rimavská Sobota districts;
- Prešov region: Prešov and Stropkov districts.

The capital district was the district with the lowest unemployment rate in each region. The experts were selected according to several criteria. The Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices played a major role in the selection. The experts were selected upon recommendations of the contacted heads (usually directors) of the Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices. Most experts worked at the offices but there were also other experts. The mayors or their close collaborators were approached in certain districts bearing in mind the necessary collaboration between labour offices and local municipal offices, for example, in organizing activation jobs. Activists and NGO people experienced in the issues of the Roma were included in case with large Roma populations. Five experts were selected in each district, making a total sample of 30 experts. External interviewers who mostly came

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from the same region conducted in-depth interviews following an outlined structure. The interviews were taken in May – June 2006. An in-depth interview usually took about 50 – 90 minutes. The interviews were structured along the following series of issues:

- The district labour market,
- Rate of inflow of the unemployed into employment and groups most at risk of becoming unemployed,
- Labour, social affairs and family offices' services for the unemployed and use of active labour market policy measures with special emphasis on women,
- Effects of unemployment on families,
- The potential and opportunities to improve employment in general, and specifically of women

## **1. Unemployment in the surveyed districts**

The situation in all districts with district and regional capitals the unemployment assessment resulted quite well. Employment in those districts was better because of public and state administration institutions with mostly female staffs. There were a number of districts in which the public or state administration authorities were the dominating employers for the relevant regions. The Roosevelt Hospital, Banská Bystrica district, is an example of a dominating employer despite its staff reductions. The hospital has about 2500 employees, mostly women. Similarly, women's jobs prevailed in the other state and public sector institutions, and therefore the issue of gender inequality in the labour market was not perceived as urgent or requiring special attention. The experts assessed the employment situation in their district towns quite favourably but at the same time stressed the dramatic difference between the district capital and elsewhere. They pointed at less job opportunities in the non-capital districts and the problem with commuting to work because of time and financial loss. Commuting distances of up to 20 kilometres were considered acceptable.

The structure of employers underwent major changes in all districts after 1989. Restructuring or collapse of the former large enter-

prises – single employers in many districts – resulted in major job losses. The employment in regional capitals could be maintained because of the aforementioned state administration or public sector institutions, but the other districts did not have the same opportunities. A number of the surveyed experts currently working with the labour offices admitted that jobs at the newly established agencies helped them tackle their own individual unemployment when their former employers ceased to exist. Many of the labour office experts had originally rather different job backgrounds.

Differences in unemployment within the district were mentioned by experts from all surveyed districts, yet the specified reasons varied. The differences within the Banská Bystrica region were explained by geography and accessibility of settlements. Those that were “cut off” from the district capital suffer the worst unemployment for the aforementioned reasons. The Prešov district indicated a correlation between unemployment and distance from the district capital town, ranking transport services among the relevant limiting factors. The traditionally agricultural Nitra district failed to compensate for the shortfall of jobs following the breakdown of most agricultural cooperative farms in the rural areas. The Rimavska Sobota district experienced the same problem. An interesting view was offered by one of the Prešov region experts, namely: residents from municipalities with an long tradition of commuting to work long distances or working mainly in the Czech lands during the former system, displayed good adjustment to new circumstances and flexibility in finding and taking jobs abroad, and pushed the unemployment rates down in their villages. Those persons who had worked with a single local employer all their lives displayed very limited capability to adjust to the new circumstances.

Large-scale redundancies occurred in most districts and affected both unskilled and skilled labour. There were massive redundancies and downturn or liquidation of enterprises that used to employ primarily unskilled or semi-skilled labour in the Prešov district. Many employees, especially Roma, left the labour market. *“There are people who still have not grasped that there is no employer such as the state in the former socialist times or that being employed is not*

*mandatory any more. There are people who actually feel comfortable, they understand they can survive without a job, and they behave in the spirit of philosophy of poverty.” (Prešov)*

Regarding changes in unemployment, experts of all districts claimed a slightly decreasing trend. They derived their opinions from data on the registered unemployment rates as reported by labour offices under their methodology. The experts identified three essential reasons for the decrease of the registered unemployed as well as for reintegration of a certain portion of the unemployed population. First, the mobility of young people seeking jobs abroad - usually on a short-term basis. Second, many people made use of the opportunity for early retirement as a remedy for their lost job. That was the choice made mostly by women. The third reason was a pragmatic one – in contrast with past arrangements, at present the unemployed are covered only by the health insurance and their time as unemployed is not included in their years of service. That is why they do not deem being registered with the labour office of any interest to them. The experts’ words, however, revealed scepticism whether the reported figures reflect reality: *“The figures, compared to the previous years, indicate a decreasing unemployment rate, yet – bitter tongues whisper that the trend allegedly is just owing to a new recording methodology... The figures exhibit a steadily falling unemployment – the question is whether employment goes up.” (Stropkov)*

Almost all the experts in the surveyed districts saw a correlation between employment increase and an influx of foreign direct investment. There are a number of good examples of useful collaboration such as the labour offices organizing recruitment competitions for foreign investors, and collaborating in social area with them. The Levice district with the operations of the Swedish Nefa Company can be mentioned as an example of a company with a well-designed social program and standard that is a benchmark and challenge for other employers in the region. On the other hand, there are examples of companies that enjoyed investment incentives, built and started up certain operations but relocated them after a short time (to Ukraine for example) or that kept operating but under different working terms and conditions than had been originally agreed. The experts pointed

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out that the labour offices have no power to check the compliance with the employer-employee agreed upon terms and conditions.

The experts also shared the opinion that the labour market transformation affected both men and women equally and that the effects of the transformation were not gender specific. The transformation – the experts believed – mostly struck unskilled labour, which was pushed to the margin of the labour market. The Roma population, typically unskilled-labour, was heavily affected by the transformation.

## **2. Rate of inflow of the unemployed into employment and groups most at risk of unemployment**

The success rate of reintegration of job seekers mediated by the labour offices varies considerably. The success rate in the most difficult districts was estimated at about 15% and in districts with a lower unemployment rate it was estimated at as much as 70% by the experts. The data, however, is very approximate. The experts pointed out that the software and lack of interlink between the systems used by respective Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices make adequate and objective assessment of success rate of reintegration of the unemployed in the labour market quite impossible. The indicator is monitored through feedback from clients, which is not always provided, and thus the statistical indicator may be distorted.

The duration of unemployment plays an important role in reinstatement of unemployed into the labour market. Those who were unemployed for over a year represent 68% of all unemployed in Slovakia and the group of persons unemployed for over 2 years went up by 4,100 persons last year alone. The longer one is unemployed, the less chance to get reinstated in the labour market. The best reinstatement chance is for those who were unemployed for not longer than 6 months. Then the chances go clearly down, the worst being for people with low education. Those who were unemployed for longer than 2 years are actually unemployable, and – as the experts pointed out – further retraining courses for them would be ineffective as their chances in the labour market are close to zero. The Roma are very

heavily represented in that group. Inequality between men and women when it comes to finding jobs is rather obvious, in the experts' opinion. *"Men certainly have more job opportunities. They can work longer hours, more than 8 hours, and they can work shifts" (Stropkov)... "Things are more difficult for women, and finding jobs is harder for them mainly owing to child care" (Stropkov)... "Men are more successful in the labour market, women may be mothers, and as such more insecure labour in the eyes of the employers. Women clients frequently admit that the employers interviewing them asked about their family plans. Women clearly are at a disadvantage in this respect." (Nitra).*

The disadvantaged position of women in the labour market is perhaps most obvious in women after their maternity leave. This group of women is specified as a group at risk in the law No. 5/2004. *"When they end their maternity leave, most of them are not accepted back by the employer after their maternity leave". (Rimavská Sobota)*

Employers perceive women after their maternity leave as a risk-involving group of labour owing to their potential absence from work, their poor flexibility in working time and unavailability for shift work. The fact that they could not gain experience while they were on maternity or parental leave reduces their chances in the labour market: the longer a woman stays at home with her children, the more difficult it gets to be reinstated in the labour market. It also has to be mentioned; on the other hand, that maternity or parental leave frequently may overlap or bridge (the better case) the woman's period of unemployment. One can reasonably expect that increasing the parental benefits will strengthen the decision of parents (usually women) to stay at home with children for as long as possible. That may have adverse effects on women's chances to succeed in the labour market. The ideal arrangement is a concurrent drawing of parental benefit and a job (usually of women), no matter whether under flexible or part-time arrangements. Those kinds of jobs are very scarce in reality. Data on long-term unemployment in Slovakia broken down by age cohorts attest to this grave and common problem of reintegration. Women from age 30 – 34, the most active working ages, represent the largest group of the long-term unemployed. This age

cohort consists predominantly of women who want to be reintegrated in the labour market after their maternity leave or family responsibilities, yet they are not successful. Experts of the surveyed districts mentioned just single grants or calls intended to help the target group of post-maternal leave women reintegrate in the labour market. The experts shared the view that the opportunity to work from home would be a major benefit for these women. There are just exceptional opportunities to work from home. Experts from just a single district claimed that the employer gives the woman the opportunity to work from home if she is a highly specialized professional. (Prešov) People are usually at risk in the labour market because of their age, or – in other words – age was specified as the most common discriminating factor. The issue of potential source of discrimination can be best illustrated by quoting a manager of a labour office in Nitra, namely: *"Age is the most critical factor; and then competence. I do not think gender is a problem. People who are older than 40 are clearly at highest risk. They have no more opportunities in the labour market. It almost looks like the working age is from 30 to 40 years of age. I will not hire a young person as s/he is inexperienced, and I do not want on older person either, as s/he is not flexible. I just do not quite understand those things. Those people can be useful employees."* The aforementioned law on employment services identifies job seekers who are 50 years and older as the group at risk. Our experts offered, though, that the fictitious critical age when people are at risk has gone down to younger age for both men and women. The experts offered that women older than 40 have no chance to succeed even if they undergo retraining. Seasonal jobs that are usually given to men are a certain replacement, yet a very temporary one. The experts believed that the poor situation of older people in the labour market could be better addressed by encouraging them to start their own businesses, more so than currently is done now. It is important to increase the interest of older people in that kind of activity. The sector of services offers a multitude of opportunities. The experts did not think that providing incentives employers to employ older workers was a useful measure. Changing the way of thinking and approach to older people may take very long, whereas the efficiency of higher standard incentives usually is rather short-lived. Not to mention possible misuses of the available incentives.

Employment of physically disabled people is a specific serious issue. The experts did not specifically list their problems because of the complexity of the disability mix in the population. The experts shared the view that job opportunities for those people are very poor and that there are too few sheltered workshops. The legislation concerning employment of people with physical disabilities does not offer sufficient incentives to employers. A supported job for disabled people involves a lot of administrative work, is time consuming, and the poor concurrence of the relevant stakeholders is rather discouraging.

A summary of the experts' opinions regarding unemployment indicates the most jeopardized or at-risk groups of the population are:

- Women after maternity leave,
- Women older than 40,
- Men older than 50 (often even younger),
- School graduates, and people with low or incomplete education (Roma excessively represented in this group),
- Citizens with a physical disability.

The above categories of people who are most at risk of being unemployed correlate with the groups of the so-called disadvantaged job seekers as defined under the law on employment services (§ 8). The law defines a number of disadvantaged groups of job seekers. Because of the limitations in the collected empirical material, only those groups that were most frequently referred to by multiple experts are included in our findings. The finding indicating that the onset of disadvantage at a much earlier age than that identified in the aforementioned law deserves due attention. Age-related disadvantage is almost "universally" valid and exists in both men and women as well as in all regions of Slovakia. The fact that long-term unemployment affects those in the 35 – 50 age group, people at their potential work pinnacle, is especially unfortunate.

### **3. Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices' services for the unemployed and use of active labour market policy measures with special emphasis on women**

*The Labour Office offers so much...except jobs.  
(Expert, Banská Bystrica)*

This topic yielded a variety of statements from the interviewed experts. This section of the interview was designed to explore the work of experts and their institutions, which mean that certain degree of variety could be expected. The experts displayed significant differences in the degree of their individual participation and involvement in addressing unemployment. The Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices are regulated by the law No. 5/2004 Coll. of laws concerning employment services. That law also regulates their procedures in dealing with and communicating with job seekers or unemployed persons. There were mainly differences in the perception of the position and role of labour offices vis-a-vis the public. The experts' opinions also differed depending upon their own fields, namely mediation employment services, counselling or welfare and social affairs. The experts' opinions can be split into three categories. Group one were very sober opinions stressing the mediatory role of the labour offices. *"The role of the labour offices is in fact overestimated. The labour offices do not generate new jobs. We can only mediate, search, or provide incentives to employers. But those things have to be done by industries, and the economic climate... The labour office is only the output of those issues that have their origins somewhere else".* (Banská Bystrica) Almost all experts claimed that the law concerning employment services has adverse effects on the offices' placement services because it does not commit employers to report vacancies to labour offices. The experts perceive that as something that makes their work much more difficult. In certain districts (Levice and Nitra) the labour office staffs pays regular visits to employers in order to make up for the perceived flaw of the law.

Group two perceived the role of labour offices in a broader context and stressed an individualized approach to clients. These experts – predominantly the counsellors, understood that the unemployment of their clients is not just as the loss of job due to, for example, redundancies but is also as a result of personal or other problems. Working on individualized plans helps these experts gain insight in work or out-of-work circumstances (such as personal or family) that lead to a loss of job. The labour office staffs many times help their clients to reintegrate into the labour market and to tackle other problems: *"We are a kind of rescue service. We bring in the individual client; take care of her/him... We have examples of success. There were two mothers, who had been abused for 20 years, and we placed them with their children, we found jobs for them. That may not be much but we are proud that we were able to discover their problem and help them.* (Nitra) This attitude illustrates the fact that the individualized plan may go beyond the area of labour and reach over to the social or health areas.

Group three were rather critical about how labour offices work and operate in their role of mediators in the labour market. Critical views were rather common in districts with above-average unemployment rates. Such views are not surprising in the light of the limited possibilities of these offices when it comes to job offers and accordingly justified frustration of certain staff from their work. The following critical remarks made by an expert from Prešov are a concentrated illustration. We bring an unabridged quotation as it pinpoints difficult points in the operation of the labour offices: *"In my opinion a labour office that does not offer jobs and just keeps records makes no sense. That kind of office should be given a new name – unemployment registration office. The idea certainly should not be having an office that would "serve" job offers on a silver tray. The labour offices should be flexible and respond to the changing demands for competences or skills of the labour market. The labour offices, being aware of the needs, should design programmes responding to the situation in the labour market. The offices should employ staff that would not just register the unemployed but also cater to their clients' individual needs. That is unlikely to happen with the present unemployment and office staff. Sadly enough, there seems to be no pressure or strategy*

*or vision of a person-to-person approach to a woman or a man who lost her/his job, is in financial difficulties, faces a social crisis, and experiences just bullying and undignified treatment. Just imagine how it feels – standing in the corridor, in front of the door, exposed in front of all those people, publicly admitting her/his precarious situation – a real trauma for those people. These things are not taken into consideration. The offices, I am afraid, violate fundamental human rights and ethical values.”*

This strongly critical statement points at a number of issues. There is a clear contrast between the above examples, with the former emphasizing an individualized approach to clients and evidence of rather different practices depending upon the respective offices. We do not have enough information to explain the reasons for those differences. The experts generally admitted inadequate personnel and expertise at the Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices to carry out specific measures to assist the unemployed and too much red tape. Many kinds of assistance (in contrast to the past) are now an entitlement under the law, but there has not been any major effect in terms of less unemployment.

Another important warning made by the experts was the absence of targeted labour market analyses which are needed to map out current as well as potential demands for labour and to develop adequate training programmes for the unemployed. That need was expressed several times. Certain experts were demanding that kind of information for effective functioning of the services and also stressed the need for relevant curricula and collaboration with schools. Their experience indicates poor responsiveness of schools to the needs of the labour market. Schools “generate” graduates or school-leavers specialised in areas that are not in demand in the labour market and waste resources. On the other hand, there is shortage of people trained in certain areas, yet the labour offices have no candidates to offer to employers. There is a pilot project between the Nitra region office and its secondary schools that is an example of better coordination between schools and industry. The project was intended to make schools respond better to the needs of employers. The project was initiated by employers who offered various forms of support to the

schools. The cooperation was very useful. Job offers at the labour offices are usually in just certain categories and depend on the regional situation. Research conducted by the Centre for Labour and Family Studies<sup>5</sup> indicated that in low unemployment regions there are relatively less job seekers who were not offered any job and, simultaneously, the smallest share of those who were offered jobs. The labour market is flexible in those regions and job seekers actively search for jobs on their own. According to this research, 0.8% of job seekers got 1-2 offers and 2.5% of job seekers got 3-5 offers in the Bratislava region, which has the lowest unemployment rate. On the other hand, in regions with higher unemployment rates, there is a higher percentage of those who got no job offers, and at the same time a higher percentage of those who got multiple offers. The research showed that in the highest unemployment region of Košice almost one third of job seekers did not get any job offers and that a quarter of the job seekers got multiple job offers.

Our research showed that the offers usually are for blue-collar jobs that are not easy to fill because the jobs involve hard manual labour or are poorly paid. Another category of offers are for jobs putting tough demands on the potential applicants; they are expected to have language skills, be computer literate or have other kinds of skills. There are usually only few candidates who can fit the demands. Another relatively important group are offers to work abroad. Near-border districts such as Levice or Rimavská Sobota offer jobs in Hungary. People choose to commute rather than move. These persons represent a large group often supported by their employers who, for example, provide transportation to work. Job offers from the Czech Republic are an important segment. These offers are best accepted in districts where people got comfortable commuting to work in the Czech Republic in the past. Men make much more use of opportunities to work abroad than women. It is usually women who have no commitments or who have grown up children who take up job offers abroad.

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<sup>5</sup> HANZELOVÁ, E., KOSTOLNÁ, Z.: Služby zamestnanosti v nových podmienkach: analýza implementačnej praxe (Employment Services under New Circumstances: Implementation Analysis), SPSPaR, Bratislava 2006, p.23

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People in certain districts have started to realize the consequences of losing young job seekers to work abroad. Experts from high unemployment districts expressed major concern: *"It is all right encouraging young people to go and look for jobs or perhaps settle elsewhere. Fine. They get jobs and here – the nature and demographic structure of this region changes. And what happens later? The purchasing power leaves, and there will be no employer willing to come here, to do something in an old district. Those are very important things to bear in mind. And at this stage in the labour market it is as if we were pushing the young... but we have to realize things and be more sensitive when tackling the labour market issues."* (Rimavská Sobota) The quoted opinion quite rightly warns that in high unemployment districts in which individual ways out of unemployment (abroad) may work against prospective development of the region. One can hardly expect young workers to return to the region when the situation changes and generates new jobs.

Disharmony between schools and needs of the labour market and lack of analyses of the expected demands of the labour market are grey areas in employment policy and represent hazards now and especially for the future. The role of education as an important variable in the labour market has been heavily distorted in this country. The experts identified the distortion in excessive education criteria applied by employers on job seekers. University education is demanded for positions that could be taken by a secondary school graduate, yet the offered pay is less than what a secondary school graduate deserves. Many times it makes no difference what kind of university the applicant graduated from; what is important is the certificate. Regarding blue-collar professions, the situation is specific and disharmony between the labour market and education is the major issue. There is a shortage of skilled labour for blue-collar professions almost everywhere.

The issue of imbalance between demand and supply in the labour market was raised in reference to the example of the pilot project in the Nitra region. One expert with the Banská Bystrica labour office also touched upon the issue of disharmony and outlined a possible solution to the problem: *"... The problem is not confined just to Ban-*

*ská Bystrica. We organized an international labour exchange upon a request of international investors operating in Banská Bystrica and surroundings. They identified a shortage of metalworkers. There are professions in demand and in short supply in the labour market. Skilled construction labour alike ... We can see certain imbalance, and it is a problem everywhere, a problem of Slovakia. The automotive industry has taken over in Slovakia and we have no relevantly skilled labour. Apprentice training centres stopped training metalworkers 15 years ago, and now they are in short supply. Schools are now under the powers of regions and self-governments that have no system or strategy; schools have no money to buy quality machines and equipment to teach relevant skills. Bad or the worst students end up in those schools, the teachers are what they are ... The process or problem needs to be addressed. The labour office is just the last element in the chain and just reports the problem but cannot do much about it. The companies could indicate a potential loss or need of such and such labour – let us say in three years' time, about hundred workers because the old ones are due to retire, ... that would be nice."*

The issue applies both to men and women and is universally valid. The problem of harmonization between the supply and demand can also be seen in retraining or training courses. Until recently, people could participate in trainings in accordance with their interests; they could take up several courses if they desired. The courses were a massive tool of labour market policy and were very popular with the unemployed. As a result of last year's changes, only the first course is free of charge, and there is 25% tuition for the second course, and 50% tuition for any additional courses. Certain courses are rather expensive and the costs vary between Sk 4,000 to 25,000. Discouraging effects can be expected from that change, as many people simply may have no money to pay the tuition. Another disincentive for the job seekers is the suspicion that there will be no job offer in spite of their participation in the course.

The comparison of life-long learning and training in Slovakia and other EU countries does not look good for either the employed or unemployed in Slovakia. According to the EUROSTAT data<sup>6</sup> only 5% of

<sup>6</sup> "Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines 2006 compendium", Latest update 01/08/2006.

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men and 6.9% of women in the 25-64 age category of working population were involved in some kind of education. The percentages were smaller, namely 1.5% for men and 3.2% for women in the same age group of unemployed. The data show that more women than men were in training in both groups. It should also be added that the figures on Slovakia were the lowest of all member states. That fact indicates that lifelong learning is by no means an integral part of common practice and there is much to do in that area.<sup>7</sup>

The problem also is that employers do not accept retraining courses as equal and valid preparation. Practical experience is preferred to additional training, particularly in the sector of services such as for cooks, waiters/waitresses, hairdressers, etc. The experts – counsellors stressed the importance of retraining and mainly a correct identification of the “clients” needs and adequate adjustment of training. Targeting the trainings has been a problem resulting in situations such as: *"The unemployed went through so many courses and retraining that the members of whatever panel are bewildered over the variety of diplomas or certificates you can get."* (Stropkov) The European fund money should be preferably used for direct support of production.

The choice of jobs the labour offices can offer is restricted because employers do not have any obligations to report vacancies, yet there is certain supply available depending on the local situation. Turning down a job offer may result in removing the unemployed person from the labour office register. The practices differ depending upon the district. In some places a job refusal is a reason for deletion from the office register, while in other districts the reasons for refusal are taken into consideration and a refusal does not necessarily have the same consequences.

Job seekers turn down job offers for various reasons. Frequently, the refused job involves hard and non-lucrative manual work. Those jobs tend to be vacant for a long time. Another very common reason

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<sup>7</sup> Countries such as Great Britain and Sweden have the best data concerning education and training of both employed and unemployed persons. About one third of the population is involved in education in those countries. An interesting fact is that women are by about 10% ahead of men in this area in these countries.

is poor pay. That is true not only for unattractive manual jobs but also about jobs for university graduates. Sometimes the offered pay is just around Sk 8,000 and that is really poor pay for that level of competence. Women, especially women with small children, turn down shift jobs. There is very little willingness to seek a flexible and acceptable arrangement on the part of both employers and women. Shift work may really be a problem because of commuting or poor transport services. Acceptable working time arrangements could be made in a number of cases (for example, TESCO Nitra). Jobs offered by smaller businesses with reputation as bad employers are frequently turned down. *"Our clients know about them. The reputation is disseminated amongst the unemployed, and then, when we offer jobs or organize a competition or make recommendations, those jobs are not taken because of the bad reputation of the employer... And the vacancy keeps "sitting" on our list."* (Rimavska Sobota) The experts admitted a problem in those situations. This reason is not an acceptable ground for refusal and the job seeker must be removed from the office register. It is unfair but that is the procedure under law.

The public employment services are a new phenomenon in our country. For these services to work well and to serve the purpose for which they were established, they need to cooperate with clients on the basis of trust. The aforementioned research conducted by the Centre for Labour and Family Studies covered that issue.<sup>8</sup> People do not trust the public employment services. Almost a third of the respondents who were unemployed, but unregistered, claimed the main reason for non-cooperation with the office was loss of confidence in the capacity of the labour office to find a job for them. The confidence rate was lowest amongst the younger than 25 group who have been one of the groups with extremely high unemployment rates for a long time. Women displayed more confidence in labour offices than men. There were regional differences in the loss of confidence in the public employment services, regardless of unemployment rates. If we compare the results of that research the regions in which we interviewed experts, the respondents who lost most confidence were in the Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Prešov regions. That is just a coincidence and has no relation whatsoever with quality of the selected experts.

<sup>8</sup> HANZELOVÁ, E., Kostolná, Z.: ibidem, pp. 30-31

## 4. Effects of unemployment on families

Unemployment frequently results in material distress and in that case individuals and their families get various benefits or allowances. The valid law covers the assessed citizen in material distress and his/her children younger than 25 who have no income or whose income is no more than minimum wage. That frequently is the case of recent school graduates. In 2005 the average monthly number of registered recipients of benefits and allowances in material distress was 175,746 persons in Slovakia.<sup>9</sup> If we sum up the number of benefit recipients and persons (family members) that are jointly covered, we arrive at a monthly average of 373,865 citizens receiving benefits under the material distress aid scheme. That number is 6.9% of the population of Slovakia. Registered job seekers represented 72.9% of all benefit or allowance recipients. The data clearly indicate that unemployment usually also means material distress.

The duration of unemployment strongly influences reintegration into the labour market (the longer one is unemployed the greater the loss of working and occupational habits) and the general situation of the family of the unemployed person. The experts noticed major differences between men and women in how they react to their unemployment. The response is very individual but certain generalizations can be made by saying that women seem to be less stigmatized by unemployment than men. The reason may dwell in the deeply rooted belief that a man's job is of primary importance (the man is the breadwinner) and a woman's job is less important (a woman's earnings are just a complementary source of income for the family). Another reason may be women's better and faster adjustment to a new situation. *"Women are the ones who take the changes better; they are willing and capable to take up a job different from their old one. Men fail in this sense: ,I used to do this for years and years, and I am not going to do anything else..." When the man has to stay at home ... for six months there still is chance to do something about the situation. But if the six months are exceeded, men fall into stereotypes and get stuck. That is a problem for the family, even more so when men resort to alcohol. Men find it difficult to cope with the fact that a woman is*

<sup>9</sup> The source of data is the Report on Social Situation of the Population of SR in 2005 (Správa o sociálnej situácii obyvateľstva Slovenskej republiky), MPSVR, 2006

*the breadwinner for the family. I can see that women are more active than men, women are more likely to "recover" and take up a job that may be less paid or may be quite new.*" (Banská Bystrica) Problems in families get worse as the unemployment goes on. There is a certain snowball effect, namely the problems owing to financial discomfort are followed by interpersonal problems, partners are unable to resolve their conflicts, often one of the partners feels guilty and leaves the family, and there are cases of family violence. The community commonly tolerates a drinking problem. (The previous quotation is an example of "justification" of alcohol consumption in men.) The family background in such cases is very discouraging for children. Long-term unemployed parents do not feel motivated to encourage their children to purpose-oriented work or learning. To the contrary, many parents discourage their children from learning: *"What good is school for you? You will end up unemployed, no matter what. Look at me, school was good for nothing."*

Experts noticed an obvious decrease in motivation of Roma children for school. Apprentice training centres were full and young people were eager to get a certificate 10 years ago, and now they hardly complete their elementary education. When the village – school distance is a couple kilometres, children tend to stay at home, and stop going to school at grade four. Their parents do not respond to notices or warnings. Parents of truants first get a parole and then they are punished with a term in prison. "We always try to make arrangements, so that the parents serve their prison terms one by one, and take turns at home with their children. Otherwise the children would suffer. And the family will not be helped – having both parents in prison at the same time." (Rimavská Sobota)

The experts kept pointing out that the current welfare system does not motivate people enough to work. An unemployed couple are better off on welfare. When one of the couple gets a job, her/his spouse is not eligible for benefits any more and the resulting income for the family is less. The situation is extremely unfavourable for children. The cases of physically suffering children go up every year, there are more children with aggressive behaviour caused by hunger, chil-

dren who envy their schoolmates, start conflicts, and hurt others. There are ever more children with psychological problems.

Provision of school meals at a token price (Sk 1 – 5) for children from families on welfare certainly is a good measure. It is clear, though, that provision of food to children from disadvantaged background often is their major motivation for school attendance, but it works only in certain situation and for a short time. The measure does not change (actually cannot change) the situation in those families in a principal way.

Experts from several regions pointed to the adverse effects of shortage of municipal pre-school facilities. Many such facilities were closed due to poor funding. Such closures occurred mainly in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Roma. Pre-school facilities play an important role in language training of children before their school attendance – most important for Roma children. The experience is that children who had been in pre-school facilities better mastered the first years' subject matter and there were no major problems with those children. "The situation is very bad now, children cannot speak the language, there is shortage of Roma assistants at schools, and sometimes teachers are not ready to do more, perhaps also because of the poor ethical or financial credit they get from the education department." (Stropkov) The plan of the current government to make attendance at the last pre-school year mandatory can only be welcome in these circumstances. The practical implementation of the plan, in the light of experience in the mandatory school attendance, will involve an extreme endeavour and appropriate institutional mechanisms.

A comparison of unemployment effects on Roma and non-Roma families, experts agreed, showed that the effects on the integrity of non-Roma families are much worse.<sup>10</sup> Unemployment is perceived by

<sup>10</sup> There is a positive example of family unemployment that motivated the involved to do something about their situation at the counselling center, Rimavska Sobota district. The Roma women's club started organizing simple activities (such as cooking) to begin with, later they added communication skills or skills needed to write applications. The participating women had family problems, and one-by-one started talking about domestic violence. The project leaders encouraged inviting family members to let them see how women progressed. The women were successively building up their self-esteem, becoming aware of their value, and wishing to accomplish more than just staying at home. Their husbands started accepting them. Those women started to understand the importance of education and some of them started visiting school; one of them is a university student.

the Roma families as a more-or-less standard condition, nothing unusual, no threat to the family's existence. Besides that, the solidarity principle works very well in the extended Roma families, yet at the price of heavy and growing indebtedness in many cases.

## **5. The potential and opportunities to improve employment in general and specifically of women**

The opportunities to improve women's employment have to be seen within the general background of employment and the overall situation in the labour market. The suggestions of experts on how to improve employment opportunities varied considerably. Most proposals were meant to address the local situation but there were several that incorporated the broader context. What was surprising was the unwillingness, or rather inability, of certain experts to express their opinion on this topic. Most ideas kept reappearing in slight variations in several regions. The proposed measures can be put in two groups, women-specific measures and universal measures. Women-targeted measures can be called compensation-with an acceptable degree of simplification. Experts approached this topic very cautiously and with varying degrees of interest. There were regions (Prešov) where such measures were strongly welcome, as well as regions where their need was not mentioned (Levice). One can say that there was an essential agreement over the need of such supporting measures for women, especially in very specific situations such as women after their maternity leave, with small children or children younger than 10 years of age. The measures proposed for this group of women were very specific and can be defined as follows:

- Giving these women an opportunity to work part time with compensation for the wage reduction (covered from the state budget). (Interestingly – not a single expert expressed the idea of the same measure applying also to fathers with small children),
- Not binding the employer's subsidy just to generation of new jobs but to subsidize a previous job position taken by a woman after her maternity leave (providing some kind of bonus to employers),<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The labour office staff pointed out that flat job subsidies are very attractive to employers as they are less administration intensive. The proposed measure should work on a similar principle.

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- Creating part-time jobs for mothers with children by providing incentives to employers to create that kind of jobs.

The following measures were targeted at all women, not just mothers with small children, although the primary aim of those measures was better reconciliation of work and family:

- Create job opportunities for work from home, especially promoting tele-working,
- Adjust the legislative background so as to make starting a business easier for women who want to be self-employed by pushing down the age at which women become eligible to a business start-up benefit.

A lot of attention was focused on improvement of reconciliation of work and private life. Much could be done in that area. There are still few family-friendly employers. Certain signs of family-friendly employer policies were more common among international employers. The issue of pre-school facilities for older children was not a concern, the situation was much worse for infants younger than three years of age. The data on children in kindergartens in Slovakia are evidence: only 45.3% of Slovak children were in kindergartens (minimum 30 hours per week) in 2002, whereas the rate was 85% in Austria.

The labour offices identify rather frequent violations of the antidiscrimination law, both at the start of a job and in the course of a job. Discriminatory behaviour is mostly targeted against women. Women prefer not to report the incidents for fear from consequences. Certain experts suggested the establishment of an antidiscrimination institute that would collect information about discriminatory behaviour at work on an anonymous basis. The experts also pointed at abuses of employment on a subcontracting basis rather than employment contract basis. There are no mechanisms that could prevent or control that kind of hiring and employment, which is beneficial to the employers but denies workers their potential rights and protection.

The most frequently mentioned measure expected to improve the employment rate that could have long-lasting effects was an influx of significant investment into the region. That was mentioned in all districts. Arrival of an investor is viewed as almost a panacea for social and economic difficulties within a region, but there also were bad experiences with foreign investors. The labour offices, for example, organized competitions for jobs promised by foreign companies and the jobs were never generated or were short-lived. Other bad experiences were with foreign investors offering wages far below the national Slovakian average.

Experts also suggested non-material measures intended to change people's way of thinking or attitudes. Those ideas focused mainly on improving labour mobility, which the experts found to be traditionally very poor in Slovakia. Unwillingness to be mobile is one of the factors inhibiting better flexibility of labour. A real-estate market that is not sufficiently developed and is distorted by inadequate inter-regional price differentials discourages labour mobility. In fact, the labour mobility allowance seems to be one of the least used instruments of the active labour market policy. The main reasons are: the amount of the benefit (very low), complicated administration and complexity of eligibility-related paperwork.

There were proposals for measures concerning remuneration and how to use financial incentives to motivate people to work. Proposals and comments can be put in the following two groups:

- Generally low, non-incentive wages that distort development in the region,
- Setup of the welfare benefits system.

If one of the couple on welfare benefits starts a job, his/her partner is not eligible for welfare any more. The earnings from work for the family are no more than the total benefits for both partners, which means that work does not pay for the couple. These are rather common cases, and a reason why the labour office experts think that the current system is not well targeted.

The experts strongly recommended re-introduction of the employers' obligation to report vacancies to the labour offices to

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improve the situation in the labour market. This instrument, they believe, would help to eliminate illegal work that is very common, especially for seasonal jobs. The measure would also help to eliminate effects on the existing parallel labour market operating on the basis of informal channels. The vacancy-reporting obligation, however, should not mean that registered job seekers could only take the vacancies.

The experts appreciated numerous projects organized by the labour offices for various target groups. An interesting issue concerning local cooperation was raised in the Banská Bystrica district. The opinion is quoted below, as the issue may be relevant to several other entities: *"The employment services law gives a definition of partnership. There are many projects based on partnership for which partnership is a condition sine qua non. There, though, is a problem we and other partners encounter, namely there are no partners at the regional level. When there were regional (state administration) offices, our regional office covered six or (historically) thirteen districts, and kept a relevant regional database. There is no cooperation now that we have thirteen separate entities, and the high-tier self-governing territorial unit does not have a regional (state administration) partner. That is a problem also for various civic associations such as rural parliaments. There used to be regional projects... There is cooperation, but in many cases it disappears with the termination of the project, and that was it."*

The above quotation shows that there are opportunities to improve the situation in the labour market through better coordination of all stakeholders, and that changes in organizational structure may have not just good effects. Stronger willingness to implement common objectives on the part of municipal partnerships may help to eliminate problems a little faster.

## **Conclusion**

The "Progress Report on Implementation of the National Reform Program of the Slovak Republic for the Years 2006-2008" states that the difference between unemployment of women and men has been getting worse for women. That fact indicates that there still are inter-

related and intertwined barriers and hurdles that hamper the implementation of the key objective, namely increasing the integration of women, especially women after their maternity leave and older women, into the labour market. The adverse factors can be present in many areas such as family, work or the labour market. This research aimed at identifying at least certain problems, especially those related to access to the labour market and job mediation. Our research findings may represent just a portion of the reality, but we believe it can contribute to better knowledge and a positive change in this area.

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## ANNEXES\*

**Table No. 1: Unemployment rate in Slovakia in 2005. Break-down by age and education. (annual average in %)**

Indicator	Total	Men	Women
15+ years	49,8	57,8	42,5
15 – 64 years	57,7	64,6	50,9
Breakdown by age			
15-19 years	3	3,2	2,7
20-24 years	46,6	51	41,9
25-29 years	68	80,2	55,4
30-34 years	74,1	83,4	64,4
35-39 roční	78,2	83,6	72,8
40-44 years	81,1	84,4	77,8
45-49 years	78,1	79,6	76,6
50-54 years	73,8	77,4	70,5
55-59 years	44,7	68,6	23,6
60-64 years	12,4	20,1	6,1
65 and older	1,3	2,2	0,8
Breakdown by education (15 - 64 years)			
Elementary	13,5	13,2	13,8
Apprentice	65	71,5	55,1
Lower secondary	70,2	81,9	57,3
Apprentice with upper secondary	72,6	82,3	58
General upper secondary	41,9	40,4	42,7
Vocational upper secondary	71,9	79,8	65,7
Vocational tertiary	75,3	79,8	73,5
Tertiary – level 1	71,1	79,2	64,2
Tertiary – level 2	84,2	89,5	78,4
Tertiary–level 3	97,3	98,4	95,7

Source: ŠÚ SR- Labour Force Survey

In: The report on social situation of the population of the Slovak Republic in 2005

**Table No. 2: Working population – labour force survey. Breakdown by age.**

Working people according to selected labour force survey		
Age group	Number of working people in 2005 (annual average in thousand people)	Inter-annual index 2005/2004
15-24 years	224,1	95,4
25-34 years	617,6	101,8
35-49 years	918,6	100,1
50-54 years	287,3	107,6
55-59 years	131,6	114,4
60 and older	37,1	128,4

Source: ŠÚ SR - Statistical report on main development trends in the SR economy in 2005

\* All data taken over from the Report on the social situation of the population of the Slovak Republic in 2005, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Bratislava, October 2006

### Annex No. 3: Working people according to labour force survey. Breakdown by education.

Working people according to selected labour force survey			
Indicator	Number of working people in 2005 (annual average in thousand persons)	Interannual index 2005/2004	Share of total number of working people in %
Education attainment			
Elementary	103,9	93	4,7
Apprentice	704,9	96,2	31,8
Lower secondary	54,6	114,6	2,5
Apprentice with upper secondary	118,7	103,2	5,4
General upper secondary	97,3	102	4,4
Vocational upper secondary	788	104,3	35,6
Vocational tertiary	23,6	124,9	1,1
Tertiary (university)	363,7	110,4	16,4

Source: ŠÚ SR - Statistical report on main development trends in economy of SR in 2005

### Table No. 4: Number of job seekers. Breakdown by industries.

	Average number of job seekers in 2005 in persons	Interannual index 2005/2004	Share in total number of job seekers in %
Agriculture, hunting, forest management	20676	71,3	9,6
Fish farming, breeding, fishing services	19	79,2	0
Mineral extraction	1590	77,5	0,7
Processing industry	44947	78,8	20,9
Generation and distribution of electricity, gas, water	1211	99,7	0,6
Construction	20036	72,7	9,3
Trade, repair of vehicles and consumer goods	18358	80,2	8,5
Catering and accommodation services	6380	77,6	3
Transport, storage, communications	6325	70,7	2,9
Finance and insurance	1546	83,7	0,7
Real estate, rentals, corporate services, research and development	4506	81,9	2,1
Public administration, defence, mandatory social insurance	47308	77	22
Education	5337	88,1	2,5
Health care, veterinary and social services	6988	80,3	3,2
Other public, social and personal services	29848	83,6	13,9
Private households with house personnel	108	80,1	0
Exterritorial organizations and associations	62	48	0

Source: ÚPSVaR

**Table No. 5: Unemployment according to selected labour force survey. Breakdown by regions.**

Unemployment according to labour force survey.					
Region	Number of unemployed people			Rate	
	2005 (thousand people)	Share of SR in %	indexy 2005/2004	2005 (%)	Difference against 2004 in % points
Bratislava	17,1	4	63,3	5,2	-3
Trnava	30,1	7	83,6	10,4	-2,1
Trencin	23,9	5,6	94,1	8,1	-0,5
Nitra	61,4	14,4	86,5	17,8	-2,5
Žilina	50,3	11,8	86,9	15,2	-2,3
Banska Bystrica	77,6	18,2	89,4	23,8	-2,8
Prešov	80,1	18,7	93,8	21,5	-1,4
Košice	87	20,4	95,3	24,7	-0,5
Total SR	427,5	100	88,9	16,2	-1,9

Source: ŠÚ SR

**Table No. 6: Unemployment according to labour force survey. Breakdown by time of registration**

Unemployed according to selected labour force survey		
Time of unemployment	Number of unemployed in 2005 (annual average in thousand persons)	Interannual index 2005/2004
Less than 1 month	23,5	80,8
1 to 3 months	22,9	64
3 to 6 months	32,9	72,1
6 to 12 months	57	72,1
1 to 2 years	78,1	95
over 2 years	213,1	102

Source: ŠÚ SR - Statistical report on main development trends in economy of SR in 2005

**Table No.7: Employment rate in EU member states. Break-down by sex.  
(Employed people (15 –64 years) as a share of total population in the same age group. Breakdown by sex.)**

Men	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Women	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
EU25	71,2	71,3	71,0	70,8	70,9	71,3	EU25	53,6	64,3	54,7	55,0	55,7	56,3
EU15	72,8	73,1	72,8	72,7	72,7	72,9	EU15	54,1	55,0	55,6	56,0	56,8	57,4
NMS10*	63,7	62,6	61,8	61,7	62,0	63,3	NMS10	51,3	50,7	50,0	50,2	50,2	50,7
BE	69,5	68,8	68,3	67,3	67,9	68,3	BE	51,5	51,0	51,4	51,8	52,6	53,8
CZ	73,2	73,2	73,9	73,1	72,3	73,3	CZ	56,9	56,9	57,0	56,3	56,0	56,3
DK	80,8	80,2	80,0	79,6	79,7	79,8	DK	71,6	72,0	71,7	70,5	71,6	71,9
DE	72,9	72,8	71,8	70,9	70,8	71,2b	DE	58,1	58,7	58,9	58,9	59,2	59,6b
EE	64,3	65,0	66,5	67,2	66,4	67,0	EE	56,9	57,4	57,9	59,0	60,0	62,1
EL	71,5	71,4	72,2	73,4	73,7	74,2	EL	41,7	41,5	42,9	44,3	45,2	46,1
ES	71,2	72,5	72,6	73,2	73,8	75,2b	ES	41,3	43,1	44,4	46,3	48,3	51,2b
FR	69,2	69,7	69,5	69,4	69,0	68,8	FR	55,2	56,0	56,7	57,3	57,4	51,6
IE	76,3	76,6	75,4	75,2	75,9	76,9	IE	53,9	54,9	55,4	55,7	56,5	58,3
IT	68,0	68,5	69,1	69,6	70,1b	69,9	IT	39,6	41,1	42,0	42,7	45,2b	45,3
CY	78,7	79,3	78,9	78,8	79,8	79,2	CY	53,5	57,2	59,1	60,4	58,7	58,4
LV	61,5	61,9	64,3	66,1	66,4	67,6	LV	53,8	55,7	56,3b	57,9	58,5	59,3
LT	60,5	58,9	62,7	64,0	64,7	66,1	LT	57,7	56,2	57,2	58,4	57,8	59,4
LU	75,0	75,0	75,1	73,3	72,8	73,3	LU	50,1	50,9	51,6	50,9	51,9	53,7
HU	63,1	62,9	62,9	63,5	63,1	63,1	HU	49,7	49,8	49,8	50,9	50,7	51,0
MT	75,0	76,2	74,7	74,5	75,1	73,8	MT	33,1	32,1	33,9	33,6	32,7	33,7
NL	82,1	82,8	82,4	81,1	80,2	79,9	NL	63,5	65,2	66,2	66,0	65,8	66,4
AT	77,3	76,4	76,4	76,4	74,9b	75,4	AT	59,6	60,7	61,3	61,6	60,7b	62,0
PL	61,2	59,2	56,9	56,5	57,2	58,9	PL	48,9	47,7	46,2	46,0	46,2	46,8
PT	76,5	77,0	76,5	75,0	74,2	73,4	PT	60,5	61,3	61,4	61,4	61,7	61,7
SI	67,2	68,6	68,2	67,4	70,0	70,4	SI	58,4	58,8	58,6	57,6	60,5	61,3
SK	62,2	62,0	62,4	63,3	63,2	64,6	SK	51,5	51,8	51,4	52,2	50,9	50,9
FI	70,1	70,8	70,0	69,7	69,7	70,3	FI	64,2	65,4	66,2	65,7	65,6	66,5
SE	75,1	75,7	74,9	74,2	73,6	74,3b	SE	70,9	72,3	72,2	71,5	70,5	70,2b
UK	77,8b	78,0	77,6	77,8	77,8	77,6	UK	64,7b	65,0	65,2	65,3	65,6	65,9

Source: Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines 2006 Compendium, Latest update 01/08/2006. [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/employment\\_strategy/pdf/compendium2006\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/pdf/compendium2006_en.pdf)

Note:

EU 25 = all member states

EU 15 = old member states

NMS 10 = new member states

**Table No.8: Unemployment rate in EU member states. Break-down by sex.**  
**(Total number of unemployed people as a share of total economically active population)**

Men	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Women	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
EU 25	7,4	7,3	7,8	8,1	8,1	7,9	EU 25	10,2	9,8	10,0	10,2	10,3	9,8
EU 15	6,4	6,1	6,6	7,0	7,2	7,0	EU 15	9,3	8,7	9,0	9,3	9,3	8,9
NMS 10	12,6	13,7	14,2	13,7	13,5	12,6	NMS 10	14,8	15,5	15,5	15,1	15,0	14,4
BE	5,6	5,9	6,7	7,6	7,5	7,6	BE	8,5	7,5	8,6	8,9	9,5	9,5
CZ	7,3	6,7	5,9	6,2	7,1	6,5	CZ	10,3	9,7	9,0	9,9	9,9	9,8
DK	3,9	4,1	4,3	4,8	5,1	4,4	DK	4,8	5,0	5,0	6,1	6,0	5,3
DE	6,0	6,3	7,1	8,2	8,7	8,9	DE	8,7	8,9	9,4	10,1	10,5	10,3
EE	12,8	12,6	10,8	10,2	10,4	8,8	EE	11,8	12,2	9,7	9,9	8,9	7,1
EL	7,5	7,3	6,8	6,2	6,6	6,1	EL	17,2	16,2	15,6	15,0	16,2	15,3
ES	7,9	7,5	8,1	8,2	8,0	7,0	ES	16,0	14,8	15,7	15,3	14,3	12,2
FR	7,6	7,0	7,9	8,6	8,7	8,7	FR	10,9	10,0	10,0	10,5	10,5	10,5
IE	4,3	4,1	4,7	5,0	4,9	4,6	IE	4,2	3,8	4,1	4,3	4,1	4,0
IT	7,8	7,1	6,7	6,5	6,4	6,2	IT	13,6	12,2	11,5	11,3	10,5	10,1
CY	3,1	2,7	2,9	3,6	3,6	4,4	CY	7,1	5,5	4,4	4,7	6,0	6,5
LV	14,4	14,2	13,3	10,6	10,6	9,1	LV	12,9	11,5	11,0	10,4	10,2	8,9
LT	18,6	18,6	14,2	12,7	11,0	8,2	LT	14,1	14,3	12,8	12,2	11,8	8,3
LU	1,8	1,7	2,1	3,0	3,7	3,5	LU	3,1	2,7	3,8	4,7	7,0	5,9
HU	7,0	6,3	6,2	6,1	6,1	7,0	HU	5,6	5,0	5,4	5,6	6,1	7,4
MT	6,4	6,9	6,6	6,9	6,6	6,6	MT	7,4	9,3	9,2	9,1	8,8	8,8
NL	2,2	1,8	2,5	3,5	4,3	4,5	NL	3,6	2,8	3,1	3,9	4,8	5,1
AT	3,1	3,1	4,0	4,0	4,4	4,9	AT	4,3	4,2	4,4	4,7	5,3	5,5
PL	14,4	16,9	19,1	19,0	18,2	16,5	PL	18,1	19,8	20,9	20,4	19,9	19,2
PT	3,2	3,2	4,1	5,4	5,9	6,7	PT	4,9	5,0	6,0	7,2	7,6	8,6
SI	6,5	5,6	5,9	6,3	5,8	5,9	SI	7,1	6,8	6,8	7,1	6,8	6,9
SK	18,9	19,8	18,6	17,4	17,4	15,6	SK	18,6	18,7	18,7	17,7	19,2	17,3
FI	9,1	8,6	9,1	9,2	8,7	8,2	FI	10,6	9,7	9,1	8,9	8,9	8,6
SE	5,9	5,2	5,3	6,0	6,5	7,9	SE	5,3	4,5	4,6	5,2	6,1	7,7
UK	5,8	5,5	5,6	5,5	5,0	5,1	UK	4,8	4,4	4,5	4,3	4,2	4,3

Source: Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines 2006 Compendium, Latest update 01/08/2006. [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/employment\\_strategy/pdf/compendium2006\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/pdf/compendium2006_en.pdf)



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# **The Status of Long-term Unemployed Women, their Experiences, Opinions and Notions (Case Study)**

Zuzana Kumanová

In recent years the gender sensitive issue in its broadest sense has become a part of the interests and activities of various public, and especially political, groups. The process of harmonization of EU and SR legislation has led to changes in many spheres which has helped to reach a notable progress in both the formal and real equality of men and women in different aspects of life. Nevertheless, there are still some spheres remaining where there is room for improving equal opportunities. Among such are undoubtedly economy, particularly the labour market. In practice this means above all the equal access to education, equal conditions in the labour market, equal wages for the same work, equal conditions in business, equal conditions in performing parental responsibilities and at the same time respecting certain natural differences between men and women. It is vital that the natural differences between men and women be no source of unequal treatment, or gender-based discrimination.

Despite the legally guaranteed gender equality, despite the many institutional amendments in the last few years, and despite the adoption of important documents for uprooting of the unequal treatment based on gender, in real life there still remain areas of potential discrimination based on gender, age, parental responsibilities... The next chapter is dedicated to the issue of the position of unemployed women and how they view their chances for success in the labour market.

In 2005 the unemployment rate of women in Slovakia was 17.3% while the unemployment rate of men was 1.7% lower. Statistics clearly show the position of women on the labour market, as well as their situation with respect to unemployment. The relevant indicators show

that women are also worse in the share of long-term unemployment (more than 1 year). In 2005 the share of long-term unemployed women in Slovakia was 12.3% (from the overall share of active women population) whereas for men it was 1% less. In regards to unemployment, women started "overtaking" men from the year 2003 on.

The mentioned differences led us to look at the position of long-term unemployed women in greater detail. The methodology was developed on the assumption that partly standardized recorded interviews would provide us with a quantity of personal data, observations and opinions to help us understand the overall situation of long-term unemployed women in greater detail. We were mainly interested in the experiences and opinions of women who were unemployed for a long time that is a minimum 12 continuous months with a special emphasis on the category of women unemployed for more than 24 months. The only other criterion influencing the choice of respondents was an effort to include women living in Roma communities.

The choice of locations for the interviews was identical with the in-depth interviews with the local experts. We tried to record the situation in western, central and eastern Slovakia. We decided on three regions from which there were chosen two districts: the first with the relatively highest, and the second with the relatively lowest, rate of unemployment. (Nitra district: Nitra, Levice; Banská Bystrica district: Banská Bystrica, Rimavská Sobota; Prešov district: Prešov, Stropkov). Several interviewers recorded the interviews. All the interviews were made in the time period May-June 2006.

The interviews were structured to include the individual story of each interviewed woman and the reflection of her personal experiences in looking for an employment as well as the attitudes which did/might have influenced her potential employment. The second area of topics was related to the cooperation with the Labour Offices and experiences with seeking a job. From the point of view of comparing life strategies, the third part of the interviews had a high value for us, since it was a vision of the respondents' own future.

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## 1. Basic characteristic of the respondents

The interviews were made with women of all age categories – from 22 years old to 55 years old women just before retirement. Neither the family status nor the number of children was taken into account and the research sample included single, married, divorced and widowed women. During the selection no type of education was preferred, but it could be suggested, that the explored sample reflects the characteristics of long-term unemployed women of nationwide average.

Six of the respondents had incomplete elementary education (age 37 – 55); eight of them had completed elementary education (age 24 – 55); two of them had incomplete vocational education and both stated that they voluntarily left the apprentice training center after a year of study. Six women stated complete vocational education (aged 22 to 50 years). Seven of the interviewed women had completed secondary education with a Secondary Education Certificate. One of the respondents had completed higher education and during the research was on a post-graduate working experience in the local Labour and Social Affairs Office.

Eleven of the interviewed women never entered the formal labour market. Several of them never worked at all, not even occasionally, and some of them stated they had taken part in activation jobs, community jobs or occasional 2 – 3 month jobs in the past. This group does not include women who were repeatedly hired for occasional jobs for several years. From the educational point of view, these were women with incomplete or complete elementary education. Eight of the respondents live in Roma communities. Only two of the interviewed women were unemployed for less than two years.

All the respondents reported good health that is no health conditions, which could restrict their capacity to work. Two of the women reported illnesses, which could in certain conditions mean health hazard (oncological disease and diabetes).

Tab. č. 1

Region	Age	Family status	Number of children and their age	Education	Length of unemployment	Health limitations
Banská Bystrica	25	Married	Childless	University	1 year	None
Banská Bystrica	34	Married	Two children aged 12 and 8.	Elementary	6 years Before 1.ML worked for 2 years, then did not work anymore	None
Banská Bystrica	55	Married	Five children aged 33, 32, 30, 28, and 17.	Incomplete elementary - 6th grade	Never employed	None
Banská Bystrica	42	Married	Three children aged 20,17 and 13.	Upper secondary Secondary business school	Since 1993	None
Banská Bystrica	53	Single	Childless	Upper secondary Secondary business school	Since 2005	Shortly after oncological disease
Levice	37	Divorced	Two children aged 12 and 16.	Upper secondary Incomplete university	8 years	None
Levice	29	Single	Childless	Elementary	Never employed	None
Levice	46	Married	Two children aged 28 and 23.	Upper secondary	Since 1998	None

Levice	50	Widowed	Two children aged 30 and 28.	Upper secondary Secondary business school	Since 1997	None
Levice	55	Divorced	One son /died aged 21/	Elementary	Since 2002	None
Nitra	46	Married	Five children aged 26, 24, 22, 21 and	Elementary	Never employed	None
Nitra	39	Married	One child aged 15.	Elementary	Never employed	None
Nitra	37	Divorced	Childless (Childless marriage allegedly the divorce reason)	Incomplete elementary – 6th grade	Never employed	None
Nitra	35	Single	Childless	Incomplete elementary – 7th grade	Never employed	None
Nitra	32	Married	Three children aged 12, 10 and 6.	Upper secondary Nurses' training school	Since 2004	None
Nitra	24	Single	One child aged 4.	Elementary	Never employed	None
Prešov	32	Married	Three children aged 7, 12 and 14.	Incomplete elementary – 6th grade	Never employed	None
Prešov	28	Divorced	One child aged 6.	Secondary vocational school	Since 1998	None
Prešov	25	Single	Childless	Secondary vocational school	Since 2000	None

Prešov	34	Married	Two children aged 8 and 6.	Secondary vocational school – electrotechnical	Since 2003	None
Rimavská Sobota	34	Single	Twins aged 9.	Upper secondary Nurses' training school	6 years - since ML	None
Rimavská Sobota	30	Divorced	Two children aged 6 and 11.	Incomplete secondary	3 years – since the last ML unemployed. Until then occasionally employed	None
Rimavská Sobota	38	Married	Two children aged 15 and 19.	Elementary	Never employed	None
Rimavská Sobota	32	Married	Two children aged 9 and 14.	Elementary	Never employed	None
Rimavská Sobota	29	Married – getting divorced	One child aged 5.	Incomplete secondary	Since 2005	None
Stropkov	43	Married	Childless	Incomplete elementary – 6th grade	12 years	None
Stropkov	22	Married	Three children aged 4, 3 years and 3 months.	Secondary vocational school – textile	Never employed	None
Stropkov	55	Widowed	On child aged 37.	Incomplete elementary – 7th grade	Since the 90ies	Diabetes
Stropkov	30	Married	Two children aged 10 and 6.	Secondary vocational school – seamstress	Since 1991	None
Stropkov	50	Married	One child aged 28.	Secondary vocational school – seamstress	Since 1991	None

## 2. Description of personal professional histories and work experiences

Women who entered the labour market before the social and political changes in the 90's coincidentally stated that before the year 1989 employment was "compulsory and they evaluated the fact as positive.

*"Before the revolution I worked as a seamstress in SVIK for 7 years and then as a metal worker in Tesla for 16 years...in 1991 I was dismissed... since then I am unemployed."* (50 years old woman, Stropkov)

*I have only elementary education; I finished school at 15 and worked as a cleaning lady for nearly 5 years. Until I reached 18 I worked less and only assistant work. Such was legislation then..."* (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)

A group of women aged 46 to 55 made a common statement that after their maternity leaves they returned to work without any problems. Nevertheless, they reflect that "in their youth" maternity leaves were much shorter and they had to return to work even though the children were very small.

*My maternity leave was 6 months, and then I had to return to work.* (50 years old woman, Stropkov)

*My first maternity leave started in 1976, I worked in Smrečina-Pukanec. I remained at home for half a year. The second time I remained at home for only three months, because then they called me back and threatened me with losing my previous job position.* (50 years old woman, Levice)

Different experiences were recorded in the group of women – mothers aged 22 to 37 who were on maternity leaves after the year 1989.

All interviewed mothers were unable to re-enter the labour market after their maternity leave, they could find no suitable position.

*Before the maternity leave I worked as a shop assistant, then I left for maternity leave and since then I haven't worked anymore.* (34 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)

*I spent three years on maternity leave. After the three years I went to the company I had worked for before and asked for an open position. They turned me down; they had no open position for me. After my second child was born, I remained unemployed. (30 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*I worked as a nurse in Bratislava. It was from 1990 to 1997 until I left for maternity leave. I remained single, gave birth to twins and returned home to live with my parents. When I finished my maternity leave, I couldn't find a job. The children are 9 years old now, they go to school and I'm still unemployed...I went to interviews, I asked, I searched...it's awful to think like that, but if I didn't have children, I could find a job...I'm not sorry about having children, it's not that, but the truth is, when I admit to having children, they certainly choose a childless applicant. Nobody admits it openly, but the simple truth is they want either graduates or retired. (34 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

They claim that though according to the legislation it is not allowed to inquire about the family status or number of children, the potential employers are trying to find this out during the interview with the applicants.

*When I say I've got children, they make faces...they think I will often leave to care for a sick child, the fact I really want to work is not going to persuade them. (34 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

In the same way, women are often faced with questions about their future plans, especially those concerning family planning.

*They often ask me whether I plan to have children and when. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

The fact is that men are usually not exposed to such practices and the questions concerning family are rather of a by-the-way kind.

*The first question usually is whether I've got children. Men are never asked about children. (34 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

Women are often in a situation when they have to choose between a career, a job and family commitments.

*I graduated from a distance study Secondary business school. My first daughter was born, then I worked for a short time and another one was born. After the second maternity leave the employer proposed to give me a compensation reward to look for another job. I agreed and found a job in the customs directorate. But after a short time I got pregnant again. I got pregnant in the probationary employment period. The manager told me to write a termination of employment and promised to give me a compensation reward. I've found out about everything, I was in protective period and they couldn't dismiss me, but how was I to survive nine months in a place where I just wouldn't be accepted? I agreed on compensation. The elder daughters were small, when one got sick, the other was sure to follow her right away. Then I went on maternity leave with the third daughter. When I've finished that and wanted to start working, I've been to many interviews. I wasn't successful, the kids were small, I didn't have much self-confidence, I felt as if I'd forgotten everything and the only thing I'm able to talk about is nappies. We talked it over with my husband and he proposed I could stay at home. (42 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I studied sciences at university and when I was in my eighth semester I got married. Then one maternity leave followed another one. Since I didn't finish university studies and had graduated only from a secondary school, after the maternity leaves I went to work in education. At that time I absolutely didn't consider finishing university. (37 years old woman, Levice)*

Besides, the individual criteria in searching for a job must often be adapted to family commitments.

*The only option was to work eight and half hours and start at six in the morning. How could a mother with children do that? Once I went for an interview. The doctor that interviewed me asked me whether I would be able to work in a dispensary, whether I speak English, whether I'm willing to be further trained, whether I'm able to work with the computer. I would have managed everything, but in the end she asked me, if I could work until seven in the evening. I couldn't do that, who would take care of the kids. (34 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*I have an ill boy; I have to take him to and from boarding school every Monday and Friday. I could work only part-time, that way I would be able to take him to school on Monday and take him back on Friday. (39 years old woman, Nitra)*

The individual experiences of the respondents show that their long-term unemployment is also influenced by their insufficient education, in both the category of women with incomplete elementary or completed elementary education as well as those with secondary education.

*I'm sure it would have been better if I could read and write. (55 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I looked for a job, but I have only elementary education. Education is a problem, because nowadays everything is done by a computer. (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*Unfinished school looks bad in the documents. (34 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I worked in education. At that time I absolutely didn't consider finishing university. But then an act was adopted and unqualified people couldn't work in education any more, so that was the end for me. Four years ago I commenced social studies. I hope to have more chances after I graduate. (37 years old woman, Levice)*

On the other hand, some of the respondents were of the opinion, that higher education can in certain conditions be a handicap.

*When I started university, I was trying to find a job. But I have a problem with that. When I say I'm a student, employers don't seem happy about it, they don't want such people. (37 years old woman, Levice)*

*I've tried to find a job in the police or the army, but when I said I've got higher education, they just didn't want me. They prefer secondary school graduates. I'm glad I've got higher education, but it doesn't help me to get employed. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

The respondents considered age another possible handicap. Paradoxically, in applying for job younger women got the impression that

the employer preferred elder applicants and the elder women thought younger applicants were preferred.

*They usually want somebody for part-time work or pensioners. (34 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*Age is important, but only in certain occupations. They want young secretaries or waitresses. But in occupations where higher education is needed, age doesn't matter that much. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I usually have the feeling that the employers are not willing to hire a 53 years old productive person, because they consider her old. I think it is a worldwide practice. The desk-officers at the Labour Office sent me to apply to a shoe shop. The offer was new; I went right the next day. The position was already occupied. They had hired a young one...Then I went to a telecommunication operator and I was told they more or less want young people, that it is a young staff. (53 years old woman, BanskáBystrica)*

*I went to an interview and they hired only young women, I was too old for them. (55 years old woman, Levice)*

The interviewed women also claimed that another important impediment when searching for a job is long-term unemployment itself and the loss of social contacts and skills as well as the loss of professional qualifications.

*One potential employer wanted me to do accounting work. I had done that for ten years. They wanted me to take the job right away, because their accountant had just left. I told them I had not done such work for two years and needed some training to get a bit more confident. I proposed they could let the previous accountant hand the agenda over to me...They needed someone right away. We didn't agree. (53 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I think the employers also consider the fact I haven't worked for ten years a problem. (34 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*Then it was the children who were a problem, now its age as well as the lack of practice...They usually don't let me know the reason, but I think I get it. (42 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

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*The interviewed respondents living in Roma communities are of the opinion that employers don't want them for being of Roma origin. They also refused me for being a Roma. Hundred percent sure. Not in every case, but it is there. (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*No, they didn't take me. It's like that, they don't take Roma. ...When they see your surname...the position is filled. (37 years old woman, Nitra)*

*They don't want Roma. Sometimes it's my age that bothers them, sometimes it's that I'm a Roma. All the positions are filled as soon as they see a Roma. They do that to the boys as well; my sons have experienced it as well. My sons as well as my husband are unemployed. (46 years old woman, Nitra)*

*In this district they don't want to take Roma anywhere. (29 years old woman, Levice)*

We received a whole range of answers to the direct question whether they think it is harder for a woman to find a job.

We came across an open disclaimer of the disadvantaged position of women on the labour market in only one case.

*I don't think women are in any way disadvantaged to men. (39 years old woman, Nitra)*

Several of the respondents assign the unequal chances of women and men in the labour market to some "natural" distribution of responsibilities between men and women.

*There is still more men's work than women's work. For example, women can't do construction work or similar, and there seem to be more job offers for such work. (37 years old woman, Nitra)*

*It's hard to decide, it probably depends on the kind of work. There are more offers for typically men's works. (53 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*There are more positions for men than for women. There are a lot of jobs a woman can't do and even in professions like waiter or cook they're more likely to hire a man than a woman. I think there is less choice for women, so it's harder for them to find a job. (46 years old woman, Levice)*

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On the other hand, several women, especially those with higher education, think that when looking for a job women are in an unequal position to men. They see the reason in motherhood, caring for the family as the supreme "women task" and the deep-rooted stereotypes according to which men are considered professionally and physically more capable, less emotional, more devoted to work, more promising...

*I have to consider my children's needs first. When my husband looks for a job, he always takes the one that's better paid. That's an advantage. Men are always better paid than women. (32 years old woman, Nitra)*

*I think there is discrimination against women in looking for a job, especially when she has small children. It's not an open issue, it's hidden. (37 years old woman, Levice)*

*Life is definitely easier for men. I've been experiencing it all my life. A woman in the same position as a man and doing the same work earns maximum 2/3 of the money he earns. I've experienced it myself. I'm not talking of somebody else. For example, as soon as my daughter told the employer she is single and childless, he found some pretexts to not hire her. She speaks languages, has a title in front as well as behind her name, 3 years experience... The only reason was that she was single and childless and there was the possibility of her getting married. She would have children and leave work. The inequality of opportunity really exists. (46 years old woman, Levice)*

*It's easier for men, and I'm no feminist at that. I see it in practice that women are worse off than men. And I really can't even imagine what the situation would be after a maternity leave. It's hundred percent easier for men. For example, I went to ask about a position with the police. In one interview they even asked me whether I can imagine being able to stand as much as a man; whether I would be able to walk the town, whether I wouldn't be cold, etc. Or whether I would be able to cope with a drunkard, whether it wouldn't bother me if somebody stared at me wearing a skirt. And they often ask me whether I have or plan to have children and when. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

### 3. The Labour Office practices

The second group of issues we tried to examine through the interviews was the relationship between the unemployed and the Labour Office. We were interested in the cooperation of the placement officers: particularly in the offers of open positions; improving the personal skills of the unemployed as a tool to succeed in the labour market; and the participation of unemployed in other aspects of active employment policy. First of all we tried to gather what open positions the Labour Office placement officers to each of the unemployed women offered. Though living in different regions, several of the women stated that despite their long-term unemployment they had not received any offers of vacancies by the Labour Office.

*So far I haven't received an offer. (46 years old woman, Nitra)*  
*They have never offered me a job from the Labour Office. (32 years old woman, Prešov)*

*Nothing in particular. Not even courses. Nothing at all. (30 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

Some women admitted they had not received an offer, but even if they had, their family situation might have been a hindrance in accepting it.

*Formally I had to come and ask, because the law required it, but they knew I couldn't accept it, so they didn't offer it. When my mother died, I was assigned for activation work. (46 years old woman, Levice)*

*No. Even if there was an offer, I could work only part-time and there are no such offers. (39 years old woman, Nitra)*

They state that Labour Offices did not offer suitable open jobs offers and, in their opinion, Labour Offices' role is instead monitoring and increasing the potential for getting a permanent job.

*I received no offer, because I have only secondary education and the offers are few. The worst thing is that people with higher education fill the positions, which could be filled by people with secondary education. I went to interviews. Now I haven't been to any for half a year; I gave up. I personally experienced it: we were 60 applicants*

*and there were 4 open positions. The people with higher education filled in two tests, one to get a position where higher education was required, the second for a position where only secondary education was required. Or temporary civil service jobs. Those who worked in those positions had to go through special panel interviews. (53 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*In my opinion the Labour Office shouldn't be the one to get a job for me. Maybe it worked like that in the past, but it's not so anymore. I'm searching and sending applications myself, they don't even know whether the position is open or not. When I visited the States, they had a job service or a placement agency there and they could offer you work in an instant. The employers offering free positions call you themselves. Here it doesn't work like that. Yes. The Labour Office only monitors things, because I have to report and bring a document confirming that I applied for jobs. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

One of the respondents considers the offer made to her as only formal fulfillment of the duty to inform about a job offer, because it was unsuitable for her, but the placement officer presented it anyway.

*As a matter of fact, no. I received an offer to commute to Kozárovce (more than 30 kilometers) where I could work as an assistant cook in two shifts, but the transportation was very bad and in the afternoons I wouldn't have been able to come at all, so I had to turn the job offer down. (50 years old woman, Levice)*

Some respondents were offered open job positions, but so far none of them have gotten permanent employment.

*We were sent to apply; I don't remember precisely, it was a long time ago. We got those cards to go to a company and get them signed. They had no open positions. (37 years old woman, Nitra)*

*I got an offer to work in a company in Bratislava, but since I've got a family and small children it was out of the question. (34 years old woman, Prešov)*

*In the Labour Office they told me they needed a shop assistant in one shop. When I went there, the manager told me the position was filled. (25 years old woman, Prešov)*

*I got some offers, but when I got there, they were not hiring anybody. They just looked at me and told me they're sorry but every position is filled. (35 years old woman, Nitra)*

The respondents consider the Labour Office's placement activities a more or less formal matter. They simply visit the potential employer with a recommendation card to get it confirmed that the position is already filled. They return to the Labour Office with a filled recommendation card and their visit is considered an active search for an open position.

All the respondents declared that they look for employment themselves.

*All the time. I went to Lučenec and also to Banská Bystrica. I couldn't find anything suiting my qualification. They usually require ten years practice and I haven't got it. (29 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*I searched myself as well, but I've got only elementary education so I wasn't successful. (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

The testimonies clearly point to the women's active approach and their different ways for gathering information. In accordance to their abilities and accessibility, they search for jobs through newspaper advertisements, the Internet, personal visits to potential employers, as well as sending applications. Their ways of looking for a job depend on their age and education. Women with secondary and higher education prefer the Internet and sending applications, while the elder women, or women with lower education prefer personal visits and newspaper advertisements.

*I use the Internet, send applications, personal histories, call people...I have a colleague who gave it up, but I won't...Some days I stay at home with my family, other days I walk the town with applications in my hand. I don't want to get employed outside Banská Bystrica. Maybe I would take something in Zvolen, I went there too...If the wages were at least 10 thousand, I could manage to travel that far...I walk door to door...I've been to television, the customs office, the radio, financial institutions...also different companies, travel agencies (53 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

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*I go and ask, send applications, search the Internet. But now I'm back here, I can see apprentices are better off. There are a lot of unemployed higher- educated people in Banská Bystrica. I'm glad I've got higher education, but it's hard to get employed. The cooks, waiters, construction workers have more chances for employment. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I see an announcement on the door that a shop assistant is wanted, so I go in and ask. Or I just walk in the town, enter shops and ask. They usually want somebody part-time or a pensioner. Several times I went to an interview. They usually tell you they will let you know, but nobody did so far. Maybe the fact I haven't worked for ten years is a problem. (34 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I'm looking for a job via advertisements, the Internet or personal contacts. I have even sent several applications, most of them to companies in the district. (34 years old woman, Prešov)*

*Every month. For example in April I've sent applications to every school, approximately 50 applications. But in May I've sent only about 7 - 10 applications. Employers seldom respond to them. Maybe two out of ten would write that they have put me in their registers, but so far they have no open positions. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

Despite the active approach most women from the interviewed group remain long-term unemployed. Most of them find their situation frustrating.

*It kills me. Sometimes I thought I would get cracked staying at home all the time. When I was at school I got so much new information. Now – nothing at all. When I finished school in May I thought I would enjoy the summer. But then, when I started sending applications, I spent a lot of money on it and nothing happened and I got nervous. I didn't expect this. (25 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

The solution to this situation might partly be education, especially retraining, which would prepare them to better look for jobs, as well as help them to develop their skills. Most of them completed some kind of education. Their answers show the individual approach of the Labour Offices to provide education or retraining that would be in

accordance with their clients' needs, education or individual development plans.

*I went to a course in school, where the community social workers taught us to read and write. (43 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*I went to school to a Roma training course – computer literacy. (50 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*Now I go to a course for unemployed. They teach us how to look for a job. It is a five-day course from eight to half past two. (37 years old woman, Nitra)*

*I have completed a course for the unemployed on how to access the labour market – how to go to interviews, write a personal history, where to look for job vacancies. (32 years old woman, Prešov)*

*I went to courses in the Labour Office; they taught us to look for a job and so on. (35 years old woman, Nitra)*

*We got very positive feedback on professional courses. I have completed a retraining course on tourism. I was happy with it. I hope to use my new knowledge in practice. (46 years old woman, Levice)*

*I frequented the school in Stropkov for two months. It was a course on cooking and sewing. I liked it. (54 years old woman, Stropkov)*

But we also had some critical comments.

*I went to one, but I have to be critical. In January 2005 I turned in an application form for retraining. Computing for the intermediate level, the Internet, accounting. The Labour Office officer called in July to say they're registering people for a beginner's course. I declined it. I've been working with computers for 12 years; I've got to know something. In December I got an offer for a course in accounting. And when I went there I found out it's frequented by people who have been unemployed for 2 –3 months and I had to wait two years to get there...I don't think the clients are approached individually. (53 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

The respondents have much experience with the active labour market policy measures, the so-called activation work or similar that

in the past was called public or community work.

*After the first maternity leave I did some activation work. Then we had a Roma club - a Roma society. That was not activation work like what it is now, it was different. (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*I do activation work 4.5 hours a day for 1 700 Sk. I've been doing it for two years already. They like me and I'm happy I can do at least that much. (50 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*The Labour Office offered me to do activation work. I'm an assistant in school. I've been doing it for two years. I'm content. (30 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*I've been working for the village mayor for four and half years, until last April. That was public benefit work. I got neither money nor welfare. I did it not need to report to the Labour Office every week. Besides, I didn't need any stamp to prove I'm looking for a job. Now I have to report to the Labour Office every second week.*

Women with lower education and older women prefer the above-mentioned form of work. The women with secondary and higher education decline offers for activation work.

*They offered me to do activation work. I declined. (29 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

#### **4. Women's vision of their future**

The women differed most in their visions of their future life. Several of the women connect their future with a specific work situation; they can imagine a suitable job and formulate their notions very precisely.

*I would like to start a business. To sell clothes, accessories, bags, handbags, shoes and garments in the market. My mother does it; I would like to follow her. (37 years old woman, Nitra)*

*If I had money, I would like to run a business with our cottage. I have a vision, but right now I don't have the money. I would like to work together with my daughter. She would have a nail design studio and me a little cafeteria... (42 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*I know the local Roma organizations and I would like to join the activation work for one of them. I would learn to weave carpets and other textile products. I have tried, but unfortunately they have a limited capacity. I will try again. My nephew already works there and is satisfied (32 years old woman, Prešov)*

The women cannot exactly state the reasons for wanting to work. It is interesting that besides feeling the need to work for income they as often stress the need to be with other people and feel useful.

*If I managed to get a job I would gain more self-esteem, because when a person works, she doesn't feel so useless and lonely. I was so sad that I had to get a dog, but I know it's not the best solution. Work would definitely help me more. (35 years old woman, Levice)*

*Maybe it's a bit naive, but I think if I had a job, my whole self would change; I would be healthier and more confident. I wouldn't mind working as a home assistant, but who has money to hire me? I was always proud to be able to take care of myself and even now I think it's not age that determines human capability. I think the state should give people of my age a chance to live a normal life. (55 years old woman, Levice)*

*I would like to earn some money; it's not possible to live on social benefits. We started to build a house during the previous regime and it can't be finished now. There are six of us living in a one-room flat. We can neither save, nor live on it. It's impossible to save from that amount. (46 years old woman, Nitra)*

*To get a job would help me in many ways, I would feel more useful and our family would have a higher income. My ex-husband sends maintenance, but since everything is expensive, it's not enough. I don't know whether I'd like to stay at home, I'd rather be among people. (28 years old woman, Prešov)*

*I want to work. I don't feel a need to stay at home on my own accord; the children are more independent now. Besides, there are too many of us at home. I long to find at least a part-time job, the whole family would be better off. (32 years old woman, Prešov)*

All of them declare they are willing to work, but on the bases of their answers they could be divided into two groups. The first group

of women is willing to take any job, to learn and adjust despite certain job preferences.

*I would take a job even now, after so many years of unemployment. To tell the truth, about a year ago I went to apply for an early old-age pension. I began to fill in the papers. I have five children, that count, but I couldn't get it because I've never been employed. This is also one of the reasons I would take anything: cleaning, washing dishes... (55 years old woman, Banská Bystrica)*

*To work would be a change for me. The minimum wages would suffice. If it was more, so much better. I would like to give my children at least as much as my parents were able to give me. My parents gave me so much, so many experiences... And I can't provide for my children as I was provided for. (30 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*I would like to have everything, just as other people do. To make money, to work. I can work. I do activation works 4.5 hours a day for 1 700 Sk. So far they're happy with me and I'm glad I can do at least that much. I would do anything. (50 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*I would work only here, in Rimavská Sobota. I could be a worker or a cleaning lady. My education suffices for this kind of work. People go to work in Bohemia, but that is a long way and costs some money and - anyway - there's nobody to leave my kids with. (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

The second group of women is willing to work, but they have good conditions such as opportunity to perform their original profession, working close to their home, and suitable wages. They quite often pointed out that it is worth getting employed only if the wages are higher than the social benefits, or only when both partners are employed.

*It would be ideal to get any job in my place of residence. I wouldn't mind working in administration. The most important thing to consider would be whether I have to commute to work. If I got twice as much as the social benefit, I could even commute to Levice. I don't expect to get as much as a Minister, but after subtracting all expenses it still has to be more than what I get when I stay at home. (46*

years old woman, Levice)

*It would be ideal for me to work amongst people and to be paid well, according to my qualifications. And the best working hours for me would be 6 hours. (34 years old woman, Prešov)*

*I would like to be employed very much, ideally in my original profession – a shop assistant. My daughter goes to school this year and every crown would help. (28 years old woman, Prešov)*

*I would consider it a change if both of us could work. When only one of us has a job, our family earns only as much as social benefits. Now we get approximately 5,000 crowns. If only I got a job, I would get just the minimum wages that is about 6,800 crowns. We would get only as much as we get now from the social benefits. If we were to earn more, we both would have to work. (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

In general, the ability to specify their own vision of the future in many aspects depends upon the level of education the women had attained. Women with secondary education are more realistic in evaluating their chances and setting their goals. The visions of women without education consist in increasing their living standard. This is especially true about women from Roma communities.

*If I could get a job, I would save for an apartment. Nowadays our family is packed up in my parents' in law two-room apartment. There are nine of us living there. (32 years old woman, Prešov)*

*To have a house of my own and enough money to live on. I really want to work. (50 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*I would like to live among the non-Roma, so that it wouldn't be what it is now. I keep visiting the local authority and asking them to do that for me. This is what I dream of, but I doubt it will ever come true. And I want to have a job to be able to pay for everything. It's impossible to live on 3 500 crowns. (54 years old woman, Stropkov)*

*I'm not content right now. I want my husband to work, the kids to grow up and to have our own apartment. To be secure in every way. (22 years old woman, Stropkov)*

There is an interesting finding, that though these women are long-term unemployed, and according to their own statements, living on the verge of poverty, they do not rely on the state to help them. Nearly all of them think that in case of need they could expect some help from close relatives.

*The whole family tries to help me – children, parents, mother-in-law, all who live in Pukanec. I find it very humiliating, I worked all my life and now I don't have enough to live on sometimes. (50 years old woman, Levice)*

*I have my parents to help me. And also my best friend, an ex-classmate from secondary school, who works in Italy as a stewardess. If we could get in touch, maybe she could get me a job in Italy too. Because even if I go to work in the forest, I earn very little money. It's Sk 3300 for a whole month. It's impossible to live on. (29 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*If there is a need, we help each other in the family circle. My husband's parents financially support two nephews who live with us from their pensions. They're both doing activation work. (32 years old woman, Prešov)*

*In the worst need we seek help in our family, our parents and a single brother who is employed. (24 years old woman, Prešov)*

Particularly the women living in Roma communities have experiences with aid from not-for-profit organizations and Roma activists. Even though they think their work does not resolve all issues, they appreciate a certain potential in improving the situation.

*Certain Roma organizations employ people, but only for activation work. And they take only people able to work with computers. I would very much like Mrs. H. (a local Roma activist) to hire me, even if I can't work with the computer, I would do any other work. Someone is fit to work with them, someone isn't. (38 years old woman, Rimavská Sobota)*

*I know some organizations. For example, J.N. (a local Roma activist) taught our children, but that was a long time ago. She and her husband have an office somewhere, but I haven't been there. And also the Red Cross, my daughter and granddaughter visited them. (55*

years old woman, Banská Bystrica)

*No Roma activist was ever interested in me, I don't even know if there are any in Levice. But I know a friend of mine here in Lipnik plans to open an office to help the Roma, she had sent an application and now she's only waiting for an answer. (29 years old woman, Levice)*

*So far I didn't address strangers or Roma organizations, but I know people who do activation work for a Roma association. (24 years old woman, Prešov)*

*I know the local Roma organizations and I would like to get to do activation work in one of them. I would learn how to weave carpets and make other textile products. I have tried, but their capacity is also limited. My nephew works there and is very happy. (32 years old woman, Prešov)*

## **Instead of a conclusion**

Achieving gender equality means not only adhering to the legal framework, but above all, eliminating barriers. The change of attitudes and the elimination of gender stereotypes is certainly very important, but even more could be done by advancing real equality in access to education, by eliminating the 'work versus family' tension, by helping parents to re-enter the labour market and by promoting more flexible working arrangements such as flexible working time, part-time work... The research confirmed that women who have been unemployed for more than 12 months are rightly considered a disadvantaged group when seeking to enter the labour market. There is an accumulation of several factors, which limit their successful entry into the labour market, namely factors women are not able to overcome without any help. That is another reason why more attention should be paid to assisting women in entering the labour market.

Women of childbearing age, approximately younger than 34, are often exposed to the dilemma of work/career versus family. Women both without and with elementary education do not feel this dilemma as strongly as women with secondary or higher education, because

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there are less job offers for unskilled labour, and from the personal point of view, unskilled jobs offer less job satisfaction. On the contrary, women with secondary or higher education perceive the problems connected with parenthood as an obstacle to work/professional realization.

On the other hand, some of the respondents consider motherhood and maternity leave to be a certain way out of unemployment. In this context we can see certain risks connected with the planned increase in the parental allowance to the level of minimum wage. It would discourage certain women from entering the labour market.

Nearly all women with dependent children were some time in their life confronted with the fact that employers, or potential employers, consider motherhood a handicap. Though it is legally forbidden to seek information about the family status or number of children of job applicants, it is a common practice. It is unnecessary to stress that because of rooted stereotypes under which childcare is considered nearly exclusively the role of women and that it is woman who is absent from work if the child is sick. Women – mothers are also considered less flexible regarding working hours (overtime) and in-service training.

When entering the labour market after a maternity or parental leave, women have certain gaps in their professional education (this does not apply to every profession, but it does to many).

Last year's research shows that another handicap of the long-term unemployed is age and that it affects women as well as men. The age at which discrimination occurs has gone down, for example, from the interviews we made, it was clear that even women much younger than 50 years were confronted with disinterest of employers because of their age.

It is clear that work is not only a source of income, but also an opportunity for satisfaction, social communications, and feeling of usefulness for the community. That is why prerequisites should be developed to enable people who are willing to work and learn, can enter the labour market irrespectively of gender-based differences.

The greatest issue is education. Most interviewed women only had incomplete or complete elementary education. Their decision not to continue their education was partly due to persistent stereotypes taking for granted that women take care of the family and therefore do not need education. That statement was not true half a century ago and certainly is not plausible today. That is why it is necessary to dedicate greater attention to education and professional training. It would even be good to evaluate the need to implement educational programs for long-term unemployed women without elementary education, if necessary including elementary literacy programs.

The research has confirmed the difficult situation of the long-term unemployed women. Nearly all of the women declared that they did not expect any help from the state. But the state should definitely not give up its endeavor to help this population group and, above all, it should enhance mechanisms that can help people avoid long-term unemployment.

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# **Social Partners and their Role in Implementation of Equal Opportunities, and Reconciliation of Work and Family Life in the Light of a Survey<sup>1</sup>**

Monika Čambáliková

## **Introduction**

The research focused on analysing the content of gender mainstreaming in collective agreements at company and sectoral levels, in the activities (especially collective bargaining as well as implementation and evaluation of fulfilment of collective agreements) of social partners – particularly the trade unions – in the surveyed companies or sectors.

The contents of relevant collective agreements (company and sectoral collective agreements) were analysed, and semi-standardized interviews were conducted with the respective collective bargainers and experts working for relevant institutions in the Slovak Republic (SR)

The research shows that social partners in SR, especially unions, rank themselves among the leading partners in the processes, and are aware of their specific role and function in those processes. They have been acting in the area of principles and practices concerning reconciliation between work and private life for a long time and at a standard European level. They included the agenda of equal opportunities principle and practices in their objectives and principles. Now they are learning how to effectively include the agenda in their day-to-day activities, especially the life of their company's employees.

The surveyed Slovak collective agreements are, in principle, gender neutral. They generally go beyond the framework of the law or have more specific instruments and measures for reconciliation

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<sup>1</sup> The study was conducted under the grant VEGA 2/6031/26 Agenda, Strategy and Identity of Social Partners in Slovakia: Continuity and Change

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between work and family (private) life than for implementation of equal opportunities for men and women.

## **1. Social partners as agents, and social partnership institutions as instruments to shape the labour market**

Social partners and social partnership institutions have an important role to play in the post-World War II democracies with socially oriented market economies. In addition to their contribution to social stabilisation of the society and participation of employee and employer associations in (co) decision-making and control at a company level through to the national level, they co-shape the labour market, employment, social, and especially corporate social policies.

Social partners now at times have to struggle to keep their powers, social roles and actual influence. Processes such as liberalisation, globalization, production and labour restructuring shape the current situation and bring about internal and external changes that weaken the bargaining and organizational power of the "traditional" social partners, especially trade unions. Certain effects of those processes, however, namely the pressures resulting from the European Union integration and criteria may have positive (at least formal and institutional) effects on the position and role of social partners. Member states, under the pressure of those criteria, are encouraged to strengthen their democratic institutions, including social partnership, and to adopt an approach preferring consensus and agreement - which is exactly what the social partnership institutions can do. The role and position of the "traditional" social partners operating under modern circumstances are strengthened also with the adoption of "new" agenda. Besides the traditional agenda such as higher wages, better working and living conditions for workers, the social partners are (can be) the implementers of the principles and practices of equality (including gender equality) and equal opportunities in labour and employment, and reconciliation between work and family (private) life.

There are instruments that social partners can use, namely their “traditional” institutionalized forms of exerting influence, namely collective bargaining and collective agreements. Collective bargaining and collective agreements are instruments that can be used by social partners to safeguard and implement the equal opportunities principle in all relevant policies since collective bargaining plays an important role in setting the working conditions, employment and working conditions, and is a crucial mechanism for gender mainstreaming of industrial process in its broadest sense.

For the above reasons the research covered the following:

**1. SOCIAL PARTNERS as AGENTS,**

or (non) implementers of equal opportunities (and work and family life reconciliation);

**2. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING and COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS as INSTRUMENTS,**

for or way of (non)implementation of equal opportunities (and reconciliation of work and private life).

The research was focused mainly on content analysis of gender mainstreaming in collective agreements and activities (particularly collective bargaining as well as conclusion and implementation of collective agreements) of social partners, primarily trade unions, at the workplace or in the area of equal opportunities, and reconciliation between work and private life.

The research covered:

- a) Social partners – negotiators of collective agreements:
  - at company level
  - at union level;
- b) Collective agreements (15 company or sectoral collective agreements);
- c) Experts – members of the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Trade Union Confederation of SR (KOZ SR)

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Research instruments and techniques:

- a) Substance analysis of collective agreements;
- b) Detailed semi-standardised interviews with collective negotiators and experts.

### **1.1 Collective bargaining and collective agreements as instruments for implementation of equal opportunities, and reconciliation between work and family life**

Social partners (together with governments of member states) under the European Employment Strategy bear their share of responsibility for the following areas:<sup>2</sup>

- increasing the employment rate and employability of women,
- balancing the representation of men and women in certain sectors and jobs,
- improving women's career promotion opportunities,
- facilitating reconciliation between work and family (private) life,
- facilitating integration and reintegration of women in labour market.

#### **1.1.1 Collective bargaining and equal opportunities**

The equal opportunities policy, as a matter of principle, has to be implemented and developed within the framework of all policies, at all levels, and in all relevant areas. Since the issues covered by collective bargaining and topics of collective agreements encompass setting and specification of working conditions in their broadest sense – including employment conditions, employment and remuneration, collective bargaining is (can be) the key mechanism for gender mainstreaming in the industrial process particularly at respective workplaces (companies).

The importance of collective agreements having the status of complementary legislation has to be underlined. It is collective agree-

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Employment directive, Document: The European Employment Strategy EU9909187F

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ments where measures and provisions can go beyond the statutory provisions. Collective agreements give opportunities and room for development of positive, and temporarily “higher standard” measures – including equality advancement – especially when they respond to the past disadvantages or are intended to counterbalance past or present discriminatory practices.

It becomes apparent that gender differences and unequal opportunities are rooted in the “gender” nature and the ongoing stereotype within organizations – it is assumed, for example, that men do not run the household and do not take care of family members, and work traditionally done by women is undervalued. That is the reason why there is need to conduct a critical review of organizational structures and cultural patterns, first of all, and only then to adopt relevant specific measures against that background.

“Good” collective agreements cover primarily those obstacles to equal opportunities principles and practices that are embedded in culture and in the structure of organizations. Such agreements do not only focus on specific issues, but they outline and set up positive action programmes, fix short- and long-term goals, are very specific about procedures for accomplishment of those goals, and provide for their funding. In other words, collective agreements that can serve as “examples of the best practice” consistently integrate equal opportunities in their human resources policy and employment policy.

Those who negotiated such collective agreements understand equal opportunities, and adopt the principle as a general integral aspect of employing and employment, business and flexibility

“If collective bargaining lacks a gender perspective, it is very likely that agreements will institutionalise discriminatory practices, entrench rather than challenge gender segregation of work, and operate on a male norm of employment, to the obvious disadvantage of women.”<sup>3</sup>

What are the general features of a “good” collective agreement in terms of implementation of the equal opportunities principle?

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Equal Opportunities, Collective Bargaining and European Employment Strategy

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A good collective agreement typically:

- contains elements such as elimination or at least reduction of gender pay gap, horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the jobs or positions structure, support of a more even distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women,
- and it clearly reflects the idea: Seeking to change organizations rather than simply “adapting women”.

When it comes to implementation of equal opportunities, the European social partners focus mainly on the following areas:

1. Recruitment, promotion, and training,
2. Reconciliation between work and family life,
3. Integration and reintegration in the labour market.

### **1.1.1.1 Recruitment, promotion and training**

Signs of “good” collective agreements:

a) Recruitment and selection:

- elimination of sex stereotyping in job descriptions and advertisements,
- offering/giving opportunities to work part-time,
- inviting female candidates for interview or putting female candidates on the short-listing for jobs/positions in which they are under-represented, at least in proportion to the percentage of women among the applicants for the job or position.

(Preferential recruitment of women for jobs or positions in which they are under-represented is in accord with the Amsterdam Treaty.)

b) Policy and criteria related to promotion:

- studying the sex composition of the workforce,
- identifying obstacles to (professional/career) promotion of women,
- mapping out career paths to facilitate access by women to higher posts.

### c) Education:

- equal or preferential access (of women or previously disadvantaged or less participating groups of workers) to training and work experience,
- balanced use of education funds and opportunities, securing a balanced women participation also by reserving jobs for women or other previously disadvantaged groups,
- arrangements for care facilities for dependent family members during trainings or courses.

#### **1.1.1.2 Reconciliation between work and family life**

The opportunity to combine paid work (job) and family life is important for women and men employees at different stages of their lives owing to their need to take care not only of their children but also of their senior relatives. The European employment directives, in order to promote a better reconciliation between work and private life, underline the importance of family-oriented policies such as career (employment) interruptions, parental leave, leave to care for a family member or part-time work in combination with provision, improvement and availability of social services (including services and facilities providing care for children, sick or elderly persons). The aim is to offer workers an opportunity to choose what best suits their individual needs or their specific work or family situations at the given time of their lives.

The negotiations of that kind of collective agreements draw from the idea that provisions relating to the reconciliation of work and family life must be available for both women and men. Otherwise the traditional unequal distribution of family responsibilities (or unpaid work) would be reinforced and constitute a barrier to equal opportunities in paid employment.

Features of “good” collective agreements (examples of “good practices”) regarding reconciliation between work and private life:

- accentuation of “family-friendly policy” and measures facilitating the reconciliation between work and family (private) life of employees – parental leave, leave to care for a family member, part-time work,

- also in combination with availability of social services and facilities, pre-school facilities, and spare time facilities,
- holiday beyond the minimum standard,
- cultural, recreational, sport and other activities for employees and their families.

The specific measures also draw from the adoption of the mentioned general idea, namely: Social partners successful at implementation of equality in the concerned areas realize that the “traditional” (i.e. unbalanced distribution of family responsibilities) frequently is a barrier to equal opportunities in a paid job (public area) and purposefully try to eliminate it.

### **1.1.1.3 Integration and reintegration in the labour market**

Vocational training and (life-long) education rank among important measures for better employability. Supporting measures and projects responding to specific situations of disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities, young or older people, and women after their parental leave, help these groups reintegrate in the labour market. Those kinds of projects can be currently supported with European funds.

The European Employment directives stress the need to modernize the organization of labour. They suggest doing so through flexible working patterns such as working time reduction, part-time jobs, and particularly life-long education. The directives stress the balance between flexibility and labour market security. Increasing flexibility in an undertaking is frequently at the cost of less security for the employees. The “flexible” workers such as part-time workers or temporary workers, often have lower pay and worse working and social conditions than other workers, and they also enjoy less industrial protection regarding job security.

“Good” collective agreements cover the following:

- training measures during parental leave and in relation to reintegration into employment,
- ways of maintaining contact while on parental leave (or on leave on grounds of long-term care for a family member),
- building up seniority rights and social security rights during periods of leave.

The mentioned measures – collective agreement provisions can be divided in the following general categories:

1. Measures eliminating obstacles,
2. Measures with positive effects (supporting or extraordinary measures introduced for a temporary period, intended to compensate for discrimination in the past),
3. General supporting measures (in contrast to the above, these measures such as antidiscrimination measures, education and communication activities, programmes and measures for reconciliation of work and family life, are intended for all workers),
4. Adjusting measures (intended to make work, tools and instruments, and workplaces “fit” for all groups of workers).

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (EFILWC) conducted a 5-year survey project into collective bargaining and equal opportunities in EU. Collective agreements were analysed in the light of their potential to advance equal opportunities, and the process was examined that gave rise to that kind of agreements. The project identified certain factors that may favourably support the use of collective bargaining as a tool to strengthen and advance the implementation of equal opportunities, and presented certain recommendations and examples of good practices <sup>4</sup>

### **1.1.2 Collective agreements and equal opportunities: Examples of “good practice” or good collective agreements from EU member states**

#### *France*

*A 1991 equality agreement in a French credit institution sought to improve job access for women and to reduce sex segregation, particularly in management posts. The agreement was distinguished by parity representation at all stages. Equality was considered part of general management strategy. Two structures were established to achieve the objectives: a commission representing different occupations, trade unions and management, which meets at least once a*

<sup>4</sup> Source: Strengthening and Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities through Collective Bargaining). Inge Bleijenbergh, Jeanne de Bruijn, Linda Dickens, EFILWC, December 1999.

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*year to review progress and prepare a fresh proposal; a smaller body comprising management and employee representatives, which meets as frequently as necessary to ensure implementation of the agreement.*

#### *Germany*

*The 1990 German Frankfurt Airport equal opportunities agreement treats equal opportunities as an integral element of human resource development with the emphasis on training. It has provisions on family/work interface, including career breaks; on working time, including part-time and flexible working hours; on job access/sex segregation, including the promotion of women, a promotion pool for female staff, a policy on advertisements, selection procedures and special training; and a programme to sensitise organisational culture and structures to equal opportunities. The agreement is to be implemented through an active information policy and the creation of a special commission to ensure its implementation.*

#### *Spain*

*A collective agreement covering a number of government institutions in Spain set up a committee with a majority of women (minimum of 60 per cent) with various responsibilities including examining company rules and ensuring women's participation in all activities. The committee has the right to participate in defining conditions governing job access and promotion and job evaluation, and the right to be involved in determining working conditions (e.g. health and safety).*

#### *Sweden*

*In the 1994 local authorities agreement in Sweden, equal opportunities is seen as a strategic issue in restructuring local government. Sex segregation and the equal distribution of job opportunities is 'an important question in terms of democracy, power and efficiency' and, at managerial level, is regarded as relevant to the quality of decision-making. Equal opportunities is thus mainstreamed as a central operational principle for all relevant policy areas of the agreement.*

## UK

*In the London Fire and Civil Defence Service in the UK, an equality audit was targeted explicitly at organisational culture. The approach adopted was modelled on the principle applied in health and safety audits, namely risk assessment. This involves identifying the areas of risk, assessing the degree of risk, and taking appropriate action. Implementation of the audit involved investigation of existing policies and procedures, and of patterns and trends in recruitment and selection, retention, promotion, grievance and discipline, training and development, promotion and career development. A survey of workforce opinion was undertaken, involving the trade unions. Analysis focused on the issues of organisational and cultural change and the management of equality. An outcome of the audit was the formal adoption of an agreement aimed at embedding the programme for equality in a broader programme aimed at widespread cultural change, in partnership with trade unions.*

### **1.1.3 Collective bargaining and equal opportunities: Recommendations to promote bargaining on equal opportunities**

The recommendations<sup>5</sup> are addressed first to social partners and then also to all national and transnational agents (from national governments through to relevant equal opportunities bodies), namely to all who may encourage and motivate social partners to act and collaborate in the relevant areas.

*Recommendations to social partners on the promotion of equality bargaining. Social partners should:*

- Improve their expertise,
- Set up relevant institutions and expert centres at national, sectoral and company levels,
- Take action to ensure women's proper representation and participation, and increase their involvement in the bargaining process both in terms of quantity (increasing their number) and quality (increasing women's influence),

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Strengthening ..., EFILWC, 1999

- Take action to ensure proper representation and participation of all worker groups, including their involvement in collective bargaining,
- Develop equality guidelines or manuals or methodologies for their negotiators,
- Ensure the implementation of equal opportunities in all areas, programmes, and policies (including collective agreements),
- Ensure that collective agreements include provisions for implementation and monitoring, respecting and overseeing the implementation of equality principles and provisions and measures,
- Set up joint bodies and conclude framework agreements on equality at European, national, sectoral, and company levels.

#### *Recommendations and ideas for others*

National governments should seek to utilise (or establish) mechanisms to disseminate awareness and examples of good practice in the area for example by setting up expertise centres and expert groups, and by ensuring that attention is paid to equality in the administrative collection and review of collective agreements.

National governments should implement/adopt legislation guaranteeing equal opportunities, and review/monitor the compliance with and implementation of equality legislation, and involve social partners in these activities.

National Action Plans should report at least on quantitative developments on the decrease of pay gap between men and women, changes in horizontal and vertical sex segregation in job structure, and the increase of female negotiators in collective bargaining.

European Union, national member states and local authorities should reserve funds for equality programs and measures to facilitate reconciliation between work and family life, for example, establishing and operating childcare facilities and other care facilities, to guarantee equal opportunities for employees and self-employed persons with care responsibilities while they are undergoing training.

The European Commission's technical and financial support to social partners could involve funds for training of equality officers – experts or negotiators or funds/resources for the creation of joint

equality bodies at national, company or sectoral levels.

The European Commission should ensure equality is mainstreamed into legislative measures promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining, such as provisions relating to European Works Councils and the proposed national level consultations and information bodies.

The European Commission should maintain a database on the results of equality bargaining throughout the EU.

#### **1.1.4 Collective agreements and reconciliation of work and family life: Examples of “good practice” or good collective agreements in the EU member states**

##### *Austria*

*In Austria, agreements in the public sector provide for career breaks. There is provision for information on job opportunities, discussion on deployment to other jobs, maintaining contact during leave, and particularly, dealing with the resumption of work: support after leave, targeted training and preferential admission to courses.*

##### *Belgium*

*In Belgium, an agreement from the National Labour Council provides for the right to unpaid leave up to 10 days per year for urgent reasons: illness, accident or hospitalisation of a person living under the same roof, or the parent or close relation.*

##### *Denmark*

*A 1995 agreement in the Danish insurance sector provides for full or part-time leave with pay to care for sick children, and if they require hospitalisation, up to 8 days on full pay. Leave without pay may also be granted. If there is serious illness full or part-time leave of up to 13 weeks may be granted on full pay, including holiday entitlement, pension contributions and seniority entitlement. Similarly, in the case of care for a dying or terminally ill person, leave on full pay is provided.*

### *Germany*

*In the retail trade in North Rhine-Westphalia, a collective agreement gives an entitlement to a parental leave period of one and a half years, with suspended employment, after the legal parental leave of three years. It allows for such leave to be taken on a part-time basis. The period of leave of absence can be taken in two sections, each of them least six months. In cases where both parents work in the company, the one and a half-year entitlement is only given once but can be divided between the parents. Employees are entitled to employment in a similar job in the company after parental leave without this being set out in a contract clause.*

### *Greece*

*In the Greek collective agreement for male and female accountants in the private commerce, industry and service sector, employees with children up to the age of 16 may take 5 days' paid leave per year to monitor their children's school progress and 6 days unpaid leave for exceptional domestic problems. Either partner may opt to work reduced hours to care for a child.*

### *Ireland*

*The Broadcasting Authority in Ireland, in conjunction with the trade unions, created a childcare co-operative in 1987, a crèche located on site. The employer bears the cost of the building and maintenance. There is an overall management committee working in conjunction with an operational committee elected by parents whose children attend the crèche.*

### *Italy*

*In Italy, a 1994 national agreement in the financial sector allows unpaid leave for family, personal or educational reasons of up to one year and unpaid leave to care for children with grave illness.*

### *Netherlands*

*An agreement in the Dutch medical insurance sector provides for the employer to invest 0.4 per cent of the wage bill in childcare provision. This is in the context of the government subsidising childcare places together with places financed by employers.*

### *Spain*

*In the railway sector in Spain, the 1995 agreement provides that the period of leave is taken into account in the worker's length of service record; workers taking leave may take part in competitions for transfers and promotion as if they were still at work. In the retail trade in Spain, the 1995 agreement gives workers taking leave of absence the right to attend training courses, to facilitate their return to work. Absence for childcare counts in the length of service records.*

### *Sweden*

*An agreement in the Swedish insurance sector provides that the employee's salary is to be reviewed after a return to work following full-time parental leave. This was introduced in 1995 after it was noticed that the salaries of returners tended to lag behind those of fellow employees.*

### *Austria*

*An equal opportunities plan in a federal ministry in Austria challenges organisational norms as regards the balance between professional and family work, emphasising men's responsibilities for family work. It also questioned existing working time cultures. The measures providing for reconciliation of work and family life include meetings in core time so part-timers and child carers can attend; work scheduled so as to be completed in normal hours; if overtime is required account is to be taken of childcare responsibilities; encouraging part time work; part-timers' entitlement to training, and encouraging the acceptability of parental leave for men.*

### *France*

*An agreement in the petroleum products sector in France provides six different formulae for part-time work linked to the school timetable.*

### *Italy*

*A 1994 agreement signed by the municipal authorities of Milan, the prefect's office, the Chamber of Trade and provincial trade unions, tackles the relationship between working time and free time and models the social organisation of time. Working times are now used as an*

*indicator to ascertain the quality of life of male and female workers and their families. These changes are affecting people whose needs are not only different but may be contradictory. It is up to negotiators to identify ways of directing negotiations towards an equitable outcome, with account being taken of the fact that working time no longer concerns only the specific area of production processes but also other areas.*

### *Portugal*

*An agreement in Portugal for the Post Office entitles employees with children under the age of 12 years, and those who are responsible for disabled family members to work part time. In the banking sector, employees are entitled to part time work to care for children under 12 years old. The 1996 agreement in the paper and cardboard industry entitles fathers and mothers with one or more children under 12 years of age to work on a reduced or flexible timetable.*

## **1.2 Importance and opportunities of collective bargaining and collective agreements**

The role of social partners and collective bargaining as a complementary instrument to legal regulation in facilitating reconciliation of work and family life and implementation of equal opportunities is stressed in respective European and national instruments. Collective bargaining and collective agreements provide a way of giving women and men a voice in the shaping of their own working conditions, enabling them to define their own needs, interests, and priorities.

Commitments, objectives and measures should not be just standards that were set or declarations that were made. The social partners and others should secure that collective agreements include instruments for implementation of equality, monitoring, overseeing, and reviewing principles and measures.

It is important that collective bargaining aims at creation of quality jobs. Temporary workers and part-time workers should not be excluded from collective bargaining or coverage by collective agreements. Protection of dignified work and liveable wages for workers and their families, generation of quality jobs, and working conditions

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ensuring work and family life in dignity, are still a challenge (not only) for social partners and (not only) in Slovakia.

## **2. Summarization of a survey of social partners and their role at implementation of equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life**

Conducted under the EQUAL project  
‘Slovakia on the Way to Gender Equality’

Equal opportunities of women and men in the labour market or in specific companies, and the reconciliation of work and family life in Slovakia were the topics of research and analyses of fifteen valid company collective agreements and sectoral collective agreements, and semi standardised interviews with their negotiators. The interviews focussed mainly on the following issues:

How much importance (weight, priority) is given to the issues of:

- a) equal opportunities of men and women;
- b) reconciliation between work and family life in their respective collective bargaining, and how were the outcomes of their collective bargaining in these areas reflected in their collective agreements or what specific relevant provisions, measures or commitments were included in their collective agreements,
  - What is the representation of women in their teams of negotiators,
  - Since when have they been addressing the two topics, namely gender equality and reconciliation of work and family life, within their collective bargaining,
  - How, where, and when did they get the idea or motivation to address those two topics,
  - What obstacles could the collective negotiators identify when they tried to deal with equal opportunities or reconciliation of work and family life,
  - Who and what are their allies in this area and who or what hampers their endeavour,

- What institutions in our country are most involved, and help promote equal opportunities, mainly equal social status of women, and equal opportunities in the labour market and at work,
- What specific measures regarding reconciliation of work and family life are, in the negotiators' opinion, the most desirable and the most effective in general (nation-wide), and in their respective companies,
- What specific activities and measures regarding equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life are implemented in their company (are included in their collective agreement), and
- Which of those would they identify as noteworthy (examples of the "good practice" regarding the two studied issues under our conditions),

We also asked the negotiators about their opinion of the following:

- If women and men are equal in Slovakia (if they have the same, smaller or better chance) when they: apply for a job, they get paid wages or bonuses for work, want to keep their jobs at the time of staff shedding, want to be promoted to a higher management post, and when they want to be enrolled in secondary school or university,
- When the respondent claimed practical unequal opportunities of men and women in any of those situations, we wanted to know how s/he could assess the fact.

A questionnaire survey into public opinion was conducted by another research team under this project, whereby we can compare certain negotiators' opinions with the opinion of the "public" and in that way (which sociologically or statistically is not quite correct) to assess to a certain degree, and indirectly, the opinions of those who the social partners - collective negotiators should or could represent at the bargaining table.

## **2.1 Equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life in the opinions and positions of social partners – collective negotiators in SR: selected findings**

A major finding regarding equal opportunities of men and women in collective bargaining in Slovakia is that collective bargaining (as claimed by the surveyed collective negotiators and in the light of analyses of collective agreements) almost always (knowingly or not) is gender neutral. The finding can be attested by spontaneous responses by negotiators such as: "... at the bargaining table we negotiate over an employee rather than a man or a woman"; "...we always refer to a worker"; "...we do not specify whether we refer to a male or a female worker at the bargaining table"; "... we do not specifically refer to a man or to a woman...".

The grounds or reasoning vary. The most frequent (almost all) statements made by the negotiators were: "There is article 13 of the Labour Code. We understand the principle of non-discrimination ... all are equal. Equality at work as well." "...We honour the non-discrimination law...". Frequently their deliberations went along the following pattern: "...Equal position – equal pay, equal demands ... when people are hired in our company, whether the worker is a woman or a man, that is not an issue." Another kind of reasoning is about priorities, typically: "Wages are the crucial issue of collective bargaining. So that issue – I really hate to put it that way – is a secondary issue. For the time being." Over half of the interviewed negotiators admitted – in a way – their experience of: "no pressure or demand from employees on unions to tackle that issue." There also was a (self)critical opinion explaining: "Up until now we have not dealt with the issue very much at collective bargaining because the (union) presidents have been more-or-less trying to avoid that topic."

Most negotiators also spontaneously stressed that they have not had or "have not recorded any problem in that respect." A negotiator and expert of a union expressed the most explicit opinion, namely: "In my long experience I exceptionally came across a situation when a woman teacher or scientist claimed she was discriminated against. Investigation into the case proved no discrimination. I have to admit, though, that it is very difficult to prove. Yet, the number of cases has

been very low, and one could hardly perceive it as a social problem. It would have to occur on a much larger scale. Of course, we consider those issues in collective bargaining by consistently respecting the anti-discrimination law and relevant provisions of the Labour Code that prohibit discrimination.”

There were a number of collective negotiators who admitted the so-called positive discrimination of women under collective agreements: “Collective bargaining – as a rule – makes no difference between a man or a woman, the bargaining is for workers. But – to put it this way – in reality most of the time we want to give a little advantage to the woman - mother .” Or: “Women – how to put it – enjoy specific advantages on grounds of being mothers. But we also seek to ensure that those advantages can be enjoyed also by single fathers with children.” We could conclude from the quoted statements that not all negotiators have yet sufficiently understood the specific and autonomous nature of the issues of equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life.

When it comes to equal opportunities, most negotiators, mainly at company level, meant: “... we have not seen that as a priority” and/or: “...so far the intermediate way...”

The situation is more varied at the level of branch trade unions, namely the opinions of negotiators of the sectoral collective agreements exhibited variety. There were sectoral negotiators who did not consider equal opportunities for men and women an urgent priority, since: “... we do not tackle that issue because there is nothing to tackle, no problem...”. Other branch unions – as confirmed by other findings under this research – held: “...We try to draw these issues to the fore, raise awareness at bargaining, and incorporate these issues in the sectoral collective agreements. We have been doing this at all levels, including at the international level. We are members of Public Services International and its European branch, the European PSI. We want to address these issues also within these international trade union organizations, including in the European context ... we do not want to lag behind other European countries in this respect. If we compare the legislation in our and the other countries, we think that these issues are well, sufficiently covered.”

The collective negotiators actually share the same opinion on relevant legislation concerning equal opportunities for men and women (including equal opportunities in the labour market) in Slovakia, believing that the relevant provisions are sufficient and "European standard". There are differences between individual negotiators, though. Some of them perceive the legislation as a platform for their action, and others use it as a justification for their non-action.

The experience as well as opinions of negotiators on *when have the social partners in SR started addressing the issue of equal opportunities of men and women varies a lot*. There are opinions such as: "This topic has been present for a long time. It is not just a matter of the recent years, as it may appear to someone. As far back as in 1971 the ministry issued a decree warning against violation of women's rights to higher posts..." or: "Things started moving along with Slovakia's getting ready for EU membership. It was then that we started considering that issue within our KOZ SR Committee..."; or: "... our accession to EU brought about a more intensive consideration of that issue as all draft legislation went through the Equal Opportunities Committee..." or admitting: "We have not really started tackling that issue in practice." A group of negotiators claimed: "We started paying more attention to those issues after the adoption of anti-discrimination law", or: "Unions have always addressed those topics", or: "We have been aware of and addressing those topics for about 4 – 8 years", or (perhaps a more unusual view): "This topic, namely equality of men and women, has not been an issue."

When it comes to *reconciliation of work and family life*, vast majority of negotiators agreed that unions (as well as employers and the government) have been generally involved in that area. At company level the involvement goes back to pre-transformation times: "That topic has always been on the agenda of trade unions. I personally have been involved in that area since I took up this office in 1994. I was with the pre-transition trade unions (called Revolutionary Unions), and the topic of work and family was given much attention. I can remember that, since my first job. That time, let us say the housing policy was an integral component intended to support and stabilize families. There used to be all sorts of Revolutionary Union benefits for

young families... You know, there were many things that were not right in the old system but I think that there were many good things in this specific area."

Still, it seems that this "traditional" area of trade union activities undergoes changes along with transformation and integration. The content, scope, institutions and terminology alike have been subjected to change. The following statement is related to terminology and, subsequently, to institutions: "There always used to be a Women's Commission with the KOZ SR. As a matter of fact, we realized that that kind of body is not called a women's commission any more in international structures; the relevant bodies are now called Equal Opportunities Committees. That again is owing to EU accession."

The research findings confirm that the area of reconciliation between the work and family life is more deeply rooted and prioritised by negotiators in the company level bargaining process, and it also is reflected in collective agreements. Most negotiators claimed: "That has been the role and mission of trade unions ever since.", and explained further: "The bargaining is over the use of the social fund. That in essence is one of the original roles of unions." The former quotation expresses another essential feature of provisions and commitments related to reconciliation of work and family life in most analysed company collective agreements. Indeed, the commitments are about the generation and use of the company social fund. Most of the agreements provided more holidays, more grounds for absence from work, recreation, cultural, and sport activities for workers and their families. None of the analysed company agreements exhibited a comprehensive reflection of an "instructed" statement by a negotiator-expert of a branch trade union regarding specifically the reintegration to the labour market, namely: "Reconciliation of work and family life is important, a priority to us. In practical terms we help women to reintegrate into the labour market after a period of absence during their maternity leave. We seek to keep the woman informed, in touch ... while she is on her maternity leave. How that is done in day-to-day life is up to the respective company. We seek to raise awareness, disseminate the idea to all who then negotiate and implement it in their respective enterprises. We organize meetings for negotiators, confer-

ences and trainings for people from companies, so that they come up with ways to reintegrate women, keep them updated, in touch and aware of new developments as things develop and advance, so that they can keep pace ... That is very important. That is why we make announcements, for example we encourage women on maternity leave to demand activities from their employer. If their employer does not offer things, they should take initiative, exert pressure on their employer, and inquire. We encourage women to be interested, to exert pressure, to push and seek to have those things included in collective agreements." Our research showed, however, that there is a gap, in fact an abyss, between "raising awareness" and implementation of specific and real measures at company level. It obviously is unrealistic to expect women to bridge that gap all alone, especially women on maternity leave who act individually, to separately target their demands at their employers. It is more realistic, and more justified – bearing in mind the relationship between unions and their members – to expect the social partners at company level to include this agenda in collective bargaining, and to seek optimum ways of its implementation in the bargaining process, particularly through incorporation of relevant specific measures and activities in their collective agreements.

The topic of reconciliation of work and family life really is the crucial topic at the level of a specific undertaking or company – all interviewed negotiators and experts agreed on that. Vast majority of them also believed that the topic ranks among key topics of collective bargaining and is related mainly to the use of the social fund. The equal opportunities topic was perceived as a topic of "intermediate significance" that is marginalised in their day-to-day work (and their powers at collective bargaining). Let us quote a very typical comment made by a company negotiator: "It seems to me that we address equality more in terms of family or harmonization of family and work life."

*Women's representation in teams of negotiators.* It is in line with women's representation in management posts in Slovakia in general, namely: the higher the post, the fewer women. The negotiators also are aware of the fact: "One could say that more men than women are involved in collective bargaining. Women – as a matter of fact – are

reluctant to take up those union positions. I do not know why, they do not want to engage in bargaining. Yet, negotiators, although being mostly men, push through the interests of women. They have to. One could say, they defend both men and women." Most negotiators (women and men, irrespectively) explained the situation more-or-less the same way: "We try to have women represented equally in the negotiating committee; we want gender balanced teams of negotiators. But what happens is that women do not wish to get involved on a larger scale. There are women, of course, who are willing, and come and join us at the bargaining table, but they are – how to put it – so humble or what. They do not hurry to join the bargaining teams."

*When, where and what inspired unions to address those topics in collective bargaining?*

When it comes to equal opportunities, most negotiators believe that the initiative came mainly from "inside the union", although many admitted that the "inspiration" came from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SR or the EU.

Almost all company negotiators attributed an important role in this respect to higher tier union bodies, specifically relevant committees with the Trade Union Confederation of SR: "KOZ SR was the driver. They started with a number of conferences on this topic. Those conferences go on, I participate in them owing to my office as a negotiator." ..."KOZ SR came with the initiative, namely setting up committees..."

There were a number of negotiators who perceived the process as a joint effort, overlapping and complementary activities from the grass-roots up, and top-down in terms of membership and union leaders: "That was interrelated. KOZ SR was pushing, and there was initiative from inside, demands from workers." ..."From individual branch unions and from KOZ SR. There was a joint endeavour."

Majority of negotiators believed that unions are an institution that helps promote equality of women in the society and at work, yet there were negotiators stressing the need of collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders and the society in general: "I think involving unions alone in this area is not enough. All should tackle those issues togeth-

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er. Of course, those issues are our and will be one of our (trade union) priorities but I would certainly welcome if the entire society were more interested in addressing this issue."

The responses of negotiators let us conclude that social partners, unions in particular, do not give up their responsibility for implementation of equal opportunities. To the contrary, they believe it is their mission and role especially at their workplaces, but not only there. At the same time they do not perceive equal opportunities just as a matter of equality of men and women. An example of a typical opinion: "Unions sure could and should help. They do help at safeguarding the ban against any kind of discrimination. It is their role; they rank among those who defend worker interests. Non-discrimination provisions can also be found in introductory clauses of collective agreements – they are literally copied from the SR Constitution." ... "Absolutely. Because unions actually are the only institution defending workers in the industrial relations, defending their members, both men and women." ... "It is their mission." ... "Unions can push, and advance equal rights, equal opportunities – they should do that, and we really do it. Why? There is nothing to discuss." ... "Sure, that is an inherent role of unions. I think that unions should care mainly about fair remuneration, that means equal pay for men and women. You know, if something is not all right, it is hard to find out from outside, but unions should certainly notice things like that."

Union negotiators nevertheless realize the shortcomings and problems in this area, and they also admit insufficient (bargaining and organizing) power. A typical opinion is: "Our people, that is our company management claim that they favour equality, that there is no discrimination over here. But I say, giving women Sk 200.- worth vouchers and want them to be happy with that, is not enough. We, the unions do our best to make things better. The problem is that our membership has been decreasing. And in the company? The same situation, only large scale counts." ... "We try but we are not sure if we are successful." An opinion that may make a pessimistic impression, but it reflects the current and relatively long individual experience. The opinion of a union negotiator: "That is one of the primary roles of trade union organizations. Neither maybe women nor unions neither quite realize this. And that is a mistake."

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*What obstacles can unions encounter when advancing equal opportunities for men and women?*

Major obstacles that the negotiators identified are stereotypes in their broadest sense: "Stereotypes that survive in our minds, we were taught since our childhood what is pertinent and good for a woman, and what for a man..." .."In general, in the Slovak community – certain tradition, stereotypes are the obstacles." .."Stereotypes hamper advancement. The discussion started, that helps, and now employers started advancing equality."

An interesting finding has to be underlined in this respect, namely vast majority of negotiators – men or women alike – refused (to admit) the fact of discrimination against women at their workplaces or in their undertakings. Let us quote two typical comments: "I know that there are women complaining about pay. I have not come across anything like that in our company. We apply pay scales, and women have so far not complained about earning less or so.." .."That may be an issue for licensed traders or private businesses where stereotypes may still persist, since high posts here do not depend on education." That kind of position was expressed by a vast majority of collective negotiators in different contexts and relations, but mainly in relation to (non) discrimination of women regarding their pay. This issue deserves a closer examination in the future. The problem is that the above positions given by negotiators are in conflict with findings of relevant public opinion polls and the outcomes from the questionnaire survey conducted under this project.

*Who do negotiators see as their allies in the area of equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life, and who (what) hampers their effort?*

The most common and typical comment of union bargainers: "Union members and advisory bodies, and the employer, are our allies regarding the two issues." A number of them added (which is a paradox): "At times the workers who are not willing to collaborate with us, hamper the effort. As if they were scared sometimes. As if they wanted to hide from me when I appear at their workplace. They should respond differently. And I keep encouraging them, via our company bulletin, leaflets, to be more active, to let us know what issues or

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problems are their priorities, what has to be urgently tackled – covered in our collective bargaining. Bargaining should not be only about things I deem important. I am afraid – the problem is, they are afraid of losing their jobs. One can clearly see that when it comes to pay. They do not know how to assert their pay demands; they choose not to ask their superior why their wage was increased only by so much or so little. And then there are people who expect me to resolve all pay-related issues, all personnel issues, and all problems. As if they were mistaking my office with the office of an ombudsman. On the other hand – I am always there for them.”

Several negotiators appreciated experts as their allies, namely for example: “Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR, gender equality division” and/or: “occupational safety and health experts, occupational inspectors help...” About half of the population of the surveyed union bargainers highly appreciated NGOs, namely: “civic associations focussing on this topic.” A negotiator added in regard to NGOs: “The question is whether the promotion, collaboration is coordinated. I get the impression that each civic association has specific activities seeking to dominate and enjoy a status, and sometimes there is no coordination. Coordination and better collaboration, I believe, would help.”

It was already mentioned above that most union negotiators perceived employers as their allies in their attempts to bring equality to day-to-day reality. Employers hamper their effort - negotiators claimed – when they do not recognize unions as their social partner: “Mostly when they refuse to engage in collective bargaining or they do not want to agree to anything reasoning that they must save resources.”

Obstacles or hampering factors to union negotiators dealing with equal opportunities and reconciliation between work and family life are – as said above – also: “Certain workers. They tend to rely: ‘you are there, you get paid, you should negotiate an agreement.’ it is hard to win something more, an addition, unless there is the weight and support from members.”

Our research yielded another interesting finding concerning the (non)implementation of equal opportunities for men and women in day-to-day life, something reflecting the experience of certain nego-

tiators who put it in the following words: "We can see that most employers are men ... although there were situations with women employers or managers, and that was no good." Obviously a paradox, but such was the experience of respondents in other areas too. Women possessing the power to advance equal opportunities (mainly for other women), failed to do so (perhaps more than men). To the contrary, in a number of cases, as if they were less sensitive to gender equality than men.

*What institutions help to promote equal opportunities or equal social position of women?* What was the experience of collective bargainers? The respondents could choose maximum three institutions from a submitted list – the same list that was given to respondents in the questionnaire survey. The findings of the survey are: Union negotiators believe unions are the most important institution in this area, namely thirteen out of fifteen negotiators ranked trade unions (unions in general or specifically KOZ SR) among the three most important institutions acting in this area. Only 18% of respondents of the representative population sample shared that opinion. The role (maybe success) of unions in advancement of equal opportunities was assessed with more scepticism by the "general public". There was more harmony between the general public's and negotiators' opinions regarding other institutions, namely they agreed on non-governmental organizations: both general public and negotiators highly appreciate their role. Almost half of the respondents of either of the two groups ranked NGOs among the three most important institutions for advancement of equal status of women. Both groups attributed much importance to the European Commission, namely 37.1% of the general survey respondents, and as many as eight out of 15 union negotiators.

Certain differences in opinion were apparent, namely: the negotiators, as opposed to the general public, had a more favourable opinion of the role of the National Council of SR and the government (stressing mainly the relevant legislation area), whereas unions perceived the role of the church more negatively than the general public.

Over one fifth of the questionnaire respondents claimed they could not say, whereas all negotiators had an opinion of each of those institutions' role in the relevant area, and spontaneously justified and explained their positions.

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Three most important institutions according to the "public": 1. NGOs (45.1%), 2. The European Commission (37.1%), 3. Unions (17.9%).

Three most important institutions ranked by union negotiators: 1. Unions (13 out of 15 negotiators), 2. The European Commission (8 out of 15), 3. NGOs (7 out of 15).

*What specific measures regarding work and family could help improve the life of women in our society?*

The collective negotiators could choose again just three measures from an offered list which was the same list used with respondents in the questionnaire survey. That way we could compare responses of the two groups of respondents.

Three most important/desirable measures selected by respondents from the "public" were:

1. Create a women-friendly working system and working conditions (flexible working hours, part-time jobs, ...) that would permit women to better reconcile their work and family life (selected by 61.4% of respondents);
2. Increase the state financial benefits to support families (higher tax relief, parental benefits, family allowances, ...) (selected by 54.3% of respondents);
3. Increase pay of women for their work, up to pay of men (selected by 54.3 % of respondents).

Three most important/desirable measures selected by the negotiators were:

1. Create a women-friendly working system and working conditions (flexible working hours, part-time jobs,...) that would permit women to better reconcile their work and family life (selected by 10 out of 15 negotiators);
- 2 - 3) Increase the state financial benefits to support families (higher tax relief, parental benefits, family allowances ...), (selected by 8 out of 15 negotiators);
- 2 - 3) Offer more and available services (childcare, senior care, etc.) (selected by 8 out of 15 negotiators).

The “public” and negotiators had very similar opinions of that issue. That fact is asserted by further comparisons, namely: the measure “Increasing pay of women for their work up to the pay of men” was ranked third by the “public” and 4th by the negotiators (chosen by 6 out of 15 negotiators). When it comes to pay gap, it seems that negotiators perceive that issue as a less urgent one than the “public”, maybe owing to the belief of the negotiators (they frequently expressed that belief) that there is no pay discrimination against women in their company or “has not been observed or proved”.

The priority issue demanded by the “public” in this area, namely women-friendly working system or working conditions (flexible working time, part-time jobs, etc.) to permit them to better reconcile their work and family responsibilities, actually rank among priorities and key issues of collective bargaining between social partners at company level. The analysis of collective agreements eventually proved that each of them – one way or another – included relevant measures and commitments.

The social partners, just like the “public,” expect and demand activity or intervention such as better financial support for families from the state, namely over half of either group of respondents expressed that kind of expectation.

Opinions differed most between the “public” and negotiators when it comes to more and available services for families. The “public” underestimated that measure if compared with the negotiators (measure was selected by just 26% of respondents as opposed to a half of the negotiators group).

There were negotiators who suggested “other” measures, in addition to the listed ones. For example: “There should be a guaranteed return to the original job for a worker who was on her maternity leave, in other words, the employer should permit the worker to participate in the working process from time to time (she should have the opportunity to join the working process in a certain way and update her knowledge and keep pace with developments), provide for up-to-date information about the working process, changes in her area (field of work) while she is on her maternity leave, and keep her informed in her field and job, so that she does not lose her qualifications.

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The following opinion illustrates a common idea of many negotiators, and it is about how women should be more active and contribute to improvement of their position: "Women should struggle more. They should try harder, be more assertive. And they should not be scared of being women. To the contrary. They should use their charm, and their entire self."

Typical comments of negotiators in relation to proposed measures: "One could discuss each one of them. But how I see things, well, I have never identified pay discrimination against women just because they are women. That's why I am so surprised to hear people talking so much about it; here it also is in the fore. I have not come across something like that. And I do not know how could something like that work in a company in Slovakia – that nonsense – like: you are a woman and that is why you get paid a couple thousand crown less. When somebody has a job, s/he knows what her /his wage is. No matter whether a man or a woman. My priority would be creating suitable working system and conditions. I think we need more working systems, jobs that both women and men could choose from, and then it will be easier for them to make decisions on how to reconcile family, children and work responsibilities. We want to be a welfare state, so all three are very important. Family promotion on the part of the state – that is very important."

The prevalent comments or statements of negotiators as regards the measure of increasing women's pay to the level of men's pay: "That should be self-evident." Or: "This has existed here ... as far as I know, pay in our company depends on your post rather than on your gender."

*What specific measures could help improve the life of women in their companies?*

Negotiators believed: "Hazardous work should be adapted, eliminated so that women also could work in certain laboratories, etc. I think, women in general should collect more courage, be more assertive – just like men. Then we would have more women holding management posts. There are women in our company who did it. There are women at management posts, we have a commercial manageress. I do not mean to say that that is enough. Perhaps women

were not brought up to hold and to wish to hold senior management posts."

"We are a typical male industry. There are relatively few women; some are employed in offices, others in factories. Some of their jobs are tough; we still have factories where women work hard. It is equally bad for women and for men. What can they do if they want a job? There should be new technologies, and that would help both women and men." "Awareness above all should be improved in our sector – awareness, information, more discussion on these topics."

"I do not know, I have not heard of equality violation. I admit, I may not know about absolutely everything. I cannot say that there is nothing to improve, though. I know that in our company there are both men and women in top and medium management posts." "There is no need to change anything in that respect in our company."

There were (four) negotiators who spontaneously mentioned the issue of remuneration, low pay for women, when they were trying to think what specifically would improve the situation of women in their company. That issue appears to be perceived as a matter of low price of particular labour (work done by women or mainly by women) rather than unequal pay for men and women. Relevant comments: "Mainly the financial situation. Pay for women in the manufacturing sector should go up, it is rather low." Or: "Remuneration. Certainly. Pay, because those women are not sufficiently remunerated, well paid." The following statement/opinion of a negotiator hints at the existence of discriminatory practices, including pay gap between men and women: "Individual wages should not become a common practice, or the flexible wage component should not dominate over wage scales as wage scales give no room for discrimination."

*Opinion of negotiators (the public) of whether women and men in Slovakia enjoy equal chances*

Both the negotiators and respondents in the questionnaire survey thought that the largest equal opportunities between men and women in Slovakia is when they want to get enrolled in secondary schools or universities. The view that chances are equal for both men and women in that situation in Slovakia was shared by almost 80% of respondents and all surveyed negotiators.

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This, as well as all other surveyed items, indicated that negotiators made more positive assessments of equal opportunities for men and women; that means they perceive equal chances and mainly women's opportunities more optimistically than most respondents in the questionnaire survey. Once again, major disproportion was in the opinion concerning wages or pay for work, namely: only 19.8% of respondents – representatives of the "public", and as many as 9 out of 15 negotiators.

Less than one fifth of the questionnaire-surveyed respondents and as many as half of the surveyed negotiators believe that there are equal chances between men and women seeking a management post at work.

Eleven out of 15 negotiators and only 34% of the surveyed "representatives of the public" believe men and women are equal when they try to keep their job at the time of redundancies.

Both groups' opinions converged when it came to equal opportunities for men and women applying for a job – about one third of both negotiators and the "public" believe that their chances are balanced.

An interesting finding was that opinions claiming that women are preferred to men in any of the surveyed situations were very rare amongst the negotiators and the surveyed "public". There were multiple opinions claiming that men are preferred to women – or to put it in a different way – men have better chances to succeed in all surveyed situations (important situations and challenges in the labour market or milestones in workers' careers) than women. The conclusion thus is clear, namely: inequality and unequal opportunities for men and women in the labour market in SR are a reality – at least that is what was expressed in opinions and positions of most survey respondents.

The negotiators, if compared with the "public" exhibited softer assessment of the phenomenon and the degree of inequality between men and women in the labour market –in other words: gender-based inequalities do not exist in the labour market (and specifically in their companies) or if they do exist, they are not as prominent as they appeared in the opinions of the "public". The negotiators, however,

are much tougher in comparison with the "public, when it comes to (in) toleration of the situation. All negotiators stated that if inequality really existed, that is if there was inequality or men were given preference that would not be right, and things would have to change. A typical statement: "If at work – or anywhere else – men are preferred – I certainly do not like it, and things have to change." ... "If that is a carryover from no matter when, or tradition, it is not all right, and it has to change." Most negotiators very spontaneously responded in reference to that issue, and came up with suggestions ranking from "changing the way of thinking" through to very specific measures, usually relevant to their company. The "public", namely 22.5% of the respondents in the questionnaire survey (more than a fifth of the "public") expressed their resignation and giving up to the situation, namely: "I do not like it, but it has been that way ever since, that cannot be changed". Another 6.4% of the "public" even thought "it is all right that way, that is natural, justified, and there is no need to change things."

*Activities concerning equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life* conducted by the surveyed social partners – collective bargainers mainly at company level? What would they want to specifically underline in this area of their activity? We also wanted to know about activities and measures not included (or not explicitly mentioned) in the agreements.

We compared the statements of negotiators, below, with relevant provisions of their collective agreements. If we take the content and substance rather than wording variations of the negotiators' statements, we can see that they truly reflect the relevant provisions and commitments (clauses) of the agreements.

## **2.2 Equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life in collective agreements of SR and in the opinion of their negotiators: selected findings**

The following statements made by negotiators or provisions in collective agreements, with a certain degree of simplification, can be considered examples of "good practice" especially in relation to implementation of the principle and the practice of reconciliation of work and family life in Slovakia:

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“When it comes to reconciliation of work and family life, the company gives single parents the opportunity to ask for flexible working time, so that they can come to work and leave within a flexible three hours’ span. This has been possible since the start of the company. There are summer camps for workers’ children, day-trips for workers and their families, cultural events, recreation and holiday stays in the country and abroad for workers and their families – the company uses the services of a travel agency, and employees get contributions from the social fund, union members also get contributions from the union. This summer there were considerations of providing (operating) a day care for workers’ children for at least one month, while day care centres are closed. Only four parents – employees expressed their interest – that was not enough. There have to be minimum 20 children. We do not pay much attention to that issue within our collective bargaining. It all depends on how rich is our social fund that is used to cover those kinds of activities.”

“Well, married couples are employed here. To help them manage, their working times are agreed upon, holidays are harmonized in order to accommodate the needs of families with children. The collective agreement does not address these things specifically; arrangements have to be made on an individual basis. The collective agreement provides additional leave for parents with children, especially for single parents. There also is an additional five days of holiday that go beyond the holiday under the Labour Code. Parents accompanying their children to a doctor or their first graders to school on the first school day can enjoy paid leave. In addition to that we secure rehabilitation, recovery stays, and cultural events for employees and their families. Money from the social fund is contributed for those purposes. The fund is replenished with statutory contributions.”

“We go beyond the Labour Code in this respect, and offer an additional day of paid leave in a year to an employee who is a single parent with a child younger than 15 years of age, and an extra day (on top of what is granted under the Labour Code) of paid leave for a worker’s own wedding, and an extra day of paid leave in the event of death of an employee’s family member.”

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“When it comes to work and family life, our company also generates the social fund that is then used to reimburse family recreation costs, trips, family members can get contributions, vouchers are distributed at the end of the year. Things can be done. But you have to engage in collective bargaining. Most employers adopt an accommodating approach to these kinds of company-family activities. Arrangements can be made in this respect.”

“We do not have flexible working time but we organize recreation and recovery stays, recreation and trips for employees and their families. The employer covers 60% of the price of the vouchers for employees and their family members, for children including students. The costs are covered from the social fund that is replenished with statutory contributions and a share in the cooperative’s profit. The social fund also is used to provide loans and grants for workers in difficult situations such as a death in the family. We still give presents to women on the International Women’s Day, for Christmas, we organize sports. We organize local recreation in the Tatry Mountains through Sorea agency. We have our own recreation facilities funded and maintained by the employer at Donovaly and Santovka. Employees and their families only pay a daily rate of Sk 60 or 45, and their admission to pools is reimbursed. We buy seasonal theatre tickets and tickets to cultural events. There is a wellness centre (sauna, massage) in the premises of the company.”

“Women (and also men) with children could apply for reduced working hours, and come to work later. Now we have flexible working time that is welcome by many workers, and they do not have to apply for reduced working hours any more, and that way their wages are not reduced either. I think these arrangements are good. We have had this system since 1994, when the former union drew this system through.”

“Single parents with children younger than 15 can take one day of paid leave every three months under our collective agreements. They used to have a paid leave day every month in the past but other workers objected to their advantage. I was very surprised when mostly women minded that kind of additional leave.”

“Our collective agreements used to have arrangements about summer camps and family recreation. We do not have that now. Our

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collective agreement has a clause concerning the employer's support via the social fund for stays of workers in the company recreation facility. The employees and their families pay only 20% of the stay; the rest is covered from the social fund. Employees are entitled to one subsidized stay per year. Other spare time activities (such as stays in the union owned facility near the Dobšiná ice cave) are organized and heavily subsidized by unions for their members and their families, since those services are covered with membership dues money. We used to provide those services to non-members as well. We reimburse costs of children's camps to our members. In the past we (the unions) used to organize summer camps for children but later there were not enough children to rent a bus. Every year we organize day-return trips (Bojnice, Gabčíkovo, Štúrovo), organize athletic afternoons for children, theatre visits, cultural events, and the like."

"What is nice about our collective agreement – for example we have additional (beyond the Labour Code) three days of paid leave for parents with children younger than 15. Women workers get an additional day of paid leave on the occasion of the International Women's Day. Three additional days of leave are granted to workers who had a death in the family – that leave is granted to both men and women."

"Our collective agreement has favourable clauses, and there is the social fund, and labour rehabilitation. It was agreed that each employee gets a Sk 1 500 contribution from the social fund for recovery every year. The good thing for women and families is the flexible working time. We have had that for a long time. There are trips, recreation, cultural events (organized by unions) for workers and their families that are subsidized from the social fund. The unionized workers are also subsidized by unions."

"Our activities are mainly for families. Single employees with children younger than 15 are entitled to an additional day of paid leave every three months. The unions and the employer organize trips for employees and their families. The fee is just a token amount (Sk 50 per person for a day trip that includes transport and admission fee). There also is a benefit for sports, rehabilitation, massage, swimming pool visits, etc. There are the so-called gift checks. Those activities are covered with the social fund that is generated from statutory contri-

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butions and a share in profit transferred by the employer into the social fund.”

“For example, we have flexible working time – but you can see that everywhere now, we have benefits and compensations such as leave to take care of family, recreation, cultural events, sports for workers and their families – but those are traditional benefits.”

“Our collective agreement secures additional time off work for single parents (men or women). Cultural events, sports, trips for workers and their families are always – at least partially – covered with the social fund. As regards the social fund, we want our collective agreement to specify who in addition to employees can draw from the fund. The social fund is a company fund, in principle and under the law it is earmarked for the employees. We exert pressure and seek to extend the group of persons eligible for benefits from the social fund in order to grant spouses and dependent children the opportunity to enjoy benefits from the social fund. That is our contribution.”

Examples of “good practice” in implementation of the principle and equal opportunities practice are rather rare in the valid collective agreements in Slovakia (at least those that were analysed). We also said that was mainly owing to the fact that the social partners, including collective negotiators try to “keep the agreements non-discriminatory”. A number of collective agreements attest to that endeavour – they include clauses prohibiting discrimination, quote relevant provisions from the Anti-discrimination law or refer to it.

A typical opinion: “The important things in our collective agreement in this area are the provisions concerning the principles for setting the flexible component of wages. We try to bring more balance in remuneration, and that is why there is a clause prohibiting discrimination between men and women in our collective agreement.”

Most collective bargainers seem to be aware of the legal irrelevance of explicitly spelling out such provisions in the collective agreement – nevertheless – several of them would like to see them there. There are negotiators with apparent expectations that provisions such as the ones referred to above in a collective agreement would mean more than “just” a moral commitment or display of joint will of social partners in this area, namely: “We tried to get a ban on discrimination

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in our collective agreement but the employer refused claiming that something like that was never done. The employer maintained that there had never been and there would not be any discrimination. Still, they refuse to put it down on paper. They refuse to sign their names. That is plain avoidance.”

The following quotation attests to the fact that the equal opportunities principle is not just an idea or words but is purposefully implemented by social partners in SR in day-to-day life: “We have regional council of the Confederation. The system is that the president is a man and the vice-president is a woman. We managed to include in our system a rule under which there must be a woman in at least one of the two offices, president or vice-president.”

## **Conclusion**

Collective bargaining in Slovakia is mostly (almost always in the surveyed collective agreements) gender-neutral and that can be seen in the analysed collective agreements.

Reconciliation of work and family life is a more complex issue of collective bargaining. The issue is a priority to collective negotiators and their attitude is reflected in collective agreements. Reconciliation of work and family life ranks among key topics of collective bargaining and it is related primarily to use of the social fund. Social partners (unions) in Slovakia have many years’ experience with the implementation of the idea and practical aspects of reconciliation of work and family life, and their activities in this area are a European standard.

The equal opportunities topic is mostly reflected as a marginalized issue in the activities of collective negotiators. Social partners, especially trade unionists, however, do not give up their responsibility for implementation of the equal opportunities principle in the day-to-day life. To the contrary, they believe it is their mission and role – mainly at the workplace, and elsewhere too. The negotiators perceive equal opportunities in the broader sense, not “just” as equality of men and women. They also are aware of the need of coordinated action by all relevant agents in this area – including or mainly the NGOs.

The collective negotiators' opinions do not differ when it comes to the relevant legislation concerning equal opportunities for men and women (including equal opportunities in the labour market) that is currently valid in SR, and all of them believe it is sufficient and a "European standard". There were differences between the negotiators and their perception of legislation: for some it is a platform for action, whereas for others it is a ground to refrain from action.

There is a finding that deserves further examination, namely the vast majority of negotiators – both women and men – refused to admit the fact of discrimination against women at their workplaces, their specific companies, including pay-related (non)discrimination of women. The problem is that this belief of the negotiators is in conflict with findings from relevant public opinion polls including the questionnaire survey conducted under this project.

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## Acknowledgements instead of Epilogue

The European Roma Employment Agency Civic Association (ERPA) was established in the year 2004. The main task and mission of the Agency was and still is to help the long unemployed persons and persons with low qualification with their re/integration into the labour market and with the subsequent integration into the society.

At the beginning, we perceived inequalities in the situation of the Romanies in the society, and on the Slovak labour market in particular. However, our cognition of inequalities spilt over further spheres of Slovak society and we got to be concerned with the position of other disadvantaged groups on the labour market as well. This brought us to co-operation with the Institute of Sociology, Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava..

Together with colleagues from the Institute of Sociology, we started our joint "Slovakia on the Way to Gender Equality" Project (No: 81/04-1/33/4.1) within the PD IS EQUAL, measure 4.1: Gender studies, gender audit, gender awareness as the means for labour market equality between men and women, in March 2005.

The beginning of the project was stigmatized mainly by lack of financial means and no experience with Community Initiative EQUAL. We managed to overcome these obstacles above all by the help of project development partners and enthusiasm and tolerance of all my collaborators and colleagues. I believe that this publication is concrete proof that we managed to complete the objectives of the project.

I would like to express my thanks to all who contributed to successful work flow on the project: colleagues from the Institute of Sociology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, colleagues from the TIMUR&partners, Ltd., colleagues from the ERPA c.a., all providers, collaborators, contributors, colleagues from the field research, and last but not least our transnational partners from the Italian Pandora development partnership (IT-IT-G2-ABR-064) and from the Spanish Definir Miranda development partnership (ES-ES-20040498). They all deserve word of thanks and appreciation for their share of work on the project.

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I believe that our project and its concrete outputs will contribute to improvement of gender situation in Slovakia and in the European Union. They could provide basis and inspiration for further projects and activities. There is much to be done in this field namely.

Marcel Schwarz  
Project Leader

Bratislava, December 2006

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## **ANNEX:**

### **Overview of the EC and the SR legislation regarding gender equality**

Monika Čambáliková, jr.

Principle of equal treatment between men and women (or principle of gender equality) is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union. Original and rather isolated provision set out in the primary legislation of the European Communities, namely in the Treaty of Rome, on equal pay for men and women has - through its further reinforcement and development of primary as well as secondary legislation of the European Communities - become one of the integral principles of the European Union's social policy.<sup>1</sup>

#### **1. Gender equality in the primary legislation of the EC**

Article 2 of the EC Treaty recognises principle of the equal treatment between men and women as a fundamental principle, primary goal and one of the main tasks of the European Community ("EC"). Article 3 (2) of The EC Treaty goes even further and binds European Communities to observe principle of equal treatment between men and

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<sup>1</sup> In connection with the legislation there is always the European Community mentioned and in connection with policies, principles, rules etc. there is always the European Union mentioned. The reason is that only the European Community (or European Communities, while there is discrepancy in use of the EC or the ECs also in the original documents of the EU/EC) has legal capacity, or better power/authorisation to adopt legislation. This its power/authorisation is based upon treaties establishing its predecessor organisations (EEC, ECSC, EURATOM) and upon The EC Treaty. We will be able to speak about legislation of the European Union probably only after the Constitution of the EU (as a document establishing competencies and powers of the EU directly by the Member States and changing EU from political and economical union also to legal union) shall be ratified in all of the EU Member States. In practice, the difference between concept of the European Communities and the European Union is often suppressed and common (and de facto correct) is denomination EC/EU. Sometimes we can hear about legislation of the EU, but usually legislation of the EC is meant under it.

women in all activities, policies, agendas, rules, provisions etc. of the EC as well as to use all of these activities, policies, agendas, rules, provisions etc. of the EC with aim to reach gender equality. The Amsterdam Treaty (amending The EC Treaty) further reinforced capacity and authority of the EC/EU's bodies and institutions in the sphere of promotion and reinforcement of the gender equality. Under Article 13 of The EC Treaty it authorises the Council (acting upon prior proposal of the European Commission and consultation with the European Parliament) to take all appropriate actions to combat discrimination based on sex. With a view to achieving objectives of the EC and Member States set out in Article 136 of The EC Treaty (inter alia combating all forms of exclusion), the Amsterdam Treaty bound the EC to support and complement activities and efforts of the Member States in the field of equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work in all possible ways, under Article 137 of the EC Treaty. Observing this objective, the Council should support and initiate co-operation among the Member States in exchanging of experience and information relevant for this sphere and to adopt minimum requirements applicable to this sphere by means of secondary legislation (especially directives). And finally, Article 141 of the EC Treaty is probably the most particular, due to the fact that it binds each Member State to procure application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value for men and women<sup>2</sup> as well as it obliges the Council to accept all measures that shall ensure the application of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation, including the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. Article 141 of The EC Treaty enables the Member States to adopt any other measures providing for specific advantages in order to make it easier for the under-represented sex to pursue vocational activities or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers.

<sup>2</sup> Cited Article of the EC Treaty provides for also definition of equal pay for men and women. "Pay" is defined as the ordinary basic or minimum wage or salary and any other consideration, whether in cash or in kind, which the worker receives directly or indirectly, in respect of his/her employment, from its employer. "Equal pay" means that the pay for the same work at piece rates shall be calculated on the basis of the same unit of measurement and/or that pay for work at times rates shall be the same for the same job.

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The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, signed in Nice on 7th December 2000, also recognises equality between men and women as a fundamental principle of the EU (its Article 23).

## **2. Gender equality in the secondary legislation of the EC**

Development of the gender equality principle has not been confined only to development of the primary legislation (that means of the treaties establishing EC/EU), but has been continuing also on the level of secondary legislation, especially in the EC's directives. Currently valid and effective directives have established the legal base for amendments in national legal regulatory frameworks, attitudes as well as praxis of the Member States. Case law of the European Court of Justice has further clarified and developed interpretation and extent of the principle of equal treatment.

- First adopted directive was Directive 75/117/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women, which further evolved principle of equal pay for equal work established under The Treaty of Rome and later under The EC Treaty.
- Second adopted directive was Directive 77/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions.
- Third one was Directive 79/7/EEC on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security.
- Fourth Directive adopted in 1986 under number 86/378/EEC was, similar as the previous directive, aimed at the sphere of social security and has introduced the principle of gender equality also to the schemes of social security provided by an employer.
- Fifth Directive 86/613/EEC has established the principle of gender equality also in the sphere of activities of self-employed persons, especially in the context of protection of self-employed women in the period of pregnancy and motherhood.

- Sixth Directive 92/85/EEC protecting pregnancy and motherhood, which establishes measurements to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, has - similar as the fifth directive - further developed protection of women in respect to their pregnancy and motherhood.
- Seventh Directive 96/34/EC on parental leave was the first directive adopted after the adoption of The Maastricht Treaty.

After the series of the European Court of Justice's decisions, based especially upon breaking decision in case Barber vs. Guardian Royal Exchange,<sup>3</sup> in 1996 there was adopted:

- eighth Directive 96/97/EC amending Directive 86/378/EEC.
- The ninth directive was directive, which should enhance effectiveness of the EC law in the field of gender equality, Directive 97/80/EC on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex, establishing that the burden of proof should lie on the employer, or better on the person, who is accused of discrimination, provided that the petitioner shall provide the court with sufficient evidence that the discrimination (based on sex) has really occurred. The accused person must than prove that the discrimination did not occur.
- The tenth was Directive 97/75/EC amending and extending, to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Directive 96/34/ES on parental leave; and

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<sup>3</sup> In this lawsuit, Mr Barber sued his employer - Guardian Royal Exchange due to the fact that endowments from the social security scheme of its employer were not provided to him, due to the fact that he did not reach determined pension age, which was different for men and women (it was higher for men). First of all, the court considered, whether endowments from the social security scheme of the employer are subject to definition of "pay" under Article (in those times 119, but now) 141 of The EC Treaty. The court outlined that these are part of the pay as defined under The EC Treaty and different pension age for men and women determined in the social security schemes of the employer represents the breach of The EC Treaty and that Mr Barber is entitled for the payment of pension endowments from the employer (in compliance with the principle of equal pay for equal work) under the same conditions as all other employees of the employer. This judgement binds all courts of all Member States. And the European Court of Justice rendered that it shall, since 1990, govern all similar systems of social insurance of employers.

- the eleventh Directive 98/52/EC extended application of Directive 97/80/ES to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Without any uncertainty, above enlisted directives has created strong legal framework and strong legal basis for implementation and reinforcement of the principle of gender equality. However, there is also no uncertainty that these directives require up-dating (especially in respect to evolved jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice) and better organisation with aim to make them more readable.

- The twelfth directive, Directive 2002/73/EC amending Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions, also demonstrated that legislator of the EC/EU realises need of updating and actualisation of the existing directives. Before only recent adoption of the directive, which makes EC/EU secondary legislation in the field of the gender equality more readable and systematic, there was adopted:
  - thirteenth Directive 2004/113/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to, and supply of, goods and services.<sup>4</sup>
  - Fourteenth - the most recent directive in the field of the gender equality is Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, adopted on 5th July 2006. This Directive shall, with the effectiveness since 15th August 2009, repeal currently (and till 15th August 2009) valid and effective four directives as amended and extended by three further directives.<sup>5</sup> Namely, Directive 75/117/EEC on the approximation of

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<sup>4</sup> Directive 2004/113/EC has not been transposed to Slovak law yet. Due time for its transposition into laws of the Member States is, under this Directive, till 21st December 2007 as latest. This directive is contained in the legislative plan of the Government/Cabinet of the SR, however, there is still missing closer time period of its transposition as well as determination of how, or better under which act or regulation, it shall be transposed to Slovak law.

<sup>5</sup> That means that since 15th August 2009 there shall be valid and effective one directive instead of seven directives.

the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women; Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions amended by Directive 2002/73/EC; Directive 86/378/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes amended by Directive 96/97/EC; and Directive 97/80/EC on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex amended by Directive 98/52/EC shall be repealed and replaced by Directive 2006/54/EC since 15th August 2009.

That means that since half of August 2009 there shall be valid and effective instead of current thirteen Directives (or better fourteen if counting also Directive 2006/54/EC), only seven Directives in the field of gender equality. The result of this reduction in number will, however, not cause reduction in content and contextual extent of the gender equality legal regulation; but contrary - it will result in reinforcement, considerable readability and comprehensiveness of its regulation, what will make orientation within it for a citizen of the EU easier. Directive 2006/54/EC shall regulate whole sphere of gender equality in occupation; Directive 2004/113/EC shall regulate gender equality in access to goods and services; and Directives 79/7/EEC, 86/613/EEC, 92/85/EEC and Directive 96/34/EC as amended by Directive 97/75/EC shall regulate gender equality in the sphere of social security and protection of motherhood and parenthood.

Most significant changes introduced under Directive 2006/54/EC, shall be, according to the Explanatory Memorandum issued to it, following changes: (a) definition of the equal pay shall not be, in certain<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pursuant to the decision of the European Court of Justice in case 43/75 Defrenne and/or in case C-320/00 Lawrence and others, this may be the case if employer (being either private entity or public governance authority) is - in certain way - part of the bigger unit, e.g. mother and daughter company or separate offices/authorities having one governing office/authority with one applicable budget. Or it might be also cases, when the discriminative provision is contained directly in the collective agreement of higher tier. However, if stating that the principle of equal pay was breached, the remuneration/pay provided must be - somehow - form the same "source" (and not in each case form one and the same employer), (see also case law C-256/01 Debra Allonby vs. Accrington and Rossendale College and Others)

cases (and pursuant to the case law of the European Court of Justice), restricted only to situations when men and women work for the same employer when deciding whether worker performs the same work or work of the same value as other worker, various factors, including nature of work and work conditions, will need to be taken into account; (b) clarification of application of the equal treatment principle in the pension schemes also to public servants; (c) clarification of extension of the principle of protection of pregnant women and mothers, but also fathers, coming back to job/work after maternity or parental leave, covering not just right to return to their previous job or to an equivalent job, but also application of all other same working conditions; (d) application of definitions contained in Directive 2002/73/EC to all areas covered under this (new) Directive;<sup>7</sup> (e) extension of the reversed rules on the burden of proof application in proceedings before the court also to proceedings before administrative body (save when the administrative body itself is to investigate the matter and procure all evidence); (f) extension of the caselaw on sanctions/penalties to all areas covered by directives<sup>8</sup> (g) extension of basic principles and rules set out in Directive 2002/73/EC to the whole scope of Directive 2006/54/EC application (especially principle of gender mainstreaming and provisions binding the Member States to encourage employees' representatives and employers to observe and promote principle of equal treatment in occupation).

The case law of the European Court of Justice has unsubstitutable role by interpretation of the legislation of the EC in the field of gender

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, in the current wording of Directive 97/80/EC there is statistical factor contained in the definition of indirect discrimination. However statistical factor should not be important in this respect at all and so should be drained from the definition. In respect to this, it must be mentioned, that Slovak law did not transpose this definition containing statistical factor (what was right to do) and definition of the indirect discrimination set out in Slovak law is in full compliance with the definition of indirect discrimination under Directive 2002/73/EC and so in compliance with the definition which shall be valid also in future.

<sup>8</sup> Compensation for loss as well as compensation for harm must correspond to the loss and harm suffered. That is why there should not be established/set out any limitation of it, with the exception of case if an employer would prove that the only loss/harm the person suffered was the fact that an employer did not consider his/her application for employment/job. The limit in this case can be amount of the wage/salary, for which the person would be entitled.

equality. More than 180 court's decisions provides for interpretation rules for, and closer commentary to, the EC legislation covering principle of gender equality.

### **3. Gender equality in the legislation of the SR**

In respect of what was mentioned above, it is necessary to note that the legislative and regulatory framework of the Slovak Republic is, more or less, compatible with the EC legislation valid in the sphere of gender equality. As far as now, all directives were transposed to Slovak law on due time and on appropriate level.

However, there is missing definition of the sexual harassment as defined under the EC legislation in Slovak law. On the other hand, definition of the concept of harassment pursuant to Article § 2 (5) of the Act on Anti-Discrimination goes behind the definition of this concept used under the EC legislation and, when interpreted extensively, covers also spheres of sexual harassment. With aim of full compliance with the EU legislation (namely with article 2 (2) fourth hyphenen of Directive 76/207/EEC), which is wishable, it would be appropriate/possible to (through amendment to the Act on Anti-Discrimination) add the definition of sexual harassment as defined under the EC legislation via new sub-article 6 to be inserted after sub-article 5 of Article 2 of the Act on Anti-Discrimination.

As authors of "Equal opportunities for women and men. Monitoring law and practice in Slovakia 2005"<sup>9</sup>, outlines, there is missing explicitly established principle of equal pay for men and women as well as employer's duty to inform employee about the ban of discrimination and his/her right for equal treatment under Act no. 312/2001 Coll. on State Service. Principle of equal pay for men and women can be find only in general provision of Article 3 (2) of the Act on State Service, which states that "rights set out in this Act<sup>10</sup> are guaranteed to all citizens by their entry into, as well as performance of, the state service according to the principle of equal treatment in occupation set

<sup>9</sup> DEBRECENIOVÁ, J., OČENÁŠOVÁ, Z.: Equal Opportunities for women and men. Monitoring law and practice in Slovakia, 2005, OSF/NOS

<sup>10</sup> That means also right for wage/salary under Article 82 thereto.

out under the relevant act (reference to the Act on Anti-Discrimination)". Duty of employer to inform state servant about his/her right for equal treatment is, however, missing under the Act (it is expressed neither through reference to the relevant provision of the Labour Code, which governs state service, if the Act states so).<sup>11</sup>

In respect of Directive 86/378/EEC as amended by Directive 96/97/EC, which has introduced principle of gender equality into the schemes of social security provided by an employer and caselaw rendered to this Directive, it must be noted that there is missing detailed legal regulation of this sphere in the SR. Probably due to the missing detailed legal regulation, there are still appearing collective agreements of Slovak undertakings, whose provisions are in contradiction with principles of this Directive (and so also with principle of equal pay for men and women under Article 141 of The EC Treaty). According to Directive 86/378/EEC, e.g. determination of different age for men and women as a pre-condition of entitlement to certain social advantages provided for by an employer, is not in compliance with the principle of equal pay for men and women and as such it is discriminatory. The only exceptions are pre-conditions that are determined for the protection of women in connection with their maternity.

Regarding Directive 79/7/EEC on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security, still valid, however yet progressively disappearing and only temporary provisions setting out the different pension age (as age of a person, from which pension can be provided without its reduction) for men and women (and different also for particular women, depending on number of children) must be mentioned. This Directive enables the Member States to exclude advantages provided (in respect to the pension age) to persons, who brought up children,

<sup>11</sup> In connection with prohibition of discrimination, judgement of the Regional Court in Nitra from 5 June 2006 in case 7Co/251/2005 is relevant. Under this judgement: "...employer - person being its statutory or managing body - cannot be forced not to change behaviour towards petitioner in their personal relationship. Otherwise it would be possible to outline that if manager or boss is on first name terms with one employee and on formal terms with other employees, it should be deemed discriminative. However, equal treatment principle established under Article 13 of the Labour Code, covers only employment relationships, and so it is important to distinguish between, and separate one from another, employment relationship/employment relationship contact between employer and employee and their personal relationships. ..."

as well as advantages provided in respect of protection of women in connection with their maternity, from the application of the principle of equal treatment. However, it is probably not unambiguously justifiable, that the number of children the woman had had (what was, and in a temporary period still is, the decisive condition for determination of the pension age of woman in the SR), corresponds to the number of children women had brought up or that it would justify her enhanced protection based on the maternity.

Save above-mentioned examples of problematic or disputable implementation of the EC legislation into the legislation of the SR, Slovak law is in compliance with the EC legislation. Only two new directives need to be transposed into Slovak law, namely Directive 2004/113/EC, implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services and Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. The time period determined for transposition of these directives by the Member States did not lapse yet. Directive 2004/113/EC must be implemented as of 21st December 2007 as latest and Directive 2006/54/EC as of 15th August 2008 as latest, or better (in case of the Member States facing serious problems by its implementation) as of 15th August 2009 as latest.

#### **4. Gender equality applicable to the sphere of occupation in legislation of the EC and SR**

Directives that governs sphere of the gender equality in occupation:

- Directive 75/117/EEC regarding equal pay,
- Directive 76/207/EEC (as amended by Directive 2002/73/EC) on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions,
- Directive 86/378/EEC (as amended by Directive 96/97/EC), which has introduced the principle of equal treatment into the schemes of social security provided by an employer, and
- Directive č. 97/80/EC on so called reversed burden of proof, are transposed to Slovak law especially under provisions of:

- Act no. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in some spheres and on protection against discrimination and on amendment of some acts (the Anti-Discrimination Act) as later amended,
- Act no. 311/2001 Coll., Labour Code, as later amended,
- Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, as later amended,
- Act no. 312/2001 Coll. on State Service, as later amended,
- Act no. 552/2003 Coll. on Performance of Work in the Public Interest, as later amended,
- Act no. 553/2003 Coll. on Rewarding Some Employees when Performing Work in the Public Interest, as later amended,
- Act no. 308/1993 Coll. on Establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, as later amended, and
- Act no. 125/2006 Coll. on Labour Inspection, which repealed Act no. 95/2000 Coll. on Labour Inspection.

Of course, fundament of whole Slovak legal framework is given under the Constitution of the SR, under which fundamental rights and freedoms are guaranteed to all persons, regardless of their, inter alia, sex, and also guaranty that nobody can be harmed, advantaged or disadvantaged on the basis of his/her sex is provided (Article 12 of the Constitution of the SR). Based on Article 36 of the Constitution of the SR, employees are entitled to fair and satisfactory working conditions, including right for remuneration for work performed.

Article 6 of the Act on Anti-Discrimination prohibits discrimination based on sex in occupation, and this prohibition covers (a) access to employment, occupation and other profitable activity, including requirements and conditions applicable at the process of selection of employees; (b) performance of work/occupation, including remuneration, career advancement/promotion and redundancies; (c) access to

<sup>12</sup> In connection with prohibition of discrimination, judgement of the Regional Court in Nitra from 5 June 2006 in case 7Co/251/2005 is relevant. Under this judgement: "...employer - person being its statutory or managing body - cannot be forced not to change behaviour towards petitioner in their personal relationship. Otherwise it would be possible to outline that if manager or boss is on first name terms with one employee and on formal terms with other employees, it should be deemed discriminative. However, equal treatment principle established under Article 13 of the Labour Code, covers only employment relationships, and so it is important to distinguish between, and separate one from another, employment relationship/employment relationship contact between employer and employee and their personal relationships. ..."

training and education and (d) membership and activity in organisations of employers'/employees' and in organisations associating persons with certain profession, including advantages that these organisations provide to its members.<sup>12</sup> Pursuant to Article 8 of the Act on Anti-Discrimination, different treatment shall not be considered discriminative, if different treatment is objectively reasoned by nature of activities performed in occupation or by conditions, under which these activities are performed, and if, at the same time, the extend and manner of this different treatment is adequate and necessary in respect to these activities or conditions, under which these activities are performed.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Article 6 of Fundamental Principles of the Labour Code, that represent fundamental interpretations rule for all provisions of the Labour Code, states, that "women and men have right to equal treatment in access to employment, remuneration, career advancement/promotion, training and education and working conditions". Article 13 of the Labour Code binds each employer to treat employees in accordance with the principle of equal treatment set out for the sphere of labour law in the Act on Anti-Discrimination and prohibits also discrimination based on family and marital status.

When speaking about access to employment, Article 62 (2) of Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services is also relevant. Under this Article an employer may not publish job advertisements, which contains any restrictions or discrimination based on sex<sup>14</sup> . And in accordance with sub-article 62 (3) thereof, (i) an employer may not, when selecting employees, require information, which are of personal nature and/or which are not needed for the performance of the employers' duties stated under any binding act or regulation (e.g. information regarding pregnancy, number of children, marital status - single/married of the applicant for a job), and (ii) "criteria for the selection of an employee must guarantee equal treatment for all employees". Pursuant to Article 41 of the Labour Code, employer may require only information connected with a concrete job, which should applicant be employed for, from the applicant for a job (including sub-

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<sup>13</sup> It could be e.g. works prohibited to women under the special legal regulations due to different biological characteristics and predispositions of women in comparison with men.

<sup>14</sup> However, there still could be found job advertisements looking for men or women for a job, in which gender should not be decisive, in daily press.

mission of reference from previous employer). An employer may not require/ask information about pregnancy or family/marital status. If an employer would breach any of its above mentioned duties, it may be penalised up to SKK 1,000,000 by the Labour Inspection as well as it may face accusation from the breach of prohibition of discrimination brought to court by an employee/applicant for a job.

In respect of performance of employment and conditions of employment, especially remuneration, Article 119 (3) of the Labour Code is important. Pursuant to this, "Conditions of remuneration must be equal for men and women without any discrimination based on sex. Women and men have right for the equal pay for the work of equal difficulty, with the equal liability, performed under the equal working conditions and with the achievement of the equal results and outputs of the work". This provision of the Labour Code applies also to persons performing works in the public interest<sup>15</sup>. It, however, does not apply to the state service. In Slovak legal regulation of state service, the explicit provision setting out principle of the equal pay for equal work is missing. On the other hand, in general, there is smaller space for discrimination in remuneration in the public sphere (state service, performance of work in the public interest) than in the private sphere. The reason lies with so called "table-salaries" - explicitly stated characterisation of the particular job and to each of these pre-characterised jobs explicitly stated salary tariff. The room for discrimination is so opened only in connection with special remuneration provided in the public sphere, which is based on "personal/individual assessment" and in case of state servants also in connection with the increasing salary tariff depending on so called "service assessmen" – assessment of personal outcomes of employee. Despite of the possible discrimination, personal assessments and service assessments may motivate employees of public sphere to better and more effective performance of their work. With aim to eliminate risk of discrimination, which is brought by personal and service assessments, an employer should explicitly state criteria and concretise conditions for remuneration based on these assessments within its internal regulations.

<sup>15</sup> This is based upon subsidiarity of the Labour Code in relationship to Act no. 552/2003 Coll. on Rewarding Some Employees when Performing Works in the Public Interest. Subsidiarity means that unless the specific act (lex specialis) – Act no. 552/2003 Coll. does not state otherwise, relevant issue shall be governed by "general" act (lex generalis) – the Labour Code.

Based on Article 47 (2) of the Labour Code, employer must notify an employer about, inter alia, his/her right for equal treatment, when employing him/her. Thanks to this provision, information requirement of the EC directives is fulfilled. However, such a provision is missing under Act no. 312/2001 Coll. on State Service. Under Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment services is stated obligation of the Offices of Employment, Social Affairs and Family to inform applicant for a job about his/her right for equal treatment when accessing a job.

If an employer would breach any of above stated provisions, it could be penalised by the Labour Inspection up to SKK 1,000,000. According to Article 13 of the Labour Code, employee may submit petition in connection with the breach of principle of equal treatment to its employer and an employer must answer this petition without undue delay, to redress any breach of this principle, abandon and combat discriminative act or behaviour and redress its impacts. Employee, who assumes that his/her rights were breached due to the non-adherence to the principle of equal treatment, may petition the court and claim protection of his/her rights in civil law procedure. An employee may ask the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights<sup>16</sup> to provide him/her with the legal advice as well as to represent him/her before the court in this proceeding. Pursuant to Article 9 of the Act on Anti-Discrimination, a person, who assumes that his/her rights were breached or effected by breach of principle of equal treatment, may claim the court to order the person, who breached the principle of equal treatment, to abandon discriminative conduct/treatment, redress unlawful circumstance and to provide adequate satisfaction, e.g. public apology. If this adequate satisfaction would not be satisfactory enough, especially when dignity, social prestige and status and/or assertion of the person in society would be diminished in considerable extent, this person may require compensation for non-proprietary

<sup>16</sup> The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights is an independent legal entity, endowed also from the state budget. It is active in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It, inter alia, monitors and assesses observance of, and adherence to, human rights and principle of equal treatment, provides legal advice and legal help to the victims of discrimination and is authorised also to represent persons/victims of discrimination in the court proceedings. Establishment of the institution as the Centre is, is required under the EC directives.

<sup>17</sup> Compensation of non-proprietary harm should compensate "non-proprietary harm". That means it should compensate the fact that dignity, social prestige or ability of social assertion of the person was diminished etc.

harm<sup>17</sup> to be provided to him/her in a monetary payment. The court shall determine amount of this compensatory payment and when determining it, the court shall consider the magnitude of non-proprietary harm, which was caused and all circumstances, under which this was caused. Beside the compensation of non-proprietary harm, the injured person may claim also compensation for loss<sup>18</sup>. Reversed burden of proof, required under the EC directives, is set out in Article 11 of the Act on Anti-Discrimination, under which sued party is obliged to prove that s/he did not breach the principle of equal treatment, if a petitioner (suing party) provides the court with an evidence, under which it is possible to objectively deduce that the principle of equal treatment was breached. In both, administrative as well as court procedure, there applies prohibition of adverse treatment, recognised under Article 13 of the Labour Code: "Nobody in the work place can be victimised or otherwise affected in his/her employment relationship or in connection with it, due to the fact that s/he submitted complaint, petition or initiated court's procedure or criminal procedure against other employee or employer."

## **5. Gender equality in the sphere of social security, protection of maternity and parenthood in legislation of the EC and SR**

Gender equality in the sphere of social security is regulated under Directive 79/7/EEC, which introduces principle of the gender equality and equal treatment into social security schemes (maintained by state).

Protection of maternity and parenthood is governed by three directives:

- Directive 86/613/EEC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood

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<sup>18</sup> Compensation of loss is provided if the person suffered any monetary loss/damage or loss/damage on its property. It can be e.g. compensation for loss on wage or part of wage, which was not provided to the person due to the discriminative conduct/action of an employer.

- Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, and
- Directive 96/34/EC on parental leave amended by Council Directive 97/75/EC.<sup>19</sup>

Based on Article 5 of the Act on Anti-Discrimination, the discrimination based on sex is prohibited in social security schemes as well as health care. Principle of the equal treatment is applied in connection with rights of persons stated under the special acts applicable to accession and provision of social help, social insurance, state social endowments and social advantages as well as health care. Act no. 461/2003 Coll. on Social Insurance in its Article 6 (and almost verbatim same also Act no. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance in its Article 29) states that: "Insured persons are endowed with the rights and obligations at the social insurance (public health insurance) in accordance with the principle of the equal treatment in social insurance (health insurance) recognised under the Act on the Anti-Discrimination. Insured person, who assume that his/her rights were breached or affected due to the breach of the principle of equal treatment, may claim legal protection before the court pursuant to the Act on Anti-Discrimination and the Civil Procedure". Similarly, Act no. 43/2004 Coll. on Old Age Pension Savings in its Article 9 recognises rights of the saver to be applicable without any restrictions and discrimination based on sex in performance of the old age pension savings as well as right of

<sup>19</sup> Mentioned directives are transposed to Slovak law especially under the Act on Anti-Discrimination and:

(a) in the sphere of social insurance under:

- Act no. 461/2003 Coll. on Social Insurance, as later amended,
- Act no. 195/1998 Coll. on Social Help, as later amended,
- Act no. 43/2004 Coll. on Old Age Pension Savings, as later amended,
- Act no. 650/2004 Coll. on Additional Pension Savings, as later amended, and
- Act no. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance, as later amended;

(b) in the sphere of maternity and parenthood protection under:

- Act no. 311/2001 Coll., Labour Code, as later amended,
- Regulation of the Government of the SR no. 272/2004 Coll., under which list of works prohibited to pregnant women, mothers till the end of nine month after they gave birth to child and breastfeeding women and list of works connected with specific risks for pregnant women, mothers till the end of nine month after they gave birth to child and breastfeeding women is established and under which certain obligations are set out for an employer employing these women, and
- Act no. 461/2003 Coll. on Social Insurance, as later amended.

the saver to claim its rights before court, including right to adequate compensation of non-proprietary harm to be provided in monetary payment (this Act recognises also reversed burden of proof). Act no. 650/2004 Coll. on Additional Pension Savings in its Article 7 prohibits discrimination when performing additional pension savings referring to the Act on Anti-Discrimination, too. It also states that provisions of the collective agreement connected with additional pension savings, employer's agreement, participant's agreement, plan of endowments/payments, bylaws of the additional pension fund not being in full compliance with the principle of equal treatment are invalid. Pursuant to Article 34 of this Act, the additional pension savings company is obliged to, inter alia, apply principle of equal treatment in relationship to all savers. Despite of the fact that Act no. 195/1998 Coll. on Social Help does not contain provision, which would explicitly establish the principle of equal treatment, it also does not contain any provision which would breach this principle.

The Act on Anti-Discrimination, especially via its Article 6 (3), recognises discrimination based on pregnancy and/or maternity to be discrimination based on sex. In respect to protection of maternity and parenthood, following provisions of the Labour Code are important. Article 6 of the Fundamental principles, according to which: "Women shall be provided with working conditions enabling their participation in the working process, which takes into consideration their physiologic abilities as well as their social role in maternity. Women as well as men shall be provided with working conditions enabling their participation in the working process, which takes into consideration their family duties by bringing up children and caring for them". This general provision is made more particular and concrete in prohibition of certain works for women, especially those that endanger their maternity. Kinds of works prohibited to women are determined under Regulation of the Government/Cabinet of the SR no. 272/2004 Coll. However, prohibition of certain works to women recognised under the Labour Code covers also works that may not be performed by pregnant woman, mother till the end of nine month after she gave birth to child and breastfeeding woman due to the fact that her individual health condition, confirmed by the doctor's assessment, does not allow her to perform these works. Employer must in these cases pro-

cure appropriate modification of working conditions and if this is not possible, an employer must transfer this woman to the work/job, which is appropriate for her. If the woman, who was transferred to another work, shall not reach the same wage in the work/job, to which she was transferred, as she had in her previous work/job, the "equalisation endowment" shall be provided to her. The equalisation endowment is provided in accordance with Article 44 of the Act on Social Insurance during the whole time, during which the woman is transferred to other work/job due to the fact that her original work/job engenders her maternity, i.e. during the woman's pregnancy till the time woman goes to her maternity leave and after the end of the maternity leave till the end of nine month after the childbirth as latest. If an employer is not able to transfer the pregnant or breastfeeding woman or woman till the end of nine month after she gave birth to child into different and for this woman appropriate work/job, an employer shall provide this woman with paid leave. An employer must also provide paid days off for all health assessments and/or visits to doctor connected with the pregnancy, if these health assessments and/or visits to doctor might not be done out of the worker's working time. The Labour Code provides women also with right for maternity leave in extent of 28 weeks. In case of single woman or woman, who gave birth to two or more children at the same time, this woman is entitled for 37 weeks of maternity leave. During the maternity leave, the woman shall be provided with the social endowment in maternity in amount of 55% of her daily counting base (which is based on her income/wage before the maternity leave). However, endowment in maternity shall be provided only if the woman or other entitled person<sup>20</sup> was socially insured minimally for 270 days in last two years before the childbirth. The endowment in maternity can be provided also to a man, who takes care of born child, but only in diminished maximum limit of 22/31 weeks<sup>21</sup>. Maternity leave of a woman connect-

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<sup>20</sup> If a woman - mother shall not take care of her child, the maternity endowment shall be provided to person (insured under the social insurance scheme), who has the child in his/her care. This person might be either father of the child, husband of the child's mother, wife of the child's father or other natural person caring for child upon decision of the relevant authority.

<sup>21</sup> It can be provided also to person, who has a child in its care upon valid and effective decision of the relevant authority.

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ed with the childbirth may not be shorter than 14 weeks and in case woman went to maternity leave before the childbirth maternity leave may not end before the sixth week after the childbirth. Employer is obliged to provide, beside the maternity leave, also parental leave to woman or man, who shall require it. Parental leave shall be provided up to third year of age of the child and in case of not good health condition of a child up to sixth year of the age of the child. During the parental leave, parent is entitled to be provided with parental endowment, which is provided under Act no. 280/2002 Coll. on Parental Endowment. Person, who has a child in his/her care upon valid and effective decision of a relevant authority on care substituting parental care, or upon decision on future adoption, or upon decision on guardianship or foster care, is entitled to the maternity and/or parental leave (as well as relevant endowment), too.

If the woman or man shall come back to work after her/his maternity and/or parental leave, her/his employer must employ her/him at the same job and workplace as s/he was employed in before her maternity/parental leave. If this is not possible due to the fact that relevant job is not performed at the employer any more or due to the fact that relevant work position or relevant work place was abolished, employer must employ her/him with the job and at the workplace corresponding to her/his employment contract.

Pregnant woman, person taking care of child of less than three years old and single person taking care for child of less than 15 years old may be employed by work overtime only with his/her consent. If pregnant woman or person taking care of child of less than 15 years of age requires employer for shorter working time or different modification of working time, employer must meet his/her requirement unless serious grounds/conditions of operation prevents it. Breast-feeding women are entitled also to additional breaks at work, determined for breastfeeding, which are paid and considered to be working time. With aim of enhanced care for family, there are provided (in cases recognised under the law) also paid days off (e.g. for taking child to visit the doctor, transfer of pregnant wife to maternity hospital and back to home) or days off from work with entitlement to be provided with social endowments (e.g. if taking care for sick relative / child) under Slovak law.

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Pregnant women, women/men on maternity or parental leave, single employee caring for child of less than three years old are (in comparison with other employees) much more protected against dismissal under the law.<sup>22</sup>

## **6. Gender equality in access to goods and services in the legislation of the EC and SR**

As already mentioned, the principle of equal treatment in the accession to, and provision of, goods and services introduces Directive 2004/113/EC, which has not been transposed to Slovak law yet, but should be transposed till 21st December 2007 as latest. "Doyen" for its transposition should be the Office of the Government/Cabinet of the Slovak Republic. Pursuant to this Directive it must be, inter alia, guaranteed that the use of sex as a factor in the calculation of premiums and benefits for the purposes of insurance and related financial services shall not result in differences in individual's premiums and benefits.

In respect of the principle of equal treatment in accession to, and provision of, the goods and services, there is - as far as now - relevant only general provision of Article 5 of the Act on Anti-Discrimination, under which any discrimination based on sex is prohibited (also) by provision of goods and services, including housing, that are provided to the public by legal entities and natural persons-entrepreneurs.

### **Conclusion**

On the level of the EU, gender equality is one of the crucial issues devoted with significant attention. Gender equality is one of the basic principles and goals pursued by the EU and has significant and important place in the framework of primary as well as secondary legislation of the EC. Law of the SR is more or less in compliance with the relevant EC legislation and creates well base/ground for fostering of the principle of gender equality in the Slovak practice.

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<sup>22</sup> Refer to Articles 141, 157 and 160 and subs. of the Labour Code

In spite of the fact that the legal base is well established, there is still room for its improvement. The Slovak courts are expected to have significant role by interpretation of, often very general, legal provisions. In this respect, we hope that the quotation in journal Pravda<sup>23</sup>: "In contrary, judges themselves already for long time assert that without new men<sup>24</sup> in gowns it will not be possible to mange cases lying untouched on their tables." is only unhappy formulation of the journalist and not real citation of a judge.

## References:

- Directive 75/117/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women
- Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions amended by Directive 2002/73/EC
- Council Directive 79/7/EEC on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security
- Council Directive 86/378/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes amended by 96/97/EC
- Council Directive 86/613/EEC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and materhood
- Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding

<sup>23</sup> In: Harabin ide prijímať nových sudcov (Harabin is going to admit new judges), Pravda, 6th August 2006

<sup>24</sup> Please note that in the Slovak language, word "men" (muž) in no case stands also for women. In Slovak, it does not mean "human being" in general (men as well as women). "Men", "muž" in Slovak, means only male sex.

- Smernica Rady 97/80/ES o dôkaznom bremene v prípadoch diskriminácie na základe pohlavia v znení Smernice Rady 98/52/ES
- Council Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC amended by Council Directive 97/75/EC
- Council Directive 2004/113/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services
- Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)
- Explanatory Memorandum to Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)
- Judgement of the Court, 13. 1. 2004, in case C-256/01
- [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/gender\\_equality/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/index_en.html)
- Zákon č. 308/1993 Z. z. o zriadení Slovenského národného strediska pre ľudské práva
- Zákon č. 311/2001 Z. z., Zákonník práce, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 312/2001 Z. z. o štátnej službe, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 552/2003 Z. z. o výkone práce vo verejnom záujme, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 553/2003 o odmeňovaní niektorých zamestnancov pri výkone práce vo verejnom záujme, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 461/2003 Z. z. o sociálnom poistení, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 365/2004 Z. z. antidiskriminačný zákon, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 43/2004 Z. z. o starobnom dôchodkovom sporení, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 650/2004 Z. z. o doplnkovom dôchodkovom sporení, v platnom znení
- Zákon č. 580/2004 Z. z. o zdravotnom poistení, v platnom znení
- Rozsudok Krajského súdu v Nitre zo dňa 5. 6. 2006 vo veci 7Co/251/2005 (Decision of the Regional Court in Nitra, dated 5th June 2006, in case 7Co/251/2005)

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