

**National Action Plan on Social  
Inclusion 2004-2006  
(NAP/inclusion)**

**Slovak Republic**

**Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic  
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## Introduction

In March 2000 the European Council of Lisbon recognised that the extent of poverty and social exclusion is unacceptable and considered the building of a more inclusive European Union as one of the essential components in achieving strategic objectives such as sustainable economic growth, increased employment and improved social cohesion. The Lisbon Summit agreed to adopt an *Open Method of Coordination* (OMC), in order to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010.

The key components of the *Open Method of Coordination* in the field of social inclusion include the following:

- Common Objectives adopted at the Nice Summit in December 2000 and revised in Copenhagen in 2002
- Common Indicators for measuring poverty and social exclusion so that it is possible to monitor the progress of measures adopted and compare good experience
- National Action Plans in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, in which the common objectives are implemented in national political measures, retaining national specific features in the systems of social protection and social policy
- Common Reports on Inclusion, drawn up on the NAPs/Inclusion basis, containing recommendations for member states and European institutions for the future
- Community Action Programme for supporting cooperation between Member States in the fight against social exclusion.

In order that the acceding countries, following their accession to the EU, may fully participate in the Open Method of Coordination, the European Council at its Gothenburg meeting in 2001 requested that the candidate countries transpose the Union objectives in the fields of economics, the environment and the social field into their national policies and in this context prepare a *Joint Inclusion Memorandum* (JIM) with the aim of eradication poverty by 2010. The Slovak Republic participated in the preparation of the JIM, which was signed by the Commissioner Anna Diamantopoul and the Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Ludovit Kanik, on 18 December 2003 in Brussels. This was the first official document in the Slovak Republic at the international level in which the Government explicitly committed itself to and involved itself in the fight against poverty and exclusion in the context of the Lisbon strategy. The Joint Inclusion Memorandum started the preparation of the National Action Plan on Inclusion for the years 2004-2006 and became a significant basis for the key challenges facing Slovakia in the fight against poverty and exclusion and ensuring a higher degree of social cohesion.

In the first *National Action Plan on Inclusion* we attempted to implement the EU common objectives in the field of poverty and social exclusion into national objectives, measures and programmes, taking into consideration the most direct priorities on which the Government of the Slovak Republic and the European Commission had already agreed in the *Joint Inclusion Memorandum*.

In the NAP/Inclusion we present for the first time data on poverty on the basis of common indicators, thus enabling their comparison with other EU states.

Definitions of poverty and exclusion, as well as tables and methodology used in calculating the individual indicators are given in the Appendices.

# Chapter 1

## Main trends and challenges

### 1.1. Basic socio-economic development trends

#### *Economic development*

In 2003 gross domestic product (GDP) retained its high rate of growth of 4.2% (4.4% in 2002), and was the highest in the Central European region. This trend is expected to continue also in the coming years, particularly under the influence of strengthening domestic demand and slower price growth from 2005. Compared to the previous period however the purchasing power of households fell, when after two years of growth the real wages declined by 2%. This development was brought about primarily by the increase in regulated prices and indirect taxes, whereby year-on-year inflation increased by 8.5%. The development of real wages lagged behind labour productivity growth, which however in 2003 per employee reached only 57.6% of the level of the EU countries. The deficit of the Slovak budget stood at 3.6% of GDP and is at a sustainable level with regard to the 3%-limit, conditional for adopting the euro.

#### *Demographic development*

As in other EU countries, Slovakia's population is ageing despite the fact that Slovakia is a country with one of the smallest shares of the population in the age group above 65 years (11.5%, whereas the EU15 average is 16.6%). In 2002 life expectancy again increased slightly, reaching 69.8 years for men and 77.6 years for women, in 2003 both categories remained unchanged. However, compared to the EU15 countries Slovak women have a life span almost five years shorter (EU15 81.9 years) and in the case of men, almost six years shorter (EU15 75.8). The fertility rate of 1.2 children per woman does not exceed the average level in the EU15 countries (1.5).

Although the number of live births in 2003 increased slightly (9.6 per 1000 inhabitants, compared to 9.3 for the previous year), there was no natural population growth (-0.1), since the mortality rate also increased slightly on 2002 (9.7 deaths per 1000 inhabitants). The overall slight growth in the population of 0.2‰ was caused by a growth in net migration.

The economic burden on households is increasing, and the family structure is starting to show signs of change. The proportion of single-parent families over the past 10 years has increased by 29%. The divorce rate of 2.0‰ grew against the figure for 2001 (1.8‰) and exceeded the divorce rate in the EU15 (1.9‰). On the other hand, after several years of decline, the rate of marriage has again started to increase, from 4.4‰ in 2001 to 4.8‰ in 2003. Of the total number of children born, as many as 23.3% were born outside of marriage (the figure in 2002 was 21.6%), which however is less than in the EU15 countries (30.2%). Share of single person households increased by more than half.

#### *Employment and unemployment*

In 2003 employment, according to Labour Force Survey (LFS), in the SR economy increased on a year-on-year basis by 1.8%, where a growth in employment was recorded in the case of both genders and in all regions. The number of those working increased most

significantly amongst university graduates (by 9.3%), and those with a secondary-school leaving certificate (by 8.5%). The most dynamic growth in the number of those working was in the age group above 55 years, (the number of those working in this group grew by 8.6%, and in the age group 60+ by 12.6%). These figures point to certain positive trends in the lengthening of working life.

The overall **employment rate** in 2003 reached 57.6%, where traditionally this figure is higher in the case of men (63.0%) than in the case of women (52.2%). The positive trend in the growth of the employment of older workers in the age group 55-64 years was seen in an increase in their rate of employment to the level of 24.6% (41% in the case of men and 11.2% in the case of women as a result of earlier retirement). In 2003 a growth in the rate of employment among young people in the aged group 15-24 years was also seen (an increase of 1.7%), where the employment rate in this age category reached 27.3%. Despite the increasing employment rate of citizens of productive age, its value still lags behind the EU average and the strategic Lisbon objectives (70% in case of 16-64 year-olds and 50% in the case of older workers), this being particularly in consequence of the lower employment rate among women, who pursuant to legislation valid until the end of 2003 have had an earlier retirement age than men.

The decline in the number of unemployed also continued in 2003, when the **unemployment rate** (according to the LFS) fell by 1.1 percentage points to 17.4%, where the difference between men (17.2%) and women (17.7%) increased slightly to the disbenefit of women. The average rate of registered unemployment fell from 17.8% in 2002 to 15.2% in 2003. However, high variations persisted in the rate of employment between individual regions, ranging from 6.9% in the Bratislava region through to 23.8% in the Banska Bystrica region. By age structure the most numerous group comprised 35-49 year-olds (34.8%), 15-24 year-olds (26.9%), and 25-34 (25.2%).

In 2003 unemployment among young people fell by 15.6 percentage points. According to LFS 32.9% of young people aged up to 25 years were unemployed, with as many as 37.6% in 2002. Young people however continued to be those most afflicted by long-term unemployment. According to data on registered unemployment, young people in the age group 15-29 represented 28.2% of the total number of the long-term unemployed. Those registered as unemployed and without education had only a minimal chance of finding employment, and represented 83.4% long-term unemployed persons.

Disabled persons in 2003 represented 5.4% of the overall average number of registered unemployed. The number of registered unemployed per 1 free job opportunity fell from 33 to 22 persons in 2003.

### ***Poverty and social exclusion***

One of the main factors determining the risk of poverty and social exclusion is income and its distribution in a society. With the gradual restructuring of the Slovak economy, underway since 1991, the income imbalance among the population has also risen. According to the latest Microcensus 2003 data, in 2002 the sum of the incomes of the 20% of the population with the highest incomes was 5.4 times higher than that of the 20% of the population with the lowest incomes (S80/S20). This is a higher imbalance than in the EU15 (4.4 in 2001), as well as the EU10 on average (4.1), though lower than for example Estonia (6.1), or Portugal (6.5). Similarly, the Gini Coefficient (31), which measures

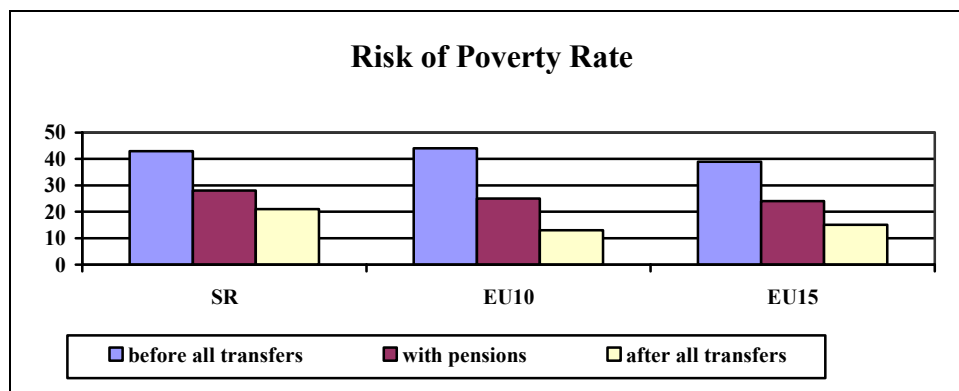
overall income distribution (income imbalance) is higher than the average for the EU15 countries and the new member states (28), though lower than, for example, in Greece (33), Spain (33) and Portugal (37).

In this context it is necessary to mention that since the Statistics Office of the SR harmonised the Microcensus data with data from external statistics by means of microsimulation methods, common indicators on poverty fully cover the lowest income groups in Slovakia, including citizens living in segregated settlements. In comparing the data it is also necessary to take into account the different databases used for calculating the common indicators. The EU15 member states rely on the research of the ECHP (European Community Households Panel) in calculations, while the new member states use national statistical surveys such as the Microcensus, Household Budget Survey, etc.

At risk of poverty rate, which expresses the share of individuals living in households where the income is less than 60% of the national equivalised median income (SKK 5511 monthly per equivalent member), reached 21% in Slovakia in 2002 without difference between genders, and is at the level of Ireland. An important indicator that completes the picture given by the data on poverty risk and provides information on “how poor are the poor” is the relative median poverty risk gap. In Slovakia the median income of citizens in risk of poverty is 34% lower than the risk-of-poverty threshold (60% of the national equivalised median income), meaning that the income of half of this group is below 66% of the at-risk-of poverty threshold, or is lower than 40% of the median equivalised income, and this both for men and women (in the EU15 countries half of those in risk of poverty in 2001 had an equivalised income below 78% of the at-risk-of poverty threshold, or 47% of the median equivalised income.)

Data on dispersion around the at-risk-of poverty threshold provide evidence for this. While in the EU15 countries only 5% of poor citizens have an income lower than 40% of the national at-risk-of poverty threshold, in the SR as many as 13% of the population are in this situation. In the case that the at-risk-of poverty threshold would conversely be shifted to 70% of the median equivalised income, the share of those defined as poor would rise to 23% in the EU15 countries and 27% in the SR, similarly as also in, for instance, the United Kingdom, Greece or Italy.

Theoretically, if citizens were without social transfers and pensions, the risk of poverty would rise to 43%, which is the level of the new member states (44%) and somewhat higher than in the EU15 countries (39%). The differences do not change significantly when we include pensions in incomes and the degree of poverty risk is reduced substantially (SR 27%, EU10 25%, EU15 24%). A larger difference, compared to other countries, is seen in Slovakia only when we evaluate income including all social transfers. The degree of risk in Slovakia is reduced by 6 percentage points, in other new member states on average by 12 percentage points, and in the EU15 by 9 percentage points.



In connection with the question of the general philosophy of social inclusion and the fight against poverty it is necessary to mention that poverty and social exclusion have complex and multidimensional forms, and therefore require an integrated approach, in which a broad pallet of policies is used in fields such as social security, social assistance, employment, education, healthcare, housing, etc.

It may be said that social exclusion is a broader concept than poverty, where this expresses the risk of marginalisation and the exclusion for individuals and groups in various fields of life. Some groups of the population, despite the fact that they are not poor, may be systematically excluded.

Lower income is only one dimension of poverty and social exclusion, since social protection may mitigate poverty also by the means of adequate and available healthcare, education, the provision of social services, and by the means of an integrated labour market for those able to work.

Moreover, the indicator at-risk-of poverty used in the EU – the proportion of persons under 60% of income, representing the median in society – is founded on the implicit preference of a society undifferentiated in terms of income. Thus, for example, the rate of poverty risk for Great Britain (with a share of average incomes in the upper and lower quintiles of 4.9) is 20%, while post-communist countries with relatively undifferentiated income distributions, such as the Czech Republic or Hungary (with a share of average incomes in the upper and lower quintiles of 3.4), show at-risk-of poverty rate at most 10%.

In this context the social strategy of the Slovak Republic focuses on strengthening the role of the individual and his/her self-support by means of a system of social protection that strengthens and motivates his/her participation in the labour market. In the SR it is precisely the unemployed who are most exposed to the risk of poverty. Up to 47% of them live below the risk-of-poverty threshold, where men (49%) are threatened a little more than women (46%). (In the more advanced EU economies the best situation is found in Denmark, where only 13% of the unemployed are at risk of poverty, while the opposite situation is found in Ireland, having a corresponding figure of 54%.)

The situation is very bad primarily in the case of long-term unemployment (i.e. 12 or more months). Despite the fact that the long-term unemployment rate has fallen (from 12.2% in 2002 to 11.1% in 2003), it has for some years remained persistently at the top in comparison with new and old member states (3.3%). In this, it is mostly young people who are most afflicted by long-term unemployment, and who have not any working habits and,

without the existence of an appropriate active labour market policy, are threatened by the complete loss of their employability.

Although the share of children aged 0-17 years living in jobless households declined slightly in Slovakia from 12.1% in 2002 to 11.8% in 2003, the figure is still above the EU15 average (9.8%). A slight decline in the population in jobless households occurred also in the case of the age group 18 – 59, falling from 10.9% to 10.1%, reaching the EU25 average. This means that in 2003 one individual in 10 in the age group 18-59 lived in a jobless household, where there were 1.6 percentage points more women living in such households than men.

Having employment, work, represents the most important instrument for reducing the risk of poverty. In the SR the rate of poverty risk in the case of employed persons was substantially lower (14%) than in the case of those unemployed (47%), though still twice as high as in the EU15 (7%).

Similarly as in other countries, children are among the most vulnerable groups of the population also in Slovakia. The at-risk-of poverty rate among children aged 0-15 years is however highest in Slovakia (30%), both in comparison with the new (17%) as well as old EU member states (15%). Undoubtedly, this is influenced by the fact that in Roma settlements (more specifically in segregated settlements), where the poorest population of the SR lives, children, according to estimates, represent up to 50% of the population. The material disadvantage of these children is seen in their overall backwardness, the low level of education and, in the final result, limited possibilities of gaining employment and escaping persistent poverty.

Compared to other age categories, the lowest risk of poverty is seen in the oldest age categories (14% in the age group 50-64 and 13% aged 64 and above). Despite the fact that in 2002 the average level of the old-age pension paid out represented 45.2% of the average monthly wage, the pension security system significantly reduces the risk of poverty among older-aged citizens, in contrast to many EU15 countries (in age group 65 and above 19% were at risk of poverty in 2001).

By household type at-risk-of poverty rate is highest in the case of single parent households, 40%, which is less than, for example, in the UK (50%) or in Malta (55%), and a little more than in comparison with the EU15 average (35%). Other types of households exposed to a high risk of poverty are families with children. While in most countries at-risk-of poverty rate significantly grows only in households with three or more children, in Slovakia a household with just one child exceeds the average at-risk-of poverty rate (22%) and this risk rises with the number of children in the family. In the SR as many as 35% of households with three or more children were exposed to the risk of poverty in 2002, which is less than in Portugal (49%), but on the other hand substantially more than in Denmark (4%) or Finland (5%).

An above-average risk of poverty may also be seen in single person households, 27% (EU10 15% and EU15 25%), and this in all age categories. However, in contrast to other countries, men are exposed to greater risk (33%) than women (23%). The prevalence of single person households is formed by women, primarily due to their higher life expectancy. Although women pensioners on average have lower incomes than men, they



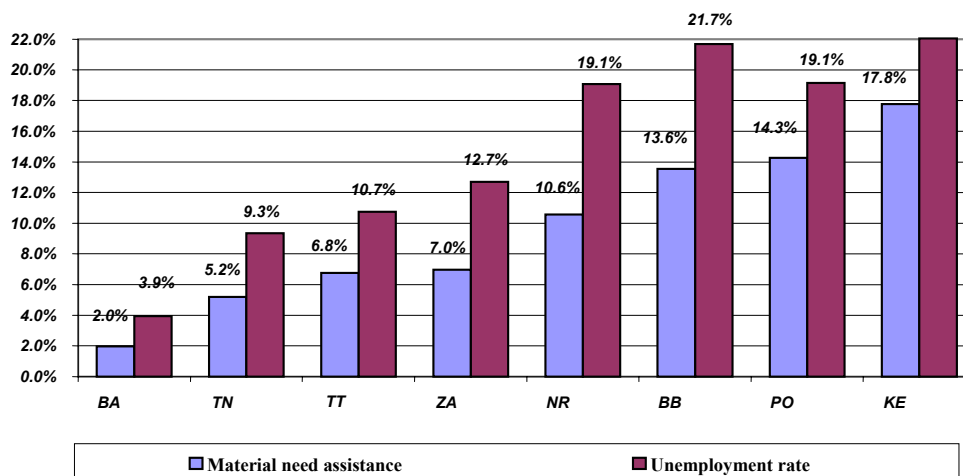
receive, besides the old-age pension, also the widow's pension, while in the case of men, the claim to a widower's pension was introduced only on 1.1.2004.

The subsistence minimum or the number of beneficiaries and persons dependent on social assistance benefits (as of 1.1.2004 on material need assistance) are also considered as a **national poverty indicator** in Slovakia. The social assistance benefit has however since 2001 not reached the level of the subsistence minimum and is not explicitly tied to the average living standard in society.

In 2003 the average monthly number of recipients of social assistance benefit (278 563) fell in comparison with 2002 by 13.1%, where the average amount of the benefit was reduced by 9% to SKK 2 706 monthly. The share of these citizens in the total number of the population reached 10.1%, representing a decline of 1.4 percentage points against the same period last year.

The share of persons dependent on material need assistance is very differentiated between regions. It varies from 2% in the Bratislava region through to 17.8% in the Kosice region, and is related to a significant extent to the unemployment rate. Regions with a high rate of unemployment (Banska Bystrica, Nitra, Kosice and Presov) also have the highest share of persons dependent on material need assistance.

Share of persons dependent on material need assistance on the total number of citizens in the SR in comparison with the rate of registered unemployment by region



## 1.2. Main groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion

As is clear from the analysis, the most vulnerable group facing the risk of poverty includes **the unemployed, and primarily the long-term unemployed**. Extraordinarily serious is the fact that also **young people aged 16-24 (or 15-29) years** are exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion, primarily those with a low degree of education or leaving schools not providing an education corresponding to the needs of the labour market.

Other vulnerable groups are **families with children**, with a significantly higher risk of poverty in single parent families and families with a large number of children, where the risk increases proportionally with the number of members of the family. From an analysis it is found that children (0-15) as well as young people (16-24) are, more than other age groups, threatened by poverty and social exclusion. The at-risk groups, identified on the basis of common indicators of poverty and social exclusion, include also lone-person households essentially in all age categories and both genders.

Nevertheless, not all groups with a risk of long-term and multiple social exclusion may be caught by means of the Microcensus and the common indicators. Already in the JIM the main risks of poverty and exclusion have been identified, as well as those groups in the case of which these risks accumulate more than in the case of other groups of the Slovak population. They include primarily members of segregated Roma communities, as well as persons with health disabilities, the elderly requiring long-term care and those having difficult access to housing, or who are completely homeless. The European Council in Copenhagen emphasised the high risk of poverty and social exclusion also in the case of immigrants, and improvement of their integration was included in the common objectives of the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

### ***The Roma communities***

Although the Roma national minority is a heterogeneous group, a large part of Roma people belongs to the most vulnerable inhabitants in the Slovak Republic. Their social situation has for a long time been determined by a high rate of unemployment, in particular long-term, dependency on benefits from the social system, a low level of education and housing.

Among the groups most threatened by social exclusion and poverty, in the case of which various key disadvantages accumulate, are unintegrated Roma communities living in rural or urban settlements, the number of which in Slovakia is estimated at several hundred. Approximately 100 000 Roma people live in these settlements, which represents almost 2% of the total Slovak population and 28% of the estimated number of the Roma population in Slovakia (according to professional demographic estimates there are approx. 350 000 Roma). The most vulnerable group is represented by the Roma who face *double-marginalisation*. On the one hand, they live in marginalised regions in which there is a minimal possibility of finding a job and thus extricating oneself from the social assistance system, and at the same time, for various reasons, they are unplaceable in the labour market, or their entry to the labour market is made difficult (for example in consequence of a labour disadvantage or social exclusion). To this as an additional complication are added certain specific factors, such as ethnic discrimination or socially pathological phenomena in segregated Roma communities.

In the framework of unemployment there has thus formed the phenomenon of ethnically specific Roma unemployment, the scope and social impacts of which are greater and deeper than in the case of the majority population. The rate of unemployment in Roma settlements reaches almost 100%. The nature of the supply of labour and the inability of a part of the population to respond to this supply causes a significant number of people to be dependent simply on material need assistance.

The population in segregated settlements experiences extreme poverty, which moreover is transferred to the next generation without a significant chance of extricating themselves from it in the near future. An alarming fact is that a large part of this population comprises dependent children. These children are disadvantaged in the process of education in consequence of language barriers, insufficient school requisites and tools, insufficient conditions for education in the domestic environment. In consequence of their disadvantaged state they are often assigned to special schools or a large proportion of them finish school prematurely, achieving only a low level of education, which in the long-term perspective makes their integration and escape from extreme poverty impossible. In settlements a low level of health awareness is prevalent, a high rate of behaviour harmful to health, which is reflected also in the lower quality of health and life expectancy in the case of the Roma, which is several years shorter than in the case of the overall population of the Slovak Republic. Child mortality is also substantially higher than that of all children up to the age of five years.

In consequence of the low economic and social status and spatial segregation the inhabitants of settlements also have a limited possibility to protect their interests by legal action, have lower access to culture, sport and other free-time activities. All these disadvantages strengthen usury and subsequent absolute indebtedness, which in many cases threatens the provision of basic life needs.

At present a sociographic mapping of the Roma communities in Slovakia is underway. This concerns a comprehensive mapping of all settlements in which members of the Roma minority live, and in the framework of which the infrastructure, socio-economic potential, degree of integration, or segregation of individual communities and projects underway are monitored in detail.

### ***Disabled People***

The risk of poverty and exclusion in the case of disabled persons is connected primarily with their access to the labour market. Certain types of disability represent in themselves a complete barrier for entering the labour market and other types lead to discrimination in the labour market. Their risk is multiplied by the limited possibilities to gain appropriate education. Besides limited access to the labour market and to education, this at-risk group must bear particular costs, which life with a disability brings. In 2003 there were 207 727 persons with a severe health disability in Slovakia, receiving a financial contribution for compensation.

Not only disabled people, but also persons who care for them, are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. They are either excluded from the labour market due to day-long care that the disabled person requires or are at risk of poverty in consequence of increased costs for providing care via another person or at facilities outside the family.

### ***Migrants***

The Slovak Republic is at present, from the aspect of international migration, primarily a transit country. Where the destination countries of the immigration are today advanced Western European states, it is expected that through the SR's accession to the EU and through the application of the Dublin Regulation the situation from the aspect of migration

will change significantly, because asylum seekers will be returned to the countries of first registration, countries on the edge of this European Community.

Whereas in 2000 the SR Government stated that the level of international migration is negligible, the number of illegal migrants entering the territory of Slovakia over the past period has increased significantly. Since the year 2000 there has been an almost three-fold growth in the number of these persons (in 2000 6 062 illegal migrants were registered, in 2002 this figure had increased to 15 235). The number of asylum seekers increased from 96 persons in 1993 to 9 743 persons in 2002 and 10 242 in 2003.

It is necessary to state that the migrants come to the SR in particular from economically weak and politically unstable regions - from Asian countries (India, China, Afghanistan, Bangladesh), from former states of the Soviet Union (Chechnya, Moldavia, Armenia, Georgia) and several African states (Somalia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone). So far the majority of migrants have not expressed an interest to settle in Slovakia, but to continue onto Western Europe. In the SR for the period 1992 – 2003, 548 asylum seekers have been granted asylum.

In 2003, 901 persons moved to Slovakia, where most of these came from the Czech Republic. Currently around 29 000 foreigners live in the SR (5 foreigners per 1000 inhabitants)

Around 9 100 registered foreigners work in Slovakia, thus forming around 0.34% of economically active persons in the country. On the other hand the official labour emigration from the SR (on the basis of permits granted for employment this is approx. 3 000 persons) is around 100 000 persons over the course of a year. The number of persons working without an employment permit, however, is estimated at several times this.

Inhabitants of the Slovak Republic essentially do not have prejudices against immigrants. Reservations regarding these groups of persons come more from fears of an uncontrollable onset of waves of illegal migrants and from a fear of foreign diseases. Certain negative opinions are expressed among citizens in places where asylum facilities for these target groups are to be established. It is true that for new member states with less well-performing economies than those of advanced EU states, the problem of migration will become more and more complicated social problem.

### ***Homeless***

Homeless persons are also among the most vulnerable groups. There is a high concentration of homeless persons primarily in the capital city, where, on the basis of a police operation undertaken at the initiative of the local authority, around 600 of them live and up to 90% of all the homeless monitored have a registered permanent address. (150 police, local authority employees and several representatives of the town council participated in the operation, the aim of which was to map out the real number of persons without shelter). Approximately the same number of homeless persons live in Kosice, as well as in other large regional towns, which is predetermined by a whole series of conditions, for example the anonymity of a large town, the higher level of migration, etc. In total approximately 2000 homeless live in Slovakia. However, according to non-governmental organisations working with homeless, individuals suffering homelessness, i.e. deprived through the loss of their home (which is not the same as a loss of residence),

about two to three thousand live in Bratislava alone. One of the most serious factors influencing the occurrence of homelessness may be the execution of punishment through removal of freedom, in particular long-term, departure from a children's home, domestic violence, expulsion from school, family problems, drug addiction, illness, a low level of qualification, long-term unemployment, etc.

### ***Other vulnerable groups of the population***

From the aspect of social exclusion, other groups at-risk include the drug addicted (including those addicted to alcohol and gambling), maltreated and abused children, victims of domestic violence, convicted offenders, citizens undergoing or having undergone punishment through removal of freedom), as well as children following the termination of institutional or protective care. According to current data around 9 000 persons are in prison facilities, of which around 2 800 citizens are in custody. The number of officially registered individuals addicted to illegal drugs was at the end of 2003 in total 1 705 persons (of which almost 47.6% were addicted to heroine and other opiates), around 9 100 were addicted to alcohol. The number of children in the case of whom there was registered reasoned suspicion of maltreatment or sexual abuse as at the end of 2002 reached the figure of 683 children up to the age of 18 (of which 419 were girls). In 2002 in total 6 737 children were placed in facilities for institutional or protective care (including 4 624 children up to the age of 15 years old), of which 106 children were in protective care.

### **1.3. Key challenges**

Key challenges in the field of the fight against poverty and exclusion are elaborated in the *Joint Inclusion Memorandum* and their main aim is to mainstream and integrate the concern with tackling poverty and social exclusion across key policy domains such as the labour market, taxation, social protection, education, housing, public services, etc. Poverty and social exclusion have complex and multidimensional form and they require common approach of all relevant bodies in society. The most urgent challenges and at the same time long-term objectives, the currency of which is also confirmed by the preceding analysis of the socio-economic situation, include the following:

- to increase employment levels and employability of vulnerable groups
- to decrease the risk of poverty of families with dependent children
- to overcome educational disadvantage
- to promote integration of the Roma communities

## Chapter 2

### Strategies, main objectives and key targets

The issues of employment and poverty are elaborated in the *Strategy for supporting employment growth by means of changes to the social system and labour market*, which was approved by the SR Government in 2003. The employment strategy is based on the conviction that each meaningful job is better than inactivity and that a growth in employment is the most effective way of fighting poverty. Its aim is to create a system which motivates individuals of productive age to find and maintain employment. The strategy places emphasis on supporting the family and the harmony between family and working life in creating a new balance between the system of social protection and motivation of the individual to care for themselves. The strategy is tied to changes being prepared in other fields, in particular tax reform, pension reform, public administration reform, social services reform and socio-legal protection reform.

The SR Government through elaborating and approving the Joint Inclusion Memorandum has committed itself to the fight against poverty and exclusion and fulfilling the common objectives of the European Union adopted in Nice and updated in Copenhagen. The strategic framework for national action plans of inclusion of all the EU countries are formed by the following common objectives:

- **Facilitate participation in employment and access to resources, rights, goods and services for all**
- **Prevent the risks of exclusion**
- **Help the most vulnerable**
- **Mobilise all relevant bodies**

#### 2.1. Increasing and facilitating participation in employment

Increasing employment has become a priority task of the Government's economic and social policy, as well as that of the whole society. In connection to social inclusion in the field of employment we are targeting the following priorities.

##### **Objective:**

***Supporting the employment and employability of groups with an increased risk of social exclusion***

The new system of employment services, provided for by the Employment Services Act, governs systemic issues, rights and obligations of those involved, as well as the procedure in providing employment services.

The Act contains various contributions for active labour market measures, various types of projects and programmes for supporting involvement in the labour market, and which are targeted in particular at groups with an increased risk of social exclusion. These concern citizens who, with regard to their age, along with family reasons, the length of their registration at the office of labour, social affairs and the family, education, lack of practice, state of health, find it more difficult to apply themselves in the labour market and therefore need increased care.

The targeting of active labour market measures on population groups with an increased risk of social exclusion in the labour market, pursuant to the Employment Services Act, has the objective of improving the application of these groups in the labour market. These measures are in particular as follows:

- employment intermediation services,
- professional advisory services that may be provided by an office of labour, social affairs and the family to a job seeker in the framework of individual or group advice. In the framework of professional advisory services the office of labour, social affairs and the family guarantees the elaboration of an individual action plan for supporting the job seeker's application in the labour market.
- participation in the labour market training and retraining of the job seeker, which is provided by the locally competent office of labour, social affairs and the family on the basis of an elaborated individual action plan for the job seeker; labour market training and retraining of an employee, and which is provided by the employer in the interest of the further application of their employees in the labour market, and this in the form of general and specific labour market training and retraining of the employee. The office of labour, social affairs and the family may provide to an employer realising the respective training, on the basis of a concluded written agreement, a contribution for the labour market training and retraining;
- a contribution for self-employment, which is provided in the form of aid to job seekers who begin a free-trading licence or other self-employment,
- support for the employment of disabled citizens, or of elderly citizens is realised in the framework of support for creating sheltered workplaces, the settlement of operating costs for a sheltered workplace and the settlement of costs for the transport of employees. A new active labour market measure in this field is the provision of a contribution for the activity of a work assistant. A contribution shall be provided to the employer on the basis of an agreement concluded with the office of labour, social affairs and the family for an employer, which assists an employee or employees – disabled persons in performing employment and in personal needs during working time. All active labour market measures leading towards the labour integration of disabled persons may be claimed following the fulfilment of conditions set out by law;

Disabled persons require special individual help in integrating into the labour market. The average monthly number of registered unemployed disabled persons in 2003 represented almost 24 000 persons. It is estimated that the number of potentially employable disabled persons, also from the ranks of economically inactive citizens, is 87 500 persons.

Through the creation of the institute of temporary employment by the Temporary Employment Agency the conditions have been created for increasing the rate of employment of citizens, including disadvantaged job seekers by employment through the fact that the agency, which employs these citizens, assigns them temporarily to a different employer - a "user employer" - for a requested performance of work. The Supported Employment Agencies, the priority activity of which is, on the basis of ascertaining the abilities and professional skills of disadvantaged job seekers (i.e. disabled persons and the long-term unemployed) to search for appropriate jobs for these citizens, to provide

professional advice aimed at supporting and helping in finding and keeping a job. For employers they provide professional advice and help in employing disabled persons.

As was clear from the first chapter, the unemployed and particularly the long-term unemployed dependent on material need assistance (young people, people with a low level of education) are at the greatest risk of poverty. Long-lasting unemployment significantly lowers people's employability.

Target groups	Targets	Indicators	
a broad spectrum of disadvantaged persons on the labour market	- to increase job creation and employment of disadvantaged groups of the population	- number of jobs created (plan 18 000) - number of job seekers beginning self-employment (plan 7 000)	- unemployment rate - long-term unemployment rate - employment rate
job seekers, the long-term unemployed, those dependent on material need assistance	- to support the creation and maintenance of working habits	- number of job seekers involved in activation programmes (plan 100 000)	
The disabled unemployed	- to increase the integration of disabled persons into the labour market through supporting their employment and the creation of sheltered workplaces	- number of persons placed in sheltered workplaces (plan 5 400) - number of persons starting a business independently (plan 450) - number of sheltered workplaces created	
unemployed young people, school leavers	- to increase the employability of young people through labour market training and retraining	- number of participants in practice for graduated - number of young people assigned to education programmes - unemployment rate of population aged less than 25 years	
the unemployed with a low or insufficient level of qualification	- to increase the degree of education and qualification of the unemployed according to the needs of the labour market	- number of unemployed persons participating in labour market training and retraining courses - share of employed in the total number of requalified	

**Objective:**

***Preventing exclusion through supporting labour force adaptability and mobility***

In the interest of involving citizens in the social, economic and political life of a society, education and professional preparation have become a priority interest. Through a system of life-long learning we are supporting the degree of citizens' adaptability to the changing conditions and demands of the labour market.



In the current prospective development of society initial education is no longer sufficient. Education must be available not only at the first stage of life, but must be life-long, and this in a way that depends on the personal and professional needs of the individual. Life-long learning is an essential sub-system of education, which flexibly reacts to market requirements (innovation, computer skills, language skills, and requalification). In this context it is necessary to state that in 2003 we recorded a decline, to the level of 4.8%, in the share of persons aged between 25-64 years in the total population of the same age group, who graduated from some form of education. This is 50% less than in the EU15 countries (9.7%) and also less than in the EU10 (5.6%).

The high degree of differentiation between regions in the rate of unemployment may be compensated for by supporting labour mobility. At present people commute to work in particular to large towns, daily over a distance of 80-100 km, without changing their residence. Over the past years there may be recorded also a positive trend in the growth of internal mobility. The prevailing form of internal mobility in Slovakia is moving from municipality to municipality in the framework of one district (46.7%). Moving between districts constitutes 30.7% of total internal mobility and between regions 22.6%. In 2002 we recorded 16.6 persons moving per thousand inhabitants. Even if in general the population in Slovakia has strong ties to family relations and the environment in which they live, the basic barrier to greater labour force mobility is a lack of affordable rented apartments.

Priorities for increasing employability include facilitating access to effective forms of employment services for all disadvantaged groups in the labour market and the targets for increasing employability according to individual at-risk groups in the population. The possibility and ability to harmonise working and family life plays a significant role in the field of adaptability and application in the labour market. Disadvantaged groups include primarily families with dependent children or families caring for a family member dependent on care.

Target groups	Targets	Indicators
adult population	- to support and develop life-long learning	- % of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training (life-long learning)
the unemployed (with special regard to the long-term unemployed)	- to increase labour mobility	
families with children (single parents, persons with family responsibilities)	- to facilitate the reconciling of family and working life	- number of families with children receiving a contribution for services

## 2. 2. Facilitating access to resources, rights, goods and services

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, besides the dimension of income and the satisfaction of basic life needs, it contains also other important aspects, such as the already-mentioned access to employment, but also access to education, housing, healthcare.

**Objective:**

***Guaranteeing essential resources for a decent life while at the same time supporting the motivation to self-reliance and independence***

The Act on Assistance in Material Need has also been prepared on the basis of the *Strategy for supporting employment growth by means of changes to the social system and labour market* so that it corresponds to changes being prepared in the social sphere and is based on the philosophy of motivating individuals to find and keep a job. The act, entering into force on 1.1.2004, retains a protective nature for the citizen at the level of ensuring basic living conditions (one hot meal daily, essential clothing and shelter). Besides the basic benefit, a citizen may gain a contribution for healthcare, a contribution for housing, and activation or protective contributions. The activation contribution objectively prepares a person in material need for their application in the labour market. This is a new institute in the field of supporting a growth in employment, for supporting the motivation of citizens to find a job, and also keep it. Citizens who for age, health or other reasons are unable to temporarily or in the long term solve their adverse situation are provided with a protective contribution.

The Act on Assistance in Material Need will have an impact on reducing poverty in the medium term. Through the activation of a benefit recipient (in the form of education and labour market training, further education, participation in smaller municipality services and voluntary works) working habits are gained, maintained or improved and thus the chances of individuals applying themselves in the labour market are improved. From the short-term aspect the Government has adopted measures primarily for supporting families with children. Children dependent on assistance in material need are subsidised in catering and school requisites.

Since January 2004 the state has supported families with children according to new rules. For each dependent child a flat-rate child supplementary benefit is provided (up to 25 years of the child's age). Working parents besides the supplementary child benefit may get monthly for each dependent child a tax-bonus, which should have a motivating effect in finding and keeping a job and at the same time help the lowest income groups (it is provided on the principle of a negative tax). The state supports families with children also through reduced compulsory contributions (one of the parents can have compulsory contributions for pension insurance reduced by 0.5% for each dependent child, without this affecting their pension), a one-time childbirth contribution, the parental contribution. The parental contribution is provided to the parent who personally cares for the child up to the age of three, in the case of a long-term unfavourable state of health of the child up to the child's sixth year of age.

In the interest of maintaining a decent life, self-reliance and independence of the citizen, we consider also instruments of social assistance in the framework of the Social Assistance Act as a significant means for solving a citizen's social situation. This assistance concerns social advice, socio-legal protection, social services and financial contributions for compensation for the social consequences of a severe health disability.

An important part of the Social Assistance Act is formed by the issue of solving the adverse social situation of persons with a severe health disability by means of social services and financial contributions for compensation of the social consequences of the severe health disability. Social assistance in the form of social services or financial

compensation contributions for the social consequences of a severe health disability are provided only to those persons who, pursuant to the act, are recognised as persons with a severe health disability. The needs of these citizens are in the field of compensation assessed on an individual basis. In the framework of the individual assessment their personal needs, nature and the scope of their life activities, their family background and broader social and architectural environment in which they live are taken into account. Social services and financial contributions are provided in varying combinations, always depending on the person's specific needs.

In the case of a loss or decrease in income from gainful activity, and for ensuring an income in consequence of temporary work inability, pregnancy, maternity leave, the social insurance system provides sickness insurance, as well as pension insurance for the case of old age and invalidity, accident insurance for the case of harm to health, guarantee insurance for the case of the payment inability of an employer and unemployment insurance in the case of a loss of work income.

Social adequacy and financial sustainability of the pension system are among the basic aims of the reform, which at the end of 2003 in the SR was entering its final phase. From 2005 onwards a component of the pension system should become also the system of old-age pension saving, which in contrast to the pay-as-you-go system will be financed from contributions to personal pension accounts and should contribute to an increase in pensions. At the same time, however, the risk of poverty in the case of those pensioners who during their economically active age worked only for a low income or worked fewer years may increase.

Target groups	Targets	Indicators
recipients of assistance in material need,	- to deepen the positive effects of the change to the system of benefits in material need	- share of children at pre-school facilities and primary schools for whom a catering subsidy is provided, in the total number of children (3-15 years old.) dependent on material need assistance - share of primary school children for whom a school-needs subsidy is provided, in the overall number of primary school children dependent on material need assistance
recipients of state social benefits	- to maintain the real value of state social benefits (valorisation)	- valorisation coefficient
persons with a severe health disability	- to activate and support the social integration of persons with a severe health disability and their families	
	- to continue in the professional and public discussion on the subsistence minimum, taking account of the concepts of absolute and relative poverty	

**Objective:**

***To facilitating access for all to legal aid, healthcare services, decent housing, available transport, education, cultural values, etc.***

***Legal aid***

The problem of access to legal services in particular for disadvantaged groups is of growing importance, primarily in connection with the growth of private advocacy and prices for providing legal assistance. In the SR legal advice is provided free of charge in order to help low income groups, in the building of the Ministry of Justice, in the form of personal consultation, four times weekly. Such legal aid is also provided by all regional courts, once a week.

At the same time, since January 2002 a network of civil advice centres has provided services to citizens in the field of advice. The establishment of these civil advice centres is based on good experience with similar civil advice centres in Great Britain. The quality of services of the civil advice centres is guaranteed by the Slovak Association of Civil Advice Centres. The role of these centres is to provide free advice in the social, housing, legal, labour-legal field, as well as in other fields.

In the SR, pursuant to Act No 211/2000 of the Digest of Laws on freedom of access to information, every citizen has the right to free (unpaid) access to information. The aim of this Act is to implement the constitutional principles of freedom of expression and rights to information, as well as the Declaration of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms.

***Health***

A better state of health, extending active life, minimising accidents, all significantly contribute to reducing the risk of poverty and concurrently the sustainability of the healthcare system. The most frequent cause of death of SR citizens are cardiovascular (54.5%), and oncological illnesses (22.3%) and illnesses of the respiratory and digestive systems. These illnesses occur in disadvantaged groups of the population more frequently than in the case of the majority group of the population as a result of the worse diet, personal hygiene, smoking, and the manner of nutrition. The timely diagnosis of these illnesses increases significantly the possibilities for their successful treatment, thus extending also the life expectancy of SR inhabitants.

The declared principles of universality, equality and solidarity in the provision of healthcare are in current practice disrupted by the overall poor setting of healthcare legislation, which leads to an inefficient allocation of current public resources for healthcare, to a public deficit, and a lack of collectively available basic healthcare in general. The Government therefore has submitted to the National Council of the Slovak Republic an integrated reform of the healthcare system, which on the basis of the principles of universality, equality and solidarity legislatively amends the scope of healthcare covered by public funds, the definition of responsibility for the provision and financing of healthcare and their effective control.

The SR Government this year also approved the significant document – *Conceptual Policy for Long-Term Social Care*, which is the basic strategic document implementing the new system of long-term care and is a supplementary component of reforms to healthcare and the social system. The proposed system of long-term care should solve the issues of overlapping, interlinking and coordination of social and health services (and their financing), as well as proposing necessary changes to the current provision of health and social services. All these may be achieved primarily through the integration of social and health care, including other related forms of services, in particular at the community level.

Long-term care shall respect the following principles:

- financing of long-term care through a combination of public and private sources
- involvement of the citizen in financing long-term care depending on their income and asset situation
- freedom to select the provider
- creation of standards for individual types of care

The creation of new legislation in the tax field is linked to the above as a sub-system of social protection to the conceptual aims in question. Within the purview of the conceptual plan there will be prepared an act on long-term care, an act on social services and an act on financial benefits to citizens not requiring long-term care, and which will set out the basic framework of the system for solving the adverse social situation of the citizen.

The package of reform legislative steps under preparation both in the social as well as the healthcare sector will significantly contribute to providing higher quality and more coordinated services to people.

### ***Housing***

The question of the lack of available housing for rent has already been mentioned in connection with the need for a growth in employment and low labour mobility. Ensuring the affordability and overall availability of housing is necessary especially with regard to the socially weaker groups, i.e. those who cannot manage to secure adequate housing themselves in the housing market. Over the course of the 1990's there was a massive sell-off of municipal rented apartments, where their share in the total stock of apartments fell from 25% in 1989 to 4% in 2003. Despite a growth in the number of apartments completed in the SR, there remains a shortage of approx. 250 000 apartments. For tackling these needs it is essential that the intensity and support for construction is increased primarily in the case of affordable public rented apartments

In 2003 support provided from the State Housing Development Fund (SHDF) fell to almost half the level of 2002, where for rented apartments, whether of a regular standard or of a lower standard, no subsidies at all were provided, in contrast to the preceding years (see Appendix 1, table 4).

It is necessary to devote attention to those citizens in material need who live in residential rooms of facilities intended for permanent living (long-term hostels) and to whom the current legal state does not allow the provision of a housing contribution.

## ***Transport***

Affordability of bus and railway personal transport is ensured by the state via the Ministry of Finance of the SR, which in its price assessments sets the maximum prices in both these types of transport. Citizens with permanent residence in the SR are provided with social discounts for pensioners, persons with a health disability, persons aged above 70 years of age, children of the age up to 15 and parents visiting a physically- or mentally-handicapped child to whom care is provided in social services facilities outside their permanent residence. The transport of immobile persons is realised in special carriages equipped with a hydraulic lifting platform. In the case that these carriages are not available, the passenger is transported in a service carriage together with their wheelchair. The possibility of movement for persons with a health disability and barrier-free access to trains and hygiene facilities of personal transport are being solved by SR Railways in the framework of reconstructions of existing buildings, covered from their own funds. In the field of bus transport, operators are gradually introducing low-platform vehicles.

## ***Education***

The education system in the SR guarantees equal access to education to all types and levels of school. The education structure of the productive population (25-64 years old) indicates a relatively low share of university-educated people (10.7%) in comparison with the EU countries (21.6%), but also most of the new member states (Hungary 14%, Lithuania 45%). In comparison with the EU countries Slovakia has a smaller share of the population having completed lower secondary education, 15.1% (EU 36.2%), and a very significant imbalance of those having completed upper secondary education, 74.3% (EU 42.2%), primarily of a technical nature. As we have already mentioned, graduates from these schools are noted for their lack of flexibility, lack of foreign language and IT skills, which makes difficult their application in the labour market. There continues to lack a mechanism, which would enable schools to flexibly react to the changing needs of the labour market, both on the side of education institutions as well as on the side of offices of labour, social affairs and family. On the other hand, it is education that significantly determines a society's possibility to fight against poverty.

Ensuring access to education for all segments of the population is the subject of discussion in society in connection with the reform of the school system currently under preparation. The prepared reform for financing universities should improve access to quality education through a transparent school system, accompanied by loan scheme to be paid back following the completion of study and repayment instalments being only from the future income of the student, and through significant changes in the market environment in which university education is provided.

## ***Culture***

Cultural activities create room where citizens and communities may define and develop their own identity, and thus indirectly help a better understanding and mutual cohesion. The field of culture creates room for improving the enlightenment and understanding of the population as to the process of social inclusion in Slovakia.

Target fields	Targets	Indicators
Legal aid	-to maintain legal aid free	- number of persons to whom free legal aid is provided
Health	-to ensure access to quality healthcare on the basis of the principle of universality, equality and solidarity -to support preventive healthcare programmes -to ensure integrated health and social care for persons dependent on long-term care	- adoption of a set of laws relating to healthcare reform, prepared by the SR Government - share of people examined in the framework of the prevention examination system (the new-born, children, adults, the elderly) - reduction in the number of illnesses causing premature deaths (life expectancy) - introduction of a system of long-term care on the basis of universality, equality and solidarity principles – accessibility, quality and financial sustainability
Housing	-to increase the construction of affordable rented apartments -to maintain financial support for acquiring rented apartments for at-risk groups	- share of rented apartments on newly-built apartments (50%) -share of public rented apartments on newly-built apartments
Education	-to support the financial accessibility of secondary school and university students from low-income families -to increase the quality of education and bring the education system into line with the needs of the labour market	- share of secondary-school students (15-19 years) receiving social scholarships in the total number of secondary-school students dependent on the material need assistance - number of university students (19-25 years) receiving social scholarships and number of university students drawing loans
Transport	-to maintain affordability for at-risk groups -to complete barrier-free access for persons with a severe health disability in public buildings (post offices, hospitals, schools, cultural institutions, etc.)	
Culture	- to support cultural activities of at-risk groups - to contribute to increasing awareness of social inclusion process in population	

### 2.3. Preventing social exclusion risks

The best path in the fight against poverty and social exclusion is to prevent life crises leading to social exclusion. Ensuring the socio-economic conditions of families is realised through various instruments (for example in the field of employment services, in the system of social insurance, state social support and social assistance, etc.).

**Objective:**

***Creating the conditions for supporting family solidarity and preventing the social exclusion of vulnerable groups***

Worldwide demographic prognoses for the coming decade point towards the need to adopt measures in the given field for strengthening family relations. Assistance to a family at a time of needing direct care for a child or for a family member dependent on care from the family is to a significant extent realised by means of providing social advice, social services, financial contributions for the compensation of the social consequences of a severe health disability.

A contribution to the possibility of supporting the integration and social inclusion of citizens in an adverse social situation is the gradual process of decentralising state power through a transfer of competences from state administration bodies to self-government bodies. In transferring competences the performance of public administration is progressively brought closer to the citizen. In this direction the principle of a community's functioning enables the more effective mapping and analysis of citizens' needs in the field of the need for individual services, their greater involvement in planning services and also the more effective public control over the expediency of the services provided. The development of public services thus at the local level responds to local particularities – to local differences and the needs of individual citizens.

At present an act on social services is being prepared, which will define the new legal framework for providing social services. The reform steps at the social assistance level in the field of providing social services are aimed at improving the quality of the social services provided, at increasing the transparency and availability of social services for citizens. With the view to implement the possibility of an alternative solution to a person's adverse social situation, and to increase the effectiveness, expediency and accessibility of the aid provided, the act under preparation proposes to introduce a contribution for social services for a person dependent on help (introduction of the right of the person in need for social assistance to decide on the manner of assistance services via the mentioned contribution – either through a family member, municipality, neighbour, social services facilities) as a new element in the field of solving the adverse social situation of such persons. At the same time, in the framework of supporting informal care the act under preparation proposes the legal implementation of relief (supporting) services for a family caring for a relatives in need for care. The aim of this measure is to support informal care provided within families (the economic aspect for society), avoid the state of exhaustion for these families, support family relationships, allow the carer to remain in the labour market, as well as to give the possibility of retaining their social life.

From the aspect of ensuring the addressness and expediency of the solution to the adverse social situation of the family the social consultancy occupies an important place in the framework of forms of social assistance. In the conditions of the SR a network of free consultancy-psychological services for the family is comprehensively equipped and has been operating on a long-term basis.

Social prevention and socio-legal protection are focused in particular on children and youth the upbringing of whom is seriously threatened or disturbed, children who were taken from the family environment on the basis of a court decision, maltreated or abused children, drug addicts, children with defective behaviour, offenders, etc. The aim of the preventive measures is to provide assistance in time and effectively in the natural social environment of the under-aged and their family and to continually interconnect individual forms of social prevention, ranging from investigative activities through to the social diagnostics,



crisis intervention, rehabilitation and resocialisation activities, and to the reintegration back into the original social environment.

Extraordinary attention needs to be dedicated to ensuring an equivalent substitute environment for children that are not brought up in a natural family. Based on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, a child temporarily or permanently removed from its family environment has the right to specific protection and help provided by the state. With this aim in mind it is necessary to continue in the process of transforming the performance of institutional care, and this primarily through creating family types of children homes, placing children in professional families and in substitute family care and in creating equivalent conditions for all children for whom a court has ordered institutional or protective care.

Target groups	Targets	Indicators
families with members dependent on care due to age or state of health	- to support family solidarity by improving conditions enabling care for family members	- adoption of an act on social services which will solve the system of support and relief services for the family
children and youth whose upbringing is seriously threatened, the under-aged with the ordered institutional or protective care, tyrannised or abused children, drug addicts, persons undergoing the execution of punishment, victims of domestic violence, the homeless	- to expand and improve the quality of socio-legal protection and social prevention	- capacity of resocialisation centres, - adoption of the act on socio-legal protection of children and social prevention

**Objective:**

***Ensuring access to information-communication technologies on the basis of the principle of equal opportunity***

On the one hand information-communication technologies (ICT) are a great opportunity for the development of society, on the other hand the limited access to them increases significantly the risk of social exclusion. Groups exist which cannot afford access to ICT or do not know how to use them. Though precise data is not available, on the basis of research we can state that digital exclusion threatens most the elderly, people on a low income, the Roma, people living in remote or excluded areas and disabled people.

Overall Slovakia lags behind in the informatisation process, and this not only in the framework of EU member countries, but also in the framework of new member countries. In 2002 Slovakia only 3% of households had access to the Internet and the Internet user density was 14%, representing the lowest values among the new member states (density of households with the Internet access in MT 21%, LV 5% and Internet user density in LV 11%, but SL 41%, CZ 30%, EE 39%, PL 22%). Slovakia has only with very limited network of the publicly available Internet points.

The digital literacy and access to ICT are becoming an important precondition for employability and offer new opportunities for social inclusion of the socially disadvantaged. ICT help in overcoming the traditional barriers of mobility, geographical distances and under the presumption of an equal access they provide more uniform sources

of knowledge. Applications of these technologies should bring about an increase in the quality and self-reliance of disabled persons, as well as facilitate the care for them provided by family or relatives.

Slovakia faces an important task in developing an information society and thus creating the preconditions for improving the quality of life of its inhabitants, not excluding from this process vulnerable groups with limited access to ICT.

Target group	Targets	Indicator
all vulnerable groups	- to increase computer literacy and availability of ICT also for vulnerable groups in all regions of the SR	- number of the ICT centres available to the public - number of persons having access to Internet per 100 inhabitants - number of PCs per 100 inhabitants - number of Internet access points at schools

## 2.4. Helping the most vulnerable

### **Objective:**

*To supporting social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups (immigrants, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, the homeless, etc.)*

Extraordinary attention needs to be dedicated to ensuring an equivalent substitute environment for children who are not brought up in a natural family. Based on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, a child temporarily or permanently removed from its family environment has the right to a specific protection and help provided by the state.

It is possible to expect that in the coming future the number of immigrants and asylum seekers will grow, as will the number of children separated from their parents. It is essential that immigrants are informed of their rights following entry to the country, that they know how to obtain independent advice; that bridges between communities are built. The basic risks among immigrants include unemployment, a low level of education or absence of documents on education acquired, a high degree of poverty. These risks are multiplied by the language handicap.

The most vulnerable groups, from the aspect of the realistic social exclusion, include those without shelter – “the homeless”, who have lost their family, working, economic and social background and their return into the original environment, finding a job, housing, renewing family and social links is very difficult. Therefore it is necessary to ensure adequate measures for securing their basic living conditions, securing health and social assistance, substitute accommodation, social rehabilitation programmes, resocialisation.

Target groups	Targets	Indicators
children and youth with a ordered institutional or protective care	- to transform the institutional care of children and youth and to support their integration into the natural social environment	
immigrants, asylum seekers, the unaccompanied under-aged, the homeless	- to ensure an integrated approach to solving specific integration problems of immigrants (including children) and homeless	capacity of asylum centres, shelters, facilities for the unaccompanied under-aged

**Objective:**

***Ensuring a comprehensive approach to solving the exclusion of Roma communities***

In Chapter 1 we highlighted the poverty and accumulation of disadvantages of the Roma population living in segregated settlements. Despite the fact that the *Strategy of the SR Government for solving the problems of the Roma national minority* and a set of measures for its realisation were passed in 1999, the *Comprehensive development programme of Roma settlements* in 2002 and the *Basic theses of the SR Government conceptual policy in the integration of Roma communities* in 2003, the implementation of these policies and programmes is still insufficient.

It is necessary to quicken steps ensuring a realistic possibility for the unemployed and persons in material need to apply themselves in the labour market, a precondition for which is economic and human development of the most backward regions, creation of new jobs and the possibility for requalification, strengthening employment services and the application of active employment policy (programmes, projects). Especial attention needs to be devoted to the integration of the Roma minority so that it gains *realistic opportunities* for equal participation in the political, social and economic life of society.

Target group:	Targets	Indicator
marginalised Roma communities	- to improve the environment and social conditions in segregated settlements	- number of personal hygiene centres and laundries - number of the field social workers
	- to improve the access of the Roma living in segregated settlement to the provision of healthcare services	- number of the field health centres - number of health assistants
	- to increase support for labour market training and training and job creation	- number of inhabitants of Roma settlements placed in the labour market
	- to increase the motivation and support of educating Roma children and youth at primary, secondary schools and universities	- number of students who successfully graduate from secondary school, or university
	- to ensure adequate housing of communities experiencing social exclusion	- number of newly-built, reconstructed apartments or otherwise ensured housing
	- to use in maximum the resources from the structural funds and the Social Development Fund in favour of the integration of Roma communities	- share of funds drawn for the solution of the exclusion of marginalised Roma communities in the total financial resources of the state fund and SDF

## Chapter 3

### Political measures

At the beginning of the second chapter we saw that a growth in employment is the most efficient way how to fight poverty in Slovakia. The employment policy in the SR is linked to the *European Employment Strategy* and its key challenges were identified in the *Joint Assessment of the Employment Policy Priorities in the Slovak Republic*, in the *Strategy of Supporting Employment Growth Through Changes in the Social System and Labour Market* and are reflected on an ongoing basis in the *National Action Plans for Employment* for the specific period (NAPE).

The basis for fulfilling the employment strategy was formed by the reform of the social system, in particular by the new *Act on Employment Services* and the *Act on Assistance in Material Need*, as well as institutional reform, rooted in the *Act on the Organisation of State Administration at the Social Affairs and Employment Section*. The *Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources (SOP HR)*, *Single Programming Document NUTS II – Bratislava Objective 3 and Initiative EQUAL* were prepared as the essential prerequisite for efficient use of ESF resources for supporting activities in the field of employment, creating equal opportunities and investing in human resources. It is expected that just on the basis of the SOP HR 85 000 jobs will be created for disadvantaged groups of job seekers, where 27 000 of these will begin to conduct business on their own.

#### 3.1. Supporting the employment and employability of groups of the population with an increased risk of social exclusion

For the successful realisation of this objective, resources from the European Social Fund will be used via four national projects that will be implemented by the *Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the SR* over the years 2004-2006, with the help of offices of labour, social affairs and the family.

Target: To increase the creation of jobs and employment of disadvantaged groups of the population

One of the most important conditions for increasing employment is the creation of new jobs. In order to support the creation of new jobs in the form of a contribution for increased costs relating to the employment of disadvantaged job seekers, a national project called *Supporting the Employment of the Unemployed with Emphasis on Disadvantaged Groups in the Labour Market* has been prepared. Jobs newly-created by employers will be supported from the ESF in the amount of SKK 688.8 million for a period of two years.

In the framework of this project a contribution for self-employment of unemployed job seekers will also be provided, and this only for provable expenses and during the constant performance of self-employment for a period of two years. A condition for providing this contribution is also the requirement to prepare and submit the business plan. The amount of the contribution will be graduated subject to the specific conditions of the region in which the contribution is provided. In regions and districts having a higher rate of registered unemployment this contribution is higher.

We will continue supporting, in individual regions of the SR, the development of the network of supported employment agencies, which provide a package of services intended in particular for disabled people who need specific support in order to gain or keep a job. At the same time these agencies provide assistance and advice to employers in setting up and operating sheltered workplaces and sheltered workshops for disabled people.

Other measures that will operate to increase the rate of employment of disadvantaged groups of the population are also the following adopted measures:

- liberalisation in the employment of old-age pensioners and invalidity pensioners,
- thorough application of the principle of equality in the approach to life-long learning and equality in access to the labour market and equality in treatment in employment
- targeted active measures in the labour market for disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

Target: To support the maintenance and creation of working habits

For fulfilling this target the national project the *Activation of the Unemployed and the Unemployed with a Low Motivation of those Dependent on Material Need Assistance* has been prepared, and for which financial resources from the ESF are assigned in the amount of SKK 526.8 mill. The main aim of the project is to support the maintenance of working habits, in particular of those long-term unemployed job seekers who are dependent on the material need assistance. By increasing the motivation of municipalities and legal entities or natural persons, cooperation of the state administration, local self-government and business entities are expected in solving local employment. These entities are provided with a contribution for activation activities, which may be used for covering a part of expenses outlaid for personal protective equipment, accident insurance of job seekers carrying out activation activities, and for settling a part of the total labour cost of an employee who organises the activation activities of job seekers.

The issue of motivating job seekers who at the same time draw material need assistance is based on increasing the basic material need assistance by the activation contribution for their participation in minor services for a municipality and in voluntary works organised by legal or natural persons. The purpose of organising minor municipality services is to renew and maintain working habits that are realised by means of suitable labour activities, taking into account age, the state of health, education and length of practice.

Target: To increase the integration of disabled people in the labour market

For ensuring the realisation of this target, the national project the *Support of Employing Disabled People* was prepared, for which SKK 302.3 million has been assigned from the ESF. Its main aim is to support the integration of disabled people into the labour market by means of supporting the creation and maintenance of jobs at an employer and supporting the self-employment of disabled people. For this purpose the employer will be provided with a contribution for setting up a sheltered workshop or sheltered workplace and for their retention, maintenance, a contribution for covering provable additional costs and a contribution for covering operating costs. The contribution will also be provided to cover expenses outlaid for the transport of employees and for activities of a work assistant who

provides aid to an disabled employee in performing targets related to the employee's employment. These instruments support the creation of a job for a longer period, since in the case that the job supported lasts less than three years, a proportional part of the financial contribution must be returned.

In order to support self-employment a disabled person will be provided a contribution for the start-up of operating and performing self-employment, a contribution for covering provable additional expenses and a contribution for covering operating costs of the sheltered workplace. The contribution will be provided only for provable costs related to self-employment and only to a disabled person who will perform such activities constantly for at least two years.

In addition to the already mentioned contributions for setting up a sheltered workshop and the contribution for performing self-employment, the Act on Employment Services also creates, for support the employment of disabled persons, a legal framework for the creation of supported employment agencies. In the framework of the twinning project of the SR – Austria, over the years 2000-2002 4 trial supported employment agencies have been set up in Banska Bystrica, Vranov nad Toplou and two in Bratislava. Through cooperation with employers they continue successfully to create jobs and prepare disabled clients to enter employment.

Target: To increase employability of young people through labour market training and retraining
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The Act on Employment Services, in the framework of active labour market measures, defines in legislative terms the contribution for performing the practice for graduated. The contribution for performing the graduation practice enables the graduate to gain skills and practical experience corresponding to his/her level of education achieved.

While performing the practice for graduated offices of labour and social affairs provide to the school graduate a flat-rate contribution in the amount of SKK 1 500 monthly to cover their essential personal expenses connected with the participation in the practice for graduated. An office may also provide to a school graduate compensation for insurance premiums for accident insurance during the performance of the graduation practice. Similarly, a flat-rate contribution of SKK 1 000 is provided monthly in order to cover essential expenses per graduate also to the employer where the practice is being performed.

The development of skills of secondary school-leavers and university graduates should be supported also by the project under preparation from the Ministry of Education of the SR, the *Multiplication of the Graduate Training Firm project to all 8 Higher Territorial Units of Slovakia*. On the basis of this project training firms should be established in selected towns, covering eight regions, where graduates could learn to solve problems in a creative way, to make decisions, to use the latest ICT. A graduate from a training firm will be able to present a certificate, a document on practice that will facilitate their entry into the labour market.

Increasing the employability of young people will be assisted also by activities supported from the ESF by means of the SOP Human Resources, in the framework of the measure *Increasing the scope, improving and broader provision of further education with the aim of improving the qualification and adaptability of employees*. The activities will be aimed in

particular at implementing new forms of further education, e.g. second chance programmes, the creation of distance-learning centres and the development of new forms of, for instance, e-learning. For the Bratislava region this target will be achieved by means of activities of the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava, in the framework of the measure *Improving the quality of employment and competitiveness of the Bratislava region by developing human resources in the field of research and development*.

Target: To increase the degree of education and qualification of the unemployed according to needs of the labour market

*Labour market training and retraining* is another national project, the aim of which is to facilitate the entry and return of the unemployed to the labour market by means of training and retraining taking account of the individual needs of job seekers on the one hand and the needs of the economy and new industries on the other. Low education and obsolete qualification in the case of a significant part of the long-term unemployed requires principal intervention in the system of education, increasing its scope and quality as well as the level of job seekers' vocational skills. For this project SKK 420.0 mill was assigned from the ESF.

The project should also contribute to decreasing regional disparities in the qualification structure of the supply and demand for labour. In order to balance the disequilibrium between the qualification structures of the labour supply and demand in a respective region it will be necessary to prepare regional programmes of labour market training and retraining. This requires the active cooperation of social partners, as well as local authorities, professional associations, etc., so that their requirements are taken into consideration in the regional programme.

In the framework of the SOP HR the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the SR declared a challenge for demand-oriented projects focused on the *Development of education and training of job seekers with the aim of improving their opportunities in the labour market*, where target groups are all categories of job seekers, including persons entering the labour market for the first time. EUR 2 500 000 is reserved for the first round of this challenge.

Regional and local organisations have also become involved in solving the problem of employability. For instance, in Presov region the higher territorial unit (HTU), as the coordinator of activities, prepared the trial project the *Education and Advisory Centre* which will be realised at the local level in the partnership of the municipality, NGOs, the community, the HTU and Offices of Labour and Social Affairs. The aim of the project is to create new jobs for persons afflicted by social exclusion, through creating a group of entrepreneurs, mainly from Roma background. On the basis of the project, in three stages leaders will be trained, then business plans will be further prepared, trade licences set up, and in the end a stay in the incubator, including legal and financial consultancy.

### **3.2. Preventing exclusion through supporting the adaptability and mobility of the labour force**

The best political measures in the field of employment include either preventing the loss of a job or creating the conditions for more successful movement in the labour market.

Target: To create conditions for the development of life-long learning

To create a system of life-long learning, to build up structures and the conditions for its implementation across the SR, these are the objectives of the project of the Ministry of Education of the SR the *Creation, development and implementation of an open system of life-long learning*. The objective of this project is to create and implement new forms and methods of further education, its horizontal and vertical permeation with the formal system of education. The target group in the framework of the project will be people with a low level of qualification, incomplete education, but also teachers, employees who increase their qualification in the form of further education.

Increasing the employability of young people will also be assisted by activities supported from the ESF by means of the SOP Human Resources, in the framework of the measure *Increasing the scope, improvement and broader provision of further education with the aim of improving the qualification and adaptability of employees*. The activities will be aimed in particular at implementing of new forms of further education, e.g. second chance programmes, the creation of distance learning centres and the development of new forms of, for instance, e-learning. In the framework of this measure the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the SR (MLSA&F SR) has declared a challenge for demand-oriented projects focused on persons with insufficient qualification, threatened by a loss of employment. EUR 2.5 million is reserved for the first round of this challenge.

For the Bratislava region this target will be achieved by means of the activities of the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava, in the framework of the measure *Improving the quality of employment and competitiveness of the Bratislava region by developing human resources in the field of research and development*.

At the same time, in the framework of the system of life-long learning we support the establishment of third-age universities at existing universities. Currently third-age university are set up at 10 universities.

Target: To increase the labour mobility

Labour mobility plays a key role in removing differences in the living standard between the regions. The free movement of people between regions operates as a very effective, long-term and systematic mechanism for levelling out differences between regions. The following measures contribute to increasing internal labour mobility, as well as international, in particular near-frontier labour mobility.

In the framework of internal mobility this is a contribution for moving for work, supporting the development of the construction of rented apartments in dynamic regions, capacities in the public interest in transport.

In order to increase the territorial mobility for job opportunities, the offices of labour, social affairs and the family have, since February 2004, provided a contribution for moving for work, which is based on the Act on Employment Services. The contribution may be requested by job seekers who accepted employment outside the place of their permanent residence and at the same time moved to the place of performing the new employment. It is provided once in two years in the amount of SKK 10 000. Making this contribution



dependent on a change in permanent residence, however, causes it to be ineligible for a large part of at-risk groups, and thus, in the case of these groups, it not very effective as an instrument for support of the mobility of such groups, since a change to permanent residence also presumes the purchase of an apartment.

A support instrument for increasing mobility in searching for work is the settlement of a part of travelling expenses. According to the Act on Employment Services the office of labour, social affairs and the family shall provide every job seeker with compensation for a part of travelling expenses which are connected with a job interview or selection proceedings. Compensation of travelling expenses may be also received by a job seeker who, in the framework of their individual action plan, participates in activities outside their place of residence.

Target: To facilitate the reconciliation of family and working life

The new Act on Employment Services, in order to facilitate access to labour market training and retraining, enables offices of labour, social affairs and the family to provide a contribution for services for a family with children. An unemployed parent looking after a child before beginning school attendance and who participates in labour market training and retraining, may receive a contribution for a child up to the amount of SKK 1 200, and for each further child up to SKK 900 monthly. Issues concerning health and social services supporting the harmonisation of the family and working life are dealt with in the framework of the access to health services.

For supporting this target in the framework of the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the SR declared a challenge for demand-oriented projects focused on the *Removing barriers to inequality between men and women in the labour market with an emphasis on reconciliation of working and family life*. The target groups here are both employed and unemployed women, persons with family obligations, women from ethnic minorities, single mothers, single fathers, and job seekers with family obligations. EUR 3 million is reserved for the first round of this challenge.

### **3.3. Guaranteeing the necessary resources for a decent life while supporting motivation towards self-reliance and independence**

Target: To deepen the positive effects of a change in the material need assistance system

In order to deepen the positive effects of social reform measures concerning in particular the amount, differentiation and manner of paying out benefits for the unemployed and those in material need, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family has prepared various programmes and measures through which it solves the current social situation of specific groups, while maintaining a motivation effect.

The Government, with the effect from 15 April 2004, increased the activation contribution from SKK 1 000 to SKK 1 500 monthly for those drawing material need assistance and who are active in a form of minor municipality services or voluntary works, education and labour market training. Similarly, it increased the protective contribution for those who are unable to solve their adverse social situation by means of activities on the labour market.

An expansion of the sphere of material need assistance beneficiaries is being prepared to include invalidity pensioners and parents on maternity leave. In this way a quarter of the income, i.e. invalidity pension, maternity and parental contribution, will not be included in the calculation for determining the claim to material need assistance. In the case of single parents the period of drawing protective contribution shall be extended from the current 14 to 31 weeks of the child's age.

In order to deepen the positive effects of the new system of material need assistance, while preserving the motivation effect of this system, a MLSA&F SR Decree has been prepared which enables, with force as of 1 May 2004, founders of pre-school facilities and primary schools to be provided with subsidies for catering and school requisites for children from families to which material need assistance is provided. Its intention is to protect children from families with the lowest incomes from insufficient nutrition in their decisive development period and to create for them favourable conditions for education. The motivation effect should be incorporated in the disbursement of scholarships for these students of primary schools, where the amount of the scholarship should depend on the student's marks.

Target: To ensure the real value of state social benefits

The MLSA&F SR is preparing the valorisation of state social benefits and in connection with the growth in prices for energy and of VAT it also proposes to increase the material need assistance benefit and housing contribution.

Target: To activate and support the social integration of persons with a severe health disability

The Social Assistance Act sets out the solution to the social need of such inhabitants by means of a compensation for the social consequences of severe health disability, and this through providing social services or financial contributions for compensation for the social consequences of the severe health disability. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family is in 2004 preparing a new legal form, as a specific legal regulation, of issues concerning the compensation of social consequences of severe health disability in the form of financial contributions. Its aim will be to link individual instruments directly to proven social activity of persons with a severe health disability. At the same time the mentioned instruments should be provided to this groups in particular when they are engaged in the educational, labour or civic field. This year the MLSA&F SR is also preparing a new legal regulation on social services and on the socio-legal protection of adults.

In accordance with the reform steps of the health and social system a pilot project is underway, the *Implementation and Development of Community Rehabilitation in the Slovak Republic*, which is to serve for the development of a new approach towards the provision of services to citizens with special needs, towards the more efficient use of

existing capacities in the framework of a community, as well as an overall increase in the quality of the services provided. The main aim of the project is to increase coordination in the provision of health and social services.

For improving the living conditions of citizens suffering from mental and behavioural disorders, who are provided with care in social services homes, the Government has passed the project *Socio-Health Beds at Psychiatry*, which has been jointly prepared by the MoH SR and the MLSA&F SR.

Target: To continue in the professional and public discussion on the subsistence minimum, taking into account the concepts of absolute and relative poverty

The target was proposed by the members of the preparatory committee founding the Slovak network against poverty and social exclusion. The initiators of the discussion are to be the Slovak Sociological Society (methodological section), the Sociological Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, university employees and NGO in the field of poverty and social exclusion, under the participation of representatives from the relevant departmental workplaces. The discussion is to take course in the form of professional undertakings, prepared publications, or organised programmes in the mass-communication media.

### **3.4. Facilitating access for all to legal aid, decent housing, available health services, education, transport and cultural values**

#### **3.4.1. Access to legal aid**

Target: To maintain legal aid free

The provision of free legal aid to socially deprived citizens was initiated by the Ministry of Justice SR (MoJ SR) back in 1999. The aid is intended for citizens who cannot afford it with regard to their personal and property circumstances. The provision of free legal advice is focused on the field of civil, family and labour law.

In civil proceedings the court's obligation is to determine a representative from among lawyers to protect the interests of a citizen who does not dispose of funds to cover expenses related to his/her representation and to free him/her from legal fees.

In criminal proceedings an accused who does not dispose of sufficient funds or assets to cover defence costs shall be entitled to a free defence, or one for reduced fees.

The intention of the Department of Justice is to build up a system of free legal aid ranging from legal advice to representation before the courts, which should be governed by law. The main criterion for the occurrence of the claim to the provision of free legal aid should be the status of material need.

### 3.4.2. Access to housing

Target: To increase the construction of rented apartments

State support in the field of apartment construction is realised by means of the State Housing Development Fund (SHDF) and the Housing Development Programme.

In October 2003 the *Updating of the Apartment Development Construction Policy* was approved, in which financial instruments of housing development support were evaluated and subsequently the move to improve their efficiency was proposed. With regard to the fact that the volume of financial resources in the state budget for the field of housing development is limited, it has been necessary to direct the provision of the state support in particular towards social housing, i.e. housing intended for citizens with a limited household income, to apartments with a limited floor space and limited acquisition costs per m<sup>2</sup> of floor space.

According to the conceptual state apartment policy to 2010 rented apartments should form approximately half of newly-built apartments in Slovakia, with a forecast construction of 20 thousand apartments yearly. A quarter of this figure, approximately 5 thousand apartments yearly, should belong to the public rented sector.

In 2004 the state budget set aside for the SHDF financial resources in the amount of SKK 2 519.4 mill. Municipalities and towns want, by means of these advantageous loans, to build more than 2 300 apartments in Slovak regions.

Target: To sustain financial support for the acquisition of apartments for at-risk groups

The support for the acquisition or improvement of housing may be provided from the State Housing Development Fund for a citizen of the SR, older than 18 years of age, whose income must not exceed a 3.5 times the subsistence minimum. Another condition for the provision of the support is the limited floor space of the apartment, which however does not relate to a barrier-free apartment. At present it is possible to obtain support for the acquisition of an apartment (construction, or purchase of an apartment) from the State Housing Development Fund in the form of an advantageous loan and non-refundable contribution. Support in the form of a loan may be provided for up to 80% of the acquisition price of the apartment, at maximum though SKK 1 mill., with an interest rate of at max. 3.6% and a repayment period of up to 30 years. The loan conditions are specified according to the individual purposes of the support.

An applicant who acquires housing for a disabled citizen may be provided with a contribution in the amount of 50% of the acquisition price, at maximum SKK 100 000. Through the Fund, on average, the acquisition of approximately 200 barrier-free apartments is supported annually. The support by means of the State Housing Development Fund may be also provided for the construction of social services facilities, renovation of an apartment building and construction of a municipal rented apartment.

In the framework of the housing development programme for the acquisition of rented apartments the municipality, town, town quarter, or a non-profit organisation set up by the

state or municipality, ensuring the acquisition of rented apartments or a non-profit organisation performing public-welfare services, may obtain a subsidy up to the amount of 30% of acquisition costs of the construction, where however the average acquisition cost per 1 m<sup>2</sup> of an apartment must not be exceeded. Tenants of these apartments may be citizens whose income and income of persons assessed jointly does not exceed three-times the subsistence wage. However, of the total number of apartments acquired at minimum 1% of apartments must be barrier-free in the case that the municipality registers a request for the allocation of such an apartment. In 2004 the State Budget set aside for the realisation of the *Housing Development Programme* in the part *Sub-Programme for the Provision of Subsidies for Acquiring Rented Apartments* financial resources in the amount of SKK 845 mill.

Target: To provide financial support for tenants of residential rooms in facilities intended for permanent residence

The MLSA&F SR is preparing, in the framework of the amendment to the Act on Assistance in Material Need, the possibility of providing a contribution for housing to tenants of residential rooms in facilities intended for permanent residence (hostels).

### 3.4.3. Access to health

Target: To ensure access to quality healthcare on the basis of the principle of universality, equality and solidarity

In the framework of the health reform draft acts are in the legislative process, founded on solidarity, universality and equality of access to healthcare for all citizens. According to the draft act on the scope of healthcare, risk shall be distributed according to disease, where it is not possible to require the contribution from a patient, and those where it is possible to require various forms of contribution. The draft act protects citizens against the risk of high costs for healthcare, and ensures free immediate care. Long-term care will be solved by a specific act on long-term care. The new institute of healthcare supervision shall ensure the protection of patients' rights and recovery of the set liability of the providers and health insurance companies.

Target: To support preventive healthcare programmes

Preventive programmes and projects should contribute to reducing early mortality and prolonging life expectancy primarily in the field of cardiology and oncology, realised by the Department of Health of the SR. Their aim is to diagnose the early stages of these serious diseases and subsequently to ensure their effective treatment. In the Slovak Republic, in the framework of the *National Health Support Programme*, preventive educational programmes are also realised as well as planned, the aim of which is to change lifestyles, support cardio-vascular health, eliminate bad habits and create positive environmental living conditions. The participation of Slovak citizens in these preventive examinations is free of charge. These projects are financed from departmental and interdepartmental funds.

In fact, prevention is cheaper than treatment itself and many diseases can be cured, if they are diagnosed early on. The New Treatment Code of the MoH SR contains a list of procedures that will form a part of preventive examinations, which will be fully covered from health insurance.

Target: To ensure integrated health and social care for the long-term ill

The system of a long-term care is under preparation, where this will integrate the social and healthcare for long-term ill persons of all age categories and for disabled people. The system of long-term care will integrate the joint financial resources from the state budget and health insurance and private funds. It will take into consideration the social and financial situation of persons to whom the long-term care is provided. The largest group to which the long-term care will be provided is the elderly. Care will be provided in the person's natural environment and in long-term care facilities.

#### **3.4.4. Access to education**

Target: To ensure financial accessibility of secondary schools and universities for pupils and students from low-income families

On the basis of the Edict of the Ministry of Education of the SR on the provision of scholarships to secondary and special school students, applicable from 1 June 2004 the implementation of the national project *Provision of Secondary-School Scholarships for Students of Secondary Schools whose Parents are Dependent on Material Need Assistance* was commenced. The aim of this national project, co-financed from the ESF, is to provide secondary-school scholarships as an instrument for facilitating access to education for students whose parents are in material need. The provision of scholarships also has a motivation effect, since the amount of the social scholarship differentiates according to the student's study results.

In the case of university students, where the introduction of school fees is expected, several similar mechanisms are proposed. In particular, a student will be able to choose a loan up to the amount of the school fee, the repayment of which will begin when the student is employed and when their income exceeds the minimum wage threshold, and where the amount of the instalment must not exceed 10% of the wage.

Students from socially deprived families shall be also paid a social scholarship, depending on the family income and number of family members. A higher scholarship will be available to those who will commute more than 30 km to school.

Target: To increase the quality of education and bring the education system into line with the needs of the labour market

The contribution to the increasing the quality of university education and its harmonisation with the needs of the labour market should also be brought by the transformation of study in study fields into more flexible forms of education in study programmes and their accreditation according to new criteria. The draft amendment to the University Act is planned to strengthen the competences of the Accreditation Commission with the possibility of the participation of its experts in education, including examinations.

Increasing the education level should be also affected by the realisation of the project *Experimental verification of the effectiveness of a Roma language and literature curriculum at primary and secondary schools*, passed by the Ministry of Education of the SR from September 2003 to June 2009. Also, the project “*Experimental verification of the effectiveness of the curriculum subject Roma culture and habits at selected primary and secondary schools*” is being prepared for approval by the Ministry of Education of the SR, with its realisation from September 2004.

The realisation of this target in the framework of the department of the Ministry of Education of the SR is possible by means of measures 3.1 *Adaptation of vocational education and training to the requirements of a knowledge-based society* and 3.2 SOP HZ and measure 2.1 of IPD NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, which are oriented on making vocational education and curriculums of higher quality in accordance with the needs of the labour market and for increasing labour force adaptability (i.e. employees, persons entering on the labour market) on the labour market.

#### **3.4.5. Access to transport**

Target: to maintain affordability for at-risk groups of the population

The current system of reductions provided for bus and railway transport for families with children, the elderly, disabled persons and their companions is given in Appendix 3.

Target: to complete barrier-free access for persons with a severe health disability to public buildings (post offices, hospitals, schools, cultural institutions, etc.)

In all building investment events of the Slovak Post Office (Slovenska posta, s. p.) under preparation (post offices: Senica, Trnava, Nitra, Senkvice, Myjava, Sturovo, Banska Bystrica) the access of immobile persons to the building is solved in a barrier-free manner. The requirements of sight-impaired persons are also respected. Project documentation for the construction of a lift in the yard part of the main post office building in Bratislava is prepared (realisation in 2004), enabling the immobile, elderly and movement-impaired persons to access the higher floors (headquarters, complaints, registry, etc.). The project documentation for the Post Office Kosice 23 solves the access communication from the external area to the ground floor of the post office as a ramp. This construction will be realised in 2004.

Building barrier-free accesses to post office buildings depends on the possibilities that the Slovak Post Office has in the field of investment construction. In buildings where it is possible, and if the post office is not located in leased premises and the building is settled in terms of property and law, and also has a suitable connection of the external public area to the entry part of the post office building, etc., it is possible to apply in the project solution a requirement for barrier-free access. For financing these constructions the Slovak Post Office uses financial resources gained from their own business activity. Upon the request of elderly persons and persons with a health disability the Slovak Post Office will ensure financial services and the payment of pensions by means of carriers on the basis of an agreement with the client.

### 3.4.6. Access to culture

Target: To contribute to increase awareness of the social inclusion process in population

The Ministry of Culture of the SR shall incorporate among its targets for the coming years, by means of the *National Enlightenment Centre*, the organisation of seminars that will focus on increasing the public's awareness on poverty and social inclusion. The fulfilment of these targets shall be ensured in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and authorities of territorial self-government.

Target: To support cultural activities and the publication of periodicals of ethnic minorities and other at-risk groups

The Ministry of Culture shall support from the grant system, in the framework of the programme *National minorities* – of the sub-programme *Disadvantaged groups*, cultural activities, the periodical as well as non-periodical press of nongovernmental organisations and territorial self-government authorities, provided that these activities will be focused on the integration of disadvantaged groups.

### 3.5. Creating conditions for supporting family solidarity and preventing social exclusion

Target: To support family solidarity by improving conditions for enabling care for family members

The MLSA&F SR is preparing a proposal for system changes and measures in family policy, in the framework of which instruments are being prepared in particular to support the reconciliation of working and family obligations. Some measures have already been mentioned above in connection with the target of facilitating access to employment for families with children and in the field of healthcare in the target of ensuring an integrated health and social care for the long-term ill.

Target: To expand and improve the quality of socio-legal protection and social prevention

The protection of the rights and interests of under-age **children** protected by law is safeguarded by means of the socio-legal protection, and which constitutes mainly care activities, organising, decision-making activities and other activities. An integral part of the measures is the protection of rights of the under-age children in relation to abroad and the performance of other roles according to international treaties in the field of children's rights that are ensured and coordinated by the Centre for the International-Legal Protection of Children and Youth, headquartered in Bratislava. An important task in the field of children rights protection is thorough compliance with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in the conditions of the SR. The basic starting points in protecting children's rights, avoiding risks to their personal and social development, are contained in the draft *Act on the socio-legal protection of children and on social prevention*, the aims of which are oriented so that under-age children, in the case of family failure, threat to health or life, or



disruption in their education or their psychological, physical and social development, have such care available that is essential for their welfare, satisfying their needs and which respects their best interests.

Support for the conditions for the appropriate psychological, physical and social development of children is laid down in the *National Action Plan for Children*, which contains also measures for children whose education is seriously threatened or disrupted, maltreated and abused children, children threatened by socio-pathological development. Attention is focused primarily on strengthening work with the family, social work in the field, crisis intervention and other measures of social prevention and socio-legal protection. Support for the integration of children and youth following the completion of institutional or protective care into a natural social environment will be focused on improving the original environment of the biological family, creation of conditions for application on the labour market and support for becoming independent, e.g. through the provision of protective accommodation – “half-way homes”, or shelters for youth following the completion of institutional care.

Measures for the **drug addicted** are codified in the *National Programme of the Fight Against Drugs, the National Action Plan for Alcohol Problems, and the National Action Plan for Synthetic Drugs*. Their fulfilment and financial coverage is coordinated by the General Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers for Drug Addictions and Drug Control.

Preventing the exclusion of **persons following the execution of punishment** is realised in cooperation with the Department of Justice, Department of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family and the Prison and Justice Guard Corps of the Department of Justice of the SR. It consists of applying alternative punishments, probation and mediation programmes, penitentiary interconnections and post-penitentiary assistance.

Specific measures for **victims of domestic violence** are contained in the *Crime Prevention Strategy in the SR*. In cooperation with the Council of the SR Government for Crime Prevention the orientation of the measures is focused on supporting the activities of advice centres for victims of violence, preparing a strategy of preventing and eliminating violence committed against women and in families, support for programmes for social, situation and victim prevention, cooperation of authorities of local state administration, self-government and non-state entities.

### **3.6. Access to information-communication technologies for groups of the population threatened by poverty and social exclusion**

Target: To increase computer literacy and availability of ICT for vulnerable groups of the population
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On the basis of the *Strategy of the informatisation of society in the Slovak Republic* and the *Action Plan* approved in January 2004, the Government adopted a task in which it undertook to ensure by 2005 the process of increasing the computer literacy of specific groups of the population. These groups included women after maternity leave and parental leave, Roma people, disabled persons, the elderly and persons living in remote excluded regions.

In the framework of these documents several tasks have been set up also for ensuring access to education for all children. Since 1999 the project Infovek [*InfoAge*] has been being implemented at schools, the aim of which is to prepare the younger generation for their application in the global information society and to equip all schools with information laboratories. By 2005 all primary and secondary schools should be equipped with computers and connected to the Internet. Each of them shall receive six computers. The introduction of the Internet to all schools across Slovakia will enable access to it even in the most remote and secluded areas of Slovakia where there is a school, thus giving a chance to all children (including children coming from poor or excluded families) to apply themselves in the modern information society.

The Ministry of Education is planning in cooperation with the private sector to draw up by 2008 a strategy of informatisation of the regional school system. The Department of Education shall this year outlay on the regional school system informatisation project SKK 450 million.

In the framework of the Infovek project a project has been launched consisting of an expanded use of Internet laboratories at schools for the needs of the local community. This will thus enable relatively cheap and for vulnerable groups be often the only possible means of access to Internet at the time when classes are not used during the education process – after school hours, i.e. mainly in the evening and night hours, at weekends and during vacations. Since the last year 230 schools have been selected, which opened their computer laboratories to all citizens of the given locality after school hours. In the framework of this project the schools received a subsidy of approximately SKK 100 000, which they used prevalingly for the purchase of further computer and other technology. Schools had to gain a further approx. SKK 15 000 on their own. The project *Open School* will run until 2008.

### **3.7. Supporting social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of the population**

Target: To ensure an integrated approach towards the solution of the specific integration problems of migrants and homeless
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Despite the fact that the number of **asylum seekers** in Slovakia has so far not been large, the MLSA&F supports projects focused on their inclusion. In particular it has extended authorisations for performing social prevention and consultancy for selected civic associations which are, jointly with the representative office of the UNHCR, implementers of the project *Integration of persons granted asylum in the SR*. The project's aim is to integrate newly-accepted asylum seekers into the majority society in the course of three years and ensure their full independence in the form of legal and social consultancy, assistance and material provision.

The Immigration Authority, in its facilities, ensures for asylum seekers a one-time offer of corresponding accommodation and education in the Slovak language, thus fulfilling one of the main principles for the possible adaptation of these persons to the conditions of life in our society. In 2004 several projects are being supported and partially financed by the Immigration Authority.

The projects *Social and psychological assistance, material aid for asylum seekers in asylum facilities in Gabčíkovo and in the holding camp at Opatovska Nova Ves* are focused on ensuring financial resources, human resources, material aid, social, psychological and legal consultancy. The submitters of these projects are the Slovak Humanitarian Council (SHC) and the Society of People of Good Will. The total amount of funds outlaid for these projects will represent more than SKK 1.1 million, where the Immigration Authority of the Ministry of the Interior of the SR shall contribute with almost SKK 0.5 million.

In 2004 SHC, UNHCR and the Immigration Authority will cooperate on the project of procedural custody, *Unaccompanied Under-Aged Children*. The aim of this project is, by means of a procedural custodian, to see to ensuring the protection of interests of unaccompanied under-age children during their time in the asylum procedure.

Care for the **homeless** is currently carried out in particular at the local level in cooperation between self-government authorities of municipalities and non-governmental and charitable organisations. Their assistance relates to giving out food, hygiene and in several cases also temporary accommodation. The Bratislava self-governing region (BSGR), in the framework of its social programme, opened at the end of last year a Shelter for the Homeless. Financing for this project was provided by the representatives of the private sector in the framework of their humanitarian programme. In cooperation with individual town quarters of Bratislava and mayors of other towns the BSGR intends to build up a network of shelters across the whole region, with the help of the European Union. The aim of the shelter network is to provide first aid to the homeless and help them in their inclusion into society. Addressing the issues of the homeless is also possible in the framework of the initiative EQUAL, or the Social Development Fund. In the grant challenge of the SDF the establishment of local social inclusion partnerships and microprojects in communities will be supported.

### **3.8. Comprehensive approach to solving the exclusion of Roma communities**

In 2002 the Government passed the *Comprehensive Development Programme of Roma Settlements*, which outlines the strategy for integrating the Roma living in segregated settlements into the majority society. The programme states that at present the fully-fledged integration of Roma settlements into municipalities is as yet not possible. The primary aim is to create in Roma settlements amenities, communication connections with the parent municipality, to create a technical infrastructure, to mitigate and progressively over time to remove social segregation, to change the municipal (public) opinion in respect of the Roma and to create space for the gradual integration of the Roma into municipalities. The aim of the programme is a comprehensive solution to the situation in selected Roma settlements and a permanently sustainable process of increasing the quality of life of their inhabitants. The pilot *project of social workers in the field* linked to this programme, where the realisation of the former is understood as an essential precondition for launching the long-term Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Roma Settlements.

In 2003 the Government adopted the *Basic Theses of the Government Conceptual Policy in the Integration of Roma Communities*, in which measures in the short-term, medium-term and long-term horizons were outlined for supporting the inclusion of the Roma ethnic

minority in the field of education, employment, social affairs, housing, health, human rights and culture.

Target: To improve the environment and social conditions in segregated settlements

In 2004 in the framework of the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Roma Settlements the MLSA&F SR shall coordinate and financially support the project *Establishing Personal Hygiene and Laundry Centres* and will also financially support the project of *social workers in the field*. From March 2004 the MLSA&F SR *Decree on the provision of subsidies* entered into force, according to which municipalities will, by means of applications and a prepared project, be able to apply for a financial subsidy for setting up and materially and technically equipping a personal hygiene and laundry centre, in the amount of up to 80% of the acquisition cost. Municipalities will be able to receive the subsidy also for the wages and training of two municipality employees who will perform social work in the field. The period of the project's duration is not set in fixed manner. For 2004 financial resources of SKK 18.6 million have been allocated, of which SKK 6.6 million for social workers in the field and SKK 12 million for the community centres – social hygiene and laundry centres.

Since 2001 the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development has been realising the PHARE project – *Supporting Infrastructure for Roma Settlements*, the aim of which is to improve the living standard of Roma citizens, through introducing the lacking basic infrastructure into the settlements (e.g. potable water, sewerage, road communications, etc.). The project is aimed at the priority regions of Slovakia – Banska Bystrica, Presov and the Kosice regions, where the concentration of Roma communities is highest. 30 municipalities have been selected from these regions, and where the project has begun to be realised. It is expected that the project will be completed in 2005, where its total financial support represents EUR 16.4 million (EUR 8.3 million is from the PHARE funds and EUR 8.4 million from national co-financing).

Target: To improve the access of the Roma living in segregated settlement to the provision of healthcare services

The availability of healthcare is given in the applicable legislation by the township system of labour. From January 2004 to December 2005 the Ministry of Health will be running the project *Improving the Access of the Roma to Healthcare* for communities living in especially isolated and marginalised Roma settlements. The Ministry of Health of the SR shall select 10 municipalities with a high representation of the Roma population, where local municipality buildings will be reconstructed into healthcare centres. 10 mobile medical units – field healthcare centres with equipment – will be purchased, and which will visit remote and isolated settlements in which there is not even basic infrastructure. On the basis of the project 32 healthcare assistants will be financed who shall be trained and will operate in all municipalities for about 13 to 15 months. Besides cooperation with local doctors, they will also devote their attention to the health education of young Roma at schools. This is a pilot project that, if it is successful, will be extended to other excluded areas. The project is financed from the PHARE programme in the amount of EUR 1.250 million and co-financed from state budget funds in the amount of EUR 460 000.

The Ministry of Health of the SR shall in 2004 support also several minor educational projects for marginalised Roma communities (in the total approved financial value of approx. SKK 300 000), the aim of which is to increase the knowledgeability of the Roma community in the field of health (education for reproductive health and family planning, prevention against sexually-transmitted diseases, child upbringing towards personal hygiene and participation in preventive examinations, etc.).

Target: To increase the support for the labour market training and retraining and job creation in the case of marginalised Roma communities

This task is realised in particular by means of the already mentioned measures identified under the objective *Support for the employment and employability of groups with a increased risk of exclusion*.

In the framework of the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, the Social Development Fund will realise the project *Increasing employment of groups afflicted and threatened by social exclusion by means of social inclusion partnerships*. The aim of the project is to increase the rate of employment of socially marginalised groups by means of social inclusion partnerships which will be established at various territorial levels (municipality, district, district of the office of labour, social affairs and the family, [self-governing] region) and the aim of which will be to identify, prepare and realise labour market training and employment programmes for the most socially disadvantaged population, in particular for members of separated and segregated Roma communities.

The Ministry of the Economy of the SR, in the framework of support for increasing the employment rate in marginalised regions with an emphasis on Roma communities, is planning to set aside for support the conduct of business by the Roma for 2005 funds in the amount of SKK 20.0 million. This will concern the programme of *Support for the conduct of business by Roma people*, on the basis of which those interested will be able to submit their projects, the aim of which will be to increase the employment rate and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the case of the Roma national minority.

Target: To increase the motivation and support for education of Roma children and youth at primary, secondary schools and universities

The amendment to the Act on Schools in 2002 enabled the establishment of a zero-year at primary schools and introduction of the profession of teacher assistant as a pedagogical employee. For the operation of teacher assistants and teachers of zero-year primary school in 2004 SKK 45 million is allocated according to the SR Government Regulation, which is to cover wage costs for 400 Roma assistants.

The project *Further integration of Roma children in the field of education and improving living conditions* within the programme PHARE 2002, should also contribute to improving the educational level of Roma children, and which will be realized by means of the Ministry of Education of the SR until 2005. The main aim of this project is to increase the integration of Roma children into the standard system of education. In order to achieve this aim, in 20 selected special primary schools classrooms will be created which will prepare children for study at standard primary schools. At the same time the conditions shall be created so that these children may attend the standard school in their place of residence.

The project has EUR 1 million available from PHARE resources and EUR 50 000 from national co-financing. A part of this project is also help in improving the living conditions of socially excluded citizens, by means of elaborating technical documentation for buildings.

The project *Support for the further integration of Roma people in the field of Upbringing and Education* of the PHARE 2003 programme shall be realised until 2006, with financial support of EUR 1 million from PHARE funds and EUR 0.11 million from national funds. The aim of the project is the preparation of a training programme and special methodology of tutoring and help for Roma children in the last two years at primary school with the view to preparing and motivating them for further education at secondary schools. Training courses at secondary schools will also be prepared in the framework of the project, focused on the training of Roma students for the changing requirements of the labour market.

The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities on the basis of SR Government Resolution No 278/2003 to the Basic Theses of the SR Government Conceptual Policy in the integration of Roma communities began, in the school year 2003/04, to provide funds for the *Support Programme for Roma students of secondary schools and universities*. These resources are intended for secondary schools, individuals and students of universities in order to facilitate study of gifted Roma students from socially deprived families. The aid relates to all schools included in the network of secondary schools, of school-leaving exam as well as non-school leaving exam specialisations (vocational and practical schools), including technical colleges as well as universities. For the work of the scholarship programme for Roma children in 2004 SKK 2 million was allocated, and SKK 3 million for supporting the secondary school system (teaching Roma studies, Gandhi school – an eight-year college for gifted children from a socially disadvantaged environment).

Target: To ensure adequate housing for communities experiencing the social exclusion
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One of the programmes partially addressing the issue of housing citizens in Roma settlements is the programme of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR. The programme is realised on the basis of SR Government Resolution No 335/2001 to the *Proposal of support for the construction of municipal rented apartments of a different standard, intended for housing citizens in material need, as well as the construction of technical amenities in Roma settlements*. In acquiring the apartments of a lower standard for persons in material need the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR may provide a subsidy of up to 80% of the acquisition cost of a structure. Such a subsidy is intended for the construction of apartments for citizens in Roma settlements, where at minimum 20% of the acquisition cost of the structure must be provided by the future tenants in the form of self-help. In 2004 the State Budget set aside SKK 180 million for realising the construction of apartments in Roma settlements. This programme represents a model in which it is necessary to continue also in the coming years. According to an estimate, these funds may cover the construction of 300 rented apartments for persons in material need in 20 Roma settlements.

At the same time in the interest of ensuring the fulfilment of the target, various programmes and other instruments are being prepared and realised which will be aimed at the housing of communities threatened by exclusion. State support in the field of apartment

construction is realised by means of the State Housing Development Fund and the Housing Development Programme.

Target: To make maximum use of the resources from the structural funds and the Social Development Fund in favour of the integration of Roma communities
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Several measures were defined in the framework of the sectoral operational programmes and their annexes which should contribute to a substantial solution of the situation of Roma communities. The financing of seven of these measures subsidised from the structural funds in the higher amount (80:20 rule) was successfully passed into the framework of Community support. Of them the most important are the following: 3.1 Development of civic infrastructure in the regions (SOP Basic Infrastructure), Measure 2.1 Improvement and development of infrastructure for protection and rational use (SOP Basic Infrastructure) – in justified cases (normally 75:25), Measure 5 Land adjustments (SOP Agriculture and Regional Development), Measure 1.1 Modernisation and increasing the scope and quality of employment services and the development of activation programmes for job seekers (SOP Human Resources), Measure 1.3 Development of Training and Retraining of Job Seekers with the Aim of Improving their Prospects in the Labour Market (SOP Human Resources) and Measure 2.1 Improving the employability of the groups threatened by social exclusion (SOP Human Resources).

The Social Development Fund, established by the Department of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, shall solve the problem of poverty and social exclusion of at-risk groups in the SR directly in the afflicted area or region. For its trial stage the most poverty-afflicted areas of Presov, Kosice and Banska Bystrica regions were chosen, where most of the separated and segregated Roma communities are also located. These will become the object and at the same time also the subject of the national project *Increasing the rate of employment of groups afflicted and threatened by social exclusion by means of social inclusion partnerships*, which the Fund is preparing to realise by means of stimulating the community development of the afflicted area.

## Chapter 4

### Institutional arrangements

The SR Government Resolution has commissioned all ministries and other central authorities of the state administration to participate in the preparation of the NAP/Inclusion. On the basis of this resolution and in addressing other entities and under the auspices of the MLSA&F SR a working group was set up comprising representatives of the central authorities of the state administration, Higher Territorial Units, the Confederation of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia, the academic sphere, research organisations, social partners and non-governmental organisations. This created the basis for cooperation at the horizontal level (between departmental ministries), at the vertical level (between the individual stages of the state administration and self-government), as well as at the intersectoral level (between government institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector).

#### 4.1. Mobilisation of public authorities at the national, regional and local level

In order that the performance of state administration in the field of social affairs, the family and employment services is brought closer to the citizen, a network of specialised state administration authorities has been created. With effect as of 1 January 2004 the *Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family* was established, with offices in the territorial district of each region. Through the headquarters, territorial offices and workplaces it is possible to make more efficient the cooperation with local self-government authorities and other entities and to improve the coordination of the aid provision to citizens with regard to the specific conditions and needs of the given regions.

The fight against poverty and social exclusion should also become a part of the strategic development plans of all regions and municipalities. In connection to these strategies specific objectives and measures should be elaborated in local, or regional inclusion action plans.

A welcome fact is that the most vulnerable regions have already made the first steps towards solving the exclusion of their inhabitants. For instance, the higher territorial unit of the Presov region, in the framework of its regional policy of the fight against poverty and exclusion has the following project objective for 2004: *Preparation of the regional strategy*. The aim of this project is to prepare a quality strategy for addressing issues of poverty at the level of regions, with the active participation of all socio-economic partners and under professional guidance. In the Kosice region they have the following project prepared: *Kosice Town: Social inclusion and the justice strategy (2004-2008)*. The main aim of this strategy is to reduce poverty, discrimination, abuse and other barriers to social inclusion and to undertake active steps in order that people are satisfied with their quality of life.

Towns, municipalities and town quarters are voluntarily grouped into 56 regional associations, in the framework of which they develop various forms of multi-municipal relationships, mutual cooperation and assistance, as well coordinate joint procedures. Of the total number of towns and municipalities in the SR 95% are covered by the



*Confederation of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia*, which currently has 2 771 members. It was via the CT&MS and its regional associations that many municipalities informed the MLSA&F SR on ongoing and prepared projects in the field of social inclusion. Their good experience was also used in Chapter 5 of this Action Plan. We are counting on the help of CT&MS and its regional associations also in the dissemination of information on the first NAP/Inclusion in Slovakia.

In order to achieve the integrated and efficient use of funds intended for the development of regions, coming from various resources, in particular from the state budget, budgets of self-governing authorities, pre-accession and structural funds of the EU, an ***Integrated network of 30 regional development agencies (RDA)*** has been created. These are non-profit organisations which, in terms of their institutional nature, fall under public administration, the private sector and the third sector of the respective region and activate development of the respective regions by using the financial resources of the state, local self-government and the EU. Provision of a subsidy from state funds for their activities is made on a contractual basis with the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR. The amount of the subsidy differs with regard to the difference in the socio-economic level of individual regions. The basic role of the RDA is to develop regions in accordance with the regional operational programmes, provide consultancy services, advice in the field of pre-accession and structural funds, and following the declaration of a challenge for submitting project proposals to ensure the supply of projects to the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development in the SR.

In the interest of institutional arrangements for a more efficient solution to the integration of Roma communities the Government of the SR has strengthened administrative capacities by creating the ***Office of the SR Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities***. The Office coordinates five regional offices (Kosice, Presov, Spisska Nova Ves, Rimavska Sobota and Banska Bystrica). The basic activity of these regional offices is targeted in particular at mapping the situation in individual regions, coordinating and implementing programmes passed by the Government at the regional level, providing consultancy and advice in the preparation of regional projects for foreign aid funds, as well as in solving specific problems of Roma citizens. Irreplaceable part of the activity of these offices is the building up of regional partnerships by means of communication at the level of self-government authorities of municipalities, higher territorial units, local non-governmental organisations and cooperation on specific projects.

The responsibility for the activity of the Office is borne by the SR Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (hereinafter referred to as the “Plenipotentiary”). The Plenipotentiary, as the advisory authority of the SR Government for issues of Roma communities, fulfils tasks focused on solving issues of Roma communities and realises systemic measures for improving their position and integration into society. The Plenipotentiary has set up an interdepartmental commission for Roma community issues and is responsible for its activities to the SR Government.

## **4.2. Supporting the participation of excluded persons**

For better and simpler communication between the SR Government and NGOs, including the excluded persons themselves, it is essential to build up in Slovakia, within the framework of the NAP/Inclusion, a network of non-governmental organisations with the specific objective in the fight against poverty and social exclusion with a nationwide scope.

A project for networking together non-governmental organisations and experts devoted to the solving the situation of the poor in Slovakia is currently underway. These efforts are based on the example of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). Similarly as the EAPN, the Slovak network against poverty and social exclusion has the aim of becoming involved in informed discussion with the Government, to comment, on the basis of experience gained through its members and cooperating experts, on the national programme for the fight against poverty and to assist in increasing the public awareness of poverty issues.

For ensuring efficient measures for the integration of those most vulnerable marginalised groups and learning the opinions of the excluded themselves with regard to the solving their situation, the MLSA&F SR has asked the Centre for the Study of Labour and Family to prepare the following research study: *Poverty and social exclusion/inclusion – Groups most threatened by social exclusion and proposals for solving/prevention (the Roma, the drug addicted, immigrants, persons with a severe health disability)*. In 2004 the task's solution will include in particular the analytical-descriptive work, with a primary orientation on the identification of causes and forms of social exclusion, a proposal of possible strategies for social inclusion, comparison with inclusion strategies in selected EU countries, as well as introduction of good practices. In the following years there will be required the interconnection of further stages on the basis of sociological research projects aimed at self-examination and reflection and ascertaining the opinions of excluded persons themselves with regard to the possibility of their integration and active participation in the process of social inclusion. The centre is also planning to prepare a professional study concerning issues of a theoretical definition of the term social exclusion, which will also serve as the starting point for assessing impacts of the Act on Assistance in Material Need.

### **4.3. Supporting dialogue and partnership between all relevant subjects**

The MLSA&F SR in February 2004 set up a government-subsidised organisation, the *Social Development Fund* (SDF), the main aim of which is to improve the process of the social inclusion of marginalised groups of the SR, threatened by poverty and social exclusion directly in the given region or area, by means of supporting community development. The Fund in its focus gives priority to creating and developing social inclusion partnerships that will be able to prepare and realise programmes for supporting an inclusive labour market in the given location, i.e. on improving the possibilities of employing groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion and their overall integration into society. The Fund ensures the National Support Structure for the *Community Initiative Equal* in the SR and uses financial resources from the ESF also by means of realisation of the national project *Establishment and Support of Inclusive Partnerships*. It is expected that the SDF shall become an instrument in the fight against poverty and social exclusion with greater competences than enabled by the ESF, or SOP HR and the current legislation. Besides supporting employment, it shall also focused on the development of infrastructure and the development of social/public services in the fields of those afflicted by poverty and social exclusion.

Up to 50% committee members of the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) are representatives of the local community. Other key partners are offices of labour, social affairs and the family, higher territorial units and the Office of the SR Government

Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. Currently the partnership creation project is being verified by means of a preparation project of the SDF, financed from World Bank funds, and this so that the partnerships are established at the level of districts, or territorial districts of offices of labour, social affairs and the family.

In its initial stage the SDF shall operate in three target regions of Banska Bystrica, Kosice and Presov. Subsequently its scope shall be extended to the whole territory of the SR. Over the course of the year 2004-2006 the realisation of about 1 000 microprojects and the support of 40 social inclusion partnerships is expected. The first challenge for projects shall be in June 2004, the first microprojects shall be commenced at the local level begun in October – November 2004.

The SDF's aim is that partnerships work in the local community as catalysts so that they assist using the help of own local knowledge to change things for the better. A precondition for success is the fact that these partnerships involve local inhabitants, deal with the local issues and not solutions imposed by someone outside the community. Within the individual social inclusion partnerships social inclusion action plans will be created. These microprojects shall, on the basis of respecting partnership and community principles, be assessed and recommended by the social inclusion partnership councils and after controlling their material particulars, financed through the Fund.

Partnership creates a broader platform for solving problems, and which cover not only representatives of the public administration, the business sector, non-profit organisations, but also the target group community which in this way shall not simply be an object of the project but also its subject. The best results in the fight against poverty and social exclusion are achieved when civic associations and interest organisations, working local partnerships are active, supporting the awakening of a feeling of the joint responsibility of each inhabitant for their quality of life and development of the community as a whole, where vulnerable groups are to be progressively integrated into the life of the local community and have their representation in local self-government. Positive results from support for the integration of vulnerable groups shall be successful only when all partners realise that integration of vulnerable groups represent a benefit for each inhabitant, the whole community, municipality, region and state.

An essential part of the dialogue and support of partnership between all relevant entities is also the serious approach of each one of the inhabitants and especially of those who are at risk of poverty to the Statistics Office of the SR and its sample surveys. Without the realistic, true data from respondents it is not possible to make qualified analyses, set specific aims and quantify impacts of individual measures. In connection with the preparation of the new statistical inquiries SILC (Statistics on income and living conditions), which will serve for evaluating common indicators on poverty, it is necessary that the Statistics Office of the SR with the help of the professional public and media emphasises the stress on conscientiousness and the responsibility of citizens in providing the necessary information during data collection.

## Chapter 5

### Good practice

#### 5.1. Development of Roma settlements (the Spis region)

As has already been mentioned, the creation of the conditions for reducing poverty and social exclusion of the Roma and supporting the realisation of programmes for solving their housing, developing infrastructure, education and growth of employment are among the priorities of the current Government, but also regions with a majority Roma population.

The municipality of Nalepkovo where almost a half of its population is represented by the Roma national minority and the rate of unemployment in 2003 reached 40.1% has very successfully participated in addressing this situation. Back in March 1992, in the framework of the conception in-process for the development of the municipality renewal, passed by the municipality's representation, it began to solve the difficult socio-economic situation of the Roma population. Its efforts were awarded when in 1995 the Agreement on the Provision of a Subsidy was concluded by means of the programme EC PHARE *Restructuring the Labour Market*, and the PALMIF fund. The basic condition of the Agreement was to create 20 jobs for a period of 2 years for the Roma engaged in the construction of the settlement.

The municipality commenced work on realising the project *Roma Settlement of Nalepkovo* already during 1994 by means of workers accepted for public-welfare works within the municipality – terrain adjustments, excavation work at the water and sewerage network, including the production of doors, window frames, etc.

As at 31. 12. 1997 total funds invested represented approx. SKK 17.0 million (SKK 1.9 million – through the project PHARE-PALMIF, SKK 6.8 million - from the state budget and SKK 8.3 million – from the municipality budget). In 1998 the municipality invested further funds in the amount of SKK 2.140 million (SKK 600 000 from the subsidy from the Ministry of Construction and Public Works of the SR and SKK 1.5 million from the municipality's resources) for the training centre having educational, cultural and trade functions and for the construction of wood-sheds for apartment units.

The result of the invested SKK 19.1 million funds was, by the end of 1998, the following:

- 16 apartment units finished and with completed building-use proceedings, which are occupied by their creators
- construction of infrastructure (town communication 2.8 km long, water pipeline, sewerage, water-treatment plant)
- 20 jobs created for a period of 2 years for the Roma
- a change in the thinking, standing and trust of the Roma in respect of such municipality activities

A welcome fact is that this project continued on and in the framework of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, by 31. 12. 2003, 28 apartments were handed over into use in the Roma settlement of Grun, now without any financial support from PHARE. By preparing the project documentation in the first half of 2004 for the construction of more apartments in the Roma settlement Pila, it will be possible in summer 2005 to hand over into use about 20 apartments with the financial support from the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR and with the participation of the Roma in construction works.

The local inhabitants have been actively involved in developing the municipality of Nalepkovo, and in cooperation with the municipality's management have been very productive. Seven NGOs operate in the municipality and after launching the programme TVOJ SPIS (Your Spis), the aim of which is the sustainable development of communities in the central region of Spis, other informal groups were founded, among them also Roma associations from the areas of Grun and Hamor, realising projects focused on supporting community life and development of the living environment in their surroundings. Another group of the Roma from the local part of Trosky and Stredny riadok was inspired by these projects and founded two other informal citizen associations similarly named.

## **5.2. Supported Employment Agency (the Banska Bystrica region)**

In Chapter 3 we mentioned the establishment of supported employment agencies, which participate in creating jobs and labour market training of disabled persons. One of the specific examples of the Supported Employment Agency in Banska Bystrica is the project *Change in attitudes of employers in respect of citizens with a changed working ability*, which was realised in 2002. The aim of this project was to familiarise the employer with the issues of employing disabled persons, to create for these persons conditions in an integrated working environment for their proper gainful activity and thus improve their equal access to the labour market.

The agency's workers (APZ, n.o.) during the realisation of this project contacted 53 employer entities operating in the district of Banska Bystrica. At the beginning the contacts were made by telephone and in the case of interest they continued on the basis of personal meetings. In the framework of these contacts, on the one hand, information on the services of APZ, n.o. was provided and, on the other, a request for employing the agency's clients was made.

Employers, from their side, offered 20 jobs. A positive result of the project was also presented interest in future cooperation in searching for employees and solving the issues of employing disabled persons, in particular from the side of large employers (Harmanecke papierne, Tlaciarne BB, Tesco, etc.). The basic argument for employers is the agency's ability to prepare its clients for entry into work and long-term targeted care for them. The total cost for realisation this project, for a period of 9 months, represented SKK 66 500.

The project's success may be also seen in the fact that during its realisation, APZ, n.o. raised its awareness profile among the disabled unemployed who are continuing to use its services. In 2003 the agency realised the project *Supported employment – job assistance*, the aim of which was to provide a package of services aimed at the integration of in particular the unemployed with a changed working ability into the labour market. At almost the same time there was also running the project *Activation-motivation programme of the Supported Employment Agency, n. o.*, through which 56 clients participated on average in three motivation activities with the help of which the participants learnt the ability to use knowledge and skills acquired in practice. The APZ introduced a new form of assistance – consultation via e-mail for disabled persons also outside the Banska Bystrica region. Currently the APZ has created a database of those waiting for assistance.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Tables

**Table 1 Main socio-economic indicators**

		2002			2003		
		EU 25	EU 15	SK	EU 25	EU 15	SK
<b>Real GDP growth rate in%</b>		1,1	1,0	4,4	0,8	0,7	4,2
<b>Labour productivity pre person employed/f</b>		92,9	100	56,3	93,0	100	56,2
<b>Inflation rate</b>		2,1	2,1	3,5	2,0	2,0	8,5
<b>Total employment growth</b>		0,1	0,4	-1,1	0,2	0,2	2,3
<b>Employment rate</b>	<i>Total</i>	62,8	64,3	56,8	62,9	64,3	57,6
	<i>Women</i>	54,7	55,6	51,4	55,0	56,0	52,2
	<i>Men</i>	71,0	72,8	62,4	70,8	72,5	63,0
<b>Total employment rate of older workers</b>	<i>Total</i>	38,7	40,1	22,8	40,2	41,7	24,6
	<i>Women</i>	29,1	30,6	9,5	30,8	32,2	11,2
	<i>Men</i>	48,8	30,0	39,1	50,3	51,6	41,0
<b>Life-long learning</b>	<i>Total</i>	8,0	8,5	9,0	9,0	9,7	4,8
	<i>Women</i>	8,6	9,2	9,4	9,7	10,4	4,7
	<i>Men</i>	7,4	7,9	8,7	8,3	8,9	4,9
<b>Employment rate</b>	<i>Total</i>	8,8	7,7	18,7	9,1	8,1	17,4
	<i>Women</i>	9,9	8,7	18,9	10,0	9,0	17,7
	<i>Men</i>	8,1	6,9	18,6	8,3	7,4	17,2
<b>Unemployment rate of population aged less than 25 years</b>		17,9	15,1	37,6	18,3	15,8	32,9
<b>Early school leavers</b>	<i>Total</i>	16,5	18,5	5,6	15,9	18,0	4,9
	<i>Women</i>	14,2	16,,	4,6	13,9	15,9	4,7
	<i>Men</i>	18,7	20,9	6,7	17,2	20,2	5,2
<b>Long term unemployment rate</b>	<i>Total</i>	3,9	3,1	12,2	4,0	3,3	11,1
	<i>Women</i>	4,5	3,6	12,6	4,5	3,7	11,4
	<i>Men</i>	3,4	2,7	11,9	3,6	2,9	10,9
<b>Children living in jobless households children aged 0-17</b>		10,0	9,9	12,1	9,8	9,8	11,8
<b>People in working age living in jobless households persons aged 18-59</b>	<i>Total</i>	10,2	9,7	10,9	10,1	9,6	10,1
	<i>Women</i>	11,5	11,0	11,4	11,3	10,8	10,9
	<i>Men</i>	8,9	8,4	10,4	8,9	8,4	9,3

Source: Structural indicators Eurostat , f – forecast, SO SR

**Table 2 Key figures on demography**

	EU 15		EU 10		SK	
	2002	2003*	2002	2003*	2002	2003*
<b>Počet živonarodených detí na 1000 obyvateľov</b>	:	10,6	:	9,2	9,5	9,6
<b>Počet úmrtí na 1000 obyvateľov</b>	:	9,8	:	10,4	9,6	9,7
<b>Prírodný prírastok obyvateľstva</b>	0,8	0,8	:	-1,2	-0,1	-0,1
<b>Migrácia</b>	4,4	2,6	:	0,4	0,2	0,3
<b>Celkový rast populácie</b>	5,3	3,4	:	-0,8	0,0	0,2
<b>Miera sobášnosti</b>	:	:	:	:	4,7	4,8
<b>Miera rozvodovosti</b>	:	:	:	:	2,0	2,0
<b>Podiel obyvateľstva nad 65 rokov</b>	:	16,8	:	:	:	11,5
<b>Očakávaná dĺžka života</b>	<i>Men</i>	81,6	:	:	69,8	69,8
	<i>Women</i>	75,8	:	:	77,6	77,6

\* first forecast

Source: First demographic estimate 2003 In: Statistics in focus, Long-term indicators, Structural indicators Eurostat; SO SR

**Table 3 Income based Laeken indicators**

			<b>SK 2002</b>	<b>EU10 2001</b>	<b>EU15 2001</b>
<b>Income quintile ratio (S80/S20)</b>			5,4	4,1	4,4
<b>Gini coefficient</b>			31	28	28
<b>Risk-of-poverty threshold</b> (illustrative values)	<b>1 person household</b>	<i>NAT</i>	66127	:	:
		<i>EUR</i>	1549	1804	8319
		<i>PPS</i>	3629	3241	8253
	<b>2 adults 2 dependent children</b>	<i>NAT</i>	138867	:	:
		<i>EUR</i>	3252	3787	17469
		<i>PPS</i>	7622	6807	17332
<b>Risk-of-poverty rate by age by gender</b>	<b>Total</b>	<i>Total</i>	21	13	15
		<i>M</i>	21	13	14
		<i>F</i>	21	13	17
	<b>0-15</b>	<i>Total</i>	30	17	19
		<i>M</i>	29	17	19
		<i>F</i>	30	18	19
	<b>16-24</b>	<i>Total</i>	23	16	19
		<i>M</i>	24	16	19
		<i>F</i>	23	16	20
	<b>25-49</b>	<i>Total</i>	21	13	12
		<i>M</i>	20	13	11
		<i>F</i>	22	13	14
	<b>50-64</b>	<i>Total</i>	14	9	12
		<i>M</i>	15	10	12
		<i>F</i>	13	9	13
	<b>65+</b>	<i>Total</i>	13	8	19
		<i>M</i>	12	5	16
		<i>F</i>	14	11	21
<b>Risk-of-poverty rate by most frequent activity status by gender</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<i>Total</i>	14	6	6
		<i>M</i>	13	7	6
		<i>F</i>	14	5	5
	<b>Self-employed</b>	<i>Total</i>	24	14	16
		<i>M</i>	24	14	16
		<i>F</i>	26	14	16
	<b>Unemployed</b>	<i>Total</i>	47	35	38
		<i>M</i>	49	37	44
		<i>F</i>	46	34	30
	<b>Retired</b>	<i>Total</i>	11	9	17
		<i>M</i>	9	7	16
		<i>F</i>	12	10	17
	<b>Inactive/ other</b>	<i>Total</i>	28	17	25
		<i>M</i>	28	16	23
		<i>F</i>	28	18	25



**Table 3 (cont.)**

<b>Risk-of-poverty rate By household type</b>	<b>Total</b>		21	13	15
	<b>1 person hh</b>	<i>Total</i>	27	15	25
		<i>M</i>	33	18	18
		<i>F</i>	23	13	28
	<b>1 person hh &lt;30yrs</b>		28	9	32
	<b>1 person hh 30-64</b>		31	17	15
	<b>1 person hh 65+</b>		20	14	29
	<b>2 adults no children</b>		14	8	16
	<b>2 adults no children</b>	<i>(at least one 65+)</i>	6	7	10
	<b>Other hh no children</b>	<i>(both &lt; 65)</i>	11	8	9
	<b>Single parent</b>		40	20	35
	<b>2 adults 1 dep. child</b>	<i>(at least 1 child)</i>	22	9	10
	<b>2 adults 2 dep. children</b>		26	12	13
	<b>2 adults 3+ dep. children</b>		35	25	27
<b>Other hh with dep. children</b>		18	14	16	
<b>Risk-of-poverty rate by tenure status</b>	<b>Total</b>		:	13	15
	<b>Owner-occupier</b>		:	12	12
	<b>Tenant</b>		:	15	24
	<b>Other</b>		:	:	:
<b>Dispersion around the risk-of-poverty threshold</b>	<b>40% of median</b>		13	4	5
	<b>50% of median</b>		16	7	9
	<b>60% of median</b>		21	13	15
	<b>70% of median</b>		27	21	23
<b>Risk-of-poverty rate</b>	<b>before all transfers</b>	<i>Total</i>	43	44	39
		<i>M</i>	42	42	36
		<i>F</i>	44	46	42
	<b>including pensions</b>	<i>Total</i>	28	25	24
		<i>M</i>	28	25	22
		<i>F</i>	27	26	25
	<b>including all transfers</b>	<i>Total</i>	21	13	15
		<i>M</i>	21	13	14
		<i>F</i>	21	13	17
<b>Relative risk-of-poverty gap By gender</b>	<i>Total</i>		34	19	22
	<i>M</i>		35	20	22
	<i>F</i>		34	19	22

**Sources:** Social Inclusion in Accessing Countries. A Synthesis of the Joint Inclusion Memoranda on Social Inclusion, SO SR

**Table 4**

**Overview of support provided within the scope of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR in acquiring housing over the years 2001 to 2003**

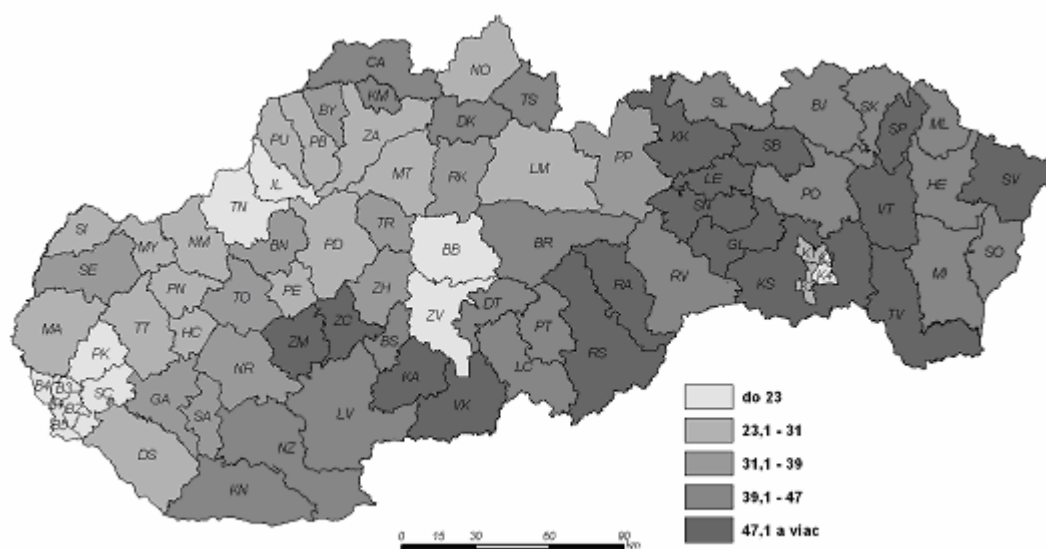
in year in mill. SKK	SHDF		rented apartments of a regular standard		rented apartments of a lower standard in Roma settlements	
	support provided	Number of apartments supported	support provided	number of apartments supported	support provided	number of apartments supported
2001	3 685.6	7 677	1 418.9	3 605	22.9	83
2002	5 183.3	9 464	2 757.9	6 226	75.6	97
2003	2 844.0	3 911	0.0	0	0.0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11 712.9</b>	<b>21 052</b>	<b>4 176.8</b>	<b>9 831</b>	<b>98.5</b>	<b>180</b>

Source: MC&RD SR

### Other ways of measuring poverty

For illustration we state here one of several other possible ways of measuring poverty and this on the basis of the deprivation level. The following poverty map was created on the basis of assessing the deprivation level in the field of consumption, material insufficiency and quality of life. In order to measure the level of poverty in regions indicators were selected which strongly correlate with poverty: unemployment (deprivation in the field of labour application), low level of education, families with multiple children, single parent families, overcrowded apartments, lack of a bath and car. The map gives a picture of the spatial localisation of poverty and shows the position of districts from the aspect of poverty in the regional structure of the SR.

### Poverty rate (level) in districts of Slovakia in 2001



Note: Values of the poverty indicator

Source:

Anton Michalek, Geography Institute SAV, Bratislava

## Appendix 2 Definitions

### Definitions of poverty, social exclusion a social inclusion used in EU

**Poverty:** People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantage through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to education, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted.

**Social exclusion:** Social exclusion is a process whereby certain groups are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty or inadequate education or life skills or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feeling powerless and unable to control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives.

**Social inclusion:** Social inclusion is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives.

(Source: Joint Report on Social inclusion, 2003)

### ISCED - International Standard Classification of Education

Individual degrees of the ISCED represent the following education:

ISCED 0 – pre-school

ISCED 1 – primary (1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> years of elementary schools, special schools)

ISCED 2 – lower secondary (5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> years of elementary schools, special schools, 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> years of an 8-year college without vocational certificate)

ISCED 3 – higher secondary (5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> years of an 8-year college, secondary vocational schools, secondary vocational schools with a vocational certificate, or school-leaving certificate)

ISCED 4 – post-secondary studies (additional secondary study, school of music study – 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> years)

ISCED 5 – tertiary (bachelor study, master's study, scientific study, doctorate study)

ISCED 6 – doctoral study

## **Objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion**

(Revised at Copenhagen European Council)

### **1. To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services**

#### **1.1. Facilitating participation in employment**

In the context of the European employment strategy, and the implementation of the guidelines in particular:

- (a) To promote access to stable and quality employment for all women and men who are capable of working, in particular:
  - by putting in place, for those in the most vulnerable groups in society, pathways towards employment and by mobilising training policies to that end;
  - by developing policies to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, including the issue of child- and dependent care;
  - by using the opportunities for integration and employment provided by the social economy.
- (b) To prevent the exclusion of people from the world of work by improving employability, through human resource management, organisation of work and life-long learning.

#### **1.2. Facilitating access to resources, rights, goods and services for all**

- (a) To organise social protection systems in such a way that they help, in particular, to:
  - guarantee that everyone has the resources necessary to live in accordance with human dignity;
  - overcome obstacles to employment by ensuring that the take-up of employment results in increased income and by promoting employability.
- (b) To implement policies which aim to provide access for all to decent and sanitary housing, as well as the basic services necessary to live normally having regard to local circumstances (electricity, water, heating etc.).
- (c) To put in place policies which aim to provide access for all to healthcare appropriate to their situation, including situations of dependency.
- (d) To develop, for the benefit of people at risk of exclusion, services and accompanying measures which will allow them effective access to education, justice and other public and private services, such as culture, sport and leisure.

### **2. To prevent the risks of exclusion**

- (a) To exploit fully the potential of the knowledge-based society and of new information and communication technologies and ensure that no-one is excluded, taking particular account of the needs of people with disabilities.

- (b) To put in place policies which seek to prevent life crises which can lead to situations of social exclusion, such as indebtedness, exclusion from school and becoming homeless.
- (c) To implement action to preserve family solidarity in all its forms.

### **3. To help the most vulnerable**

- (a) To promote the social integration of women and men at risk of facing persistent poverty, for example because they have a disability or belong to a group experiencing particular integration problems such as those affecting immigrants.
- (b) To move towards the elimination of social exclusion among children and give them every opportunity for social integration.
- (c) To develop comprehensive actions in favour of areas marked by exclusion.

These objectives may be pursued by incorporating them in all the other objectives and/or through specific policies or actions.

### **4. To mobilise all relevant bodies**

- (a) To promote, according to national practice, the participation and self-expression of people suffering exclusion, in particular in regard to their situation and the policies and measures affecting them.
- (b) To mainstream the fight against exclusion into overall policy, in particular:
  - by mobilising the public authorities at national, regional and local level, according to their respective areas of competence;
  - by developing appropriate coordination procedures and structures;
  - by adapting administrative and social services to the needs of people suffering exclusion and ensuring that front-line staff are sensitive to these needs
- (c) To promote dialogue and partnership between all relevant bodies, public and private, for example:
  - by involving the social partners, NGOs and social service providers, according to their respective areas of competence, in the fight against the various forms of exclusion;
  - by encouraging the social responsibility and active engagement of all citizens in the fight against social exclusion;
  - by fostering the social responsibility of business.

## Definitions of common indicators on poverty and social exclusion

Indicator	Definition	Age breakdown	Gender breakdown
<b>At-risk-of poverty rate</b>	Share of persons with an equivalised disposable income below 60% of the national equivalised median income. Equivalised median income is defined as the household's total disposable income divided by its "equivalent size", to take account of the size and composition of the household, and is attributed to each household member.	Yes. Age groups: 0-15; 16+; 16-24; 25-49; 50-64; 65+.	Yes (applying to people aged 16 years and over).
<b>Poverty risk by household type</b>	Poverty risk for the total population in the following household types: <u>Households with no dependent children:</u> - Single person, under 65 years old - Single person, 65 years and over - Single women - Single men - Two adults, at least one person 65 years and over - Two adults, both under 65 years - Other households <u>Households with dependent children:</u> - Single parent, 1 or more dependent children - Two adults, one dependent child - Two adults, two dependent children - Two adults, three or more dependent children - Three or more adults with dependent children Dependent children are individuals aged 0 – 15 years and 16 – 24 years if inactive and living with at least one parent.	Already specified in the typology of households.	Already specified in the typology of households.
<b>Poverty risk by most frequent activity status</b>	Poverty risk for the adult population (aged 16 years and over) in the following most frequent activity status groups: employment (broken down by wage and salary employment and self-employment); unemployment; retirement; other inactivity. The most frequent activity status is defined as the status that individuals declare to have occupied for more than half the number of months in the calendar year.	Yes	Yes
<b>At-risk-of-poverty threshold (illustrative values)</b>	The value of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60% median national equivalised income) in PPS, Euro and national currency for two illustrative household types: - Single person household - Household with 2 adults, two children	No	No
<b>Income quintile ratio (S80/S20)</b>	Ratio of total income received by the 20% of the country's population with the highest income (top quintile) to that received by the 20% of the country's population with the lowest income (lowest quintile). Income must be understood as equivalised disposable income.	No	No

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Age breakdown</b>	<b>Gender breakdown</b>
<b>Relative median poverty risk gap</b>	Difference between the median equivalised income of persons below the at-risk-of poverty threshold and the threshold itself, expressed as a percentage of the at-risk-of poverty threshold.	Yes	Yes (applying to people aged 16 years and over).
<b>Regional cohesion</b>	Coefficient of variation of employment rates at NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) level 2. Employment rates are calculated as the share of the population (aged 15 years or more) who are in employment (ILO definition).	No	Yes
<b>Long term unemployment rate</b>	Total long-term unemployed population ( $\geq 12$ months; ILO definition) as a proportion of total active population aged 15 years or more.	Yes	Yes
<b>Population living in jobless household: children</b>	Proportion of children (aged 0-17 years) living in jobless households, expressed as a share of all children.	No	No
<b>Population living in jobless household: prime-age adults</b>	Proportion of all people aged 18-59 years who live in a jobless household as a proportion of all people in the same age group. Students aged 18-24 years who live in households composed solely of students are not counted in neither numerator nor denominator.	No	Yes
<b>Early school leavers not in education or training</b>	Share of persons aged 18 to 24 who have only lower secondary education (their highest level of education or training attained is 0, 1 or 2 according to the 1997 International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED 97) and have not received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey.	No	Yes
<b>Life expectancy</b>	Number of years a person aged 0, 1 and 60 may be expected to live.	No	Yes
<b>Dispersion around the at-risk-of-poverty threshold</b>	Share of persons with an equivalised disposable income below 40%, 50% and 70% of the national equivalised median income.	Yes	Yes (applying to people aged 16 years and over).
<b>At-risk-of-poverty rate before social cash transfers</b>	Relative at-risk-of-poverty rate where equivalised income is calculated as follows: - excluding all social cash transfers - including retirement and survivors pensions and excluding all other social cash transfers. - including all social cash transfers (= indicator 1) The same at-risk-of-poverty threshold is used for the three statistics, and is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social cash transfers).	Yes	Yes (applying to people aged 16 years and over).

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Age breakdown</b>	<b>Gender breakdown</b>
<b>Gini coefficient</b>	Summary measure of the cumulative share of equivalised income accounted for by the cumulative percentages of the number of individuals. Its value ranges from 0% (complete equality) to 100% (complete inequality).	No	No
<b>Long-term unemployment share</b>	Total long-term unemployed population (≥12 months; ILO definition) as a proportion of the total unemployed population aged 15 years and over.	Yes	Yes
<b>Very long term unemployment rate</b>	Total very long-term unemployed population (≥24 months; ILO definition) as a proportion of total active population aged 15 years and over.	Yes	Yes
<b>Persons with low educational attainment</b>	Share of the adult population (aged 25 years and over) whose highest level of education or training is ISCED 0, 1 or 2.	Yes. Age groups: 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 25-64; 65 years and over.	Yes

Source: Joint Inclusion Report, Statistical Annex

### **Appendix 3 - Reductions for vulnerable groups of the population**

#### **(1) Bus transport :**

##### **(a) Local bus transport (up to 100 km):**

- SR citizens aged up to 70 years pay full fare
- SR citizens aged above 70 years pay a fare in the amount of SKK 5 for each commenced 50<sup>th</sup> km
- SR disabled citizens– holder of certificates of a persons with a severe health disability, persons with a severe health disability – blind – benefit from a 50% reduction, where the holder of a certificate of a person with a severe health disability – a blind person or guide dog travel free of charge. Wheelchairs are also transported free of charge, and where the holder of a certificate of a person with a severe health disability – blind is a child, the pram of such a child is also transported free of charge.
- A reduction of 50% is also provided to parents or legal representatives visiting a physically or mentally handicapped child placed in facilities or schools within the purview of the Ministry of Education of the SR and Ministry of Health of the SR. The certificate is issued by the facility in which the child is placed. In travelling the parent is obliged to produce their ID card.



(b) Long-distance bus transport (above 100km):

- SR citizens aged up to 70 years pay full fare.
- SR citizens aged above 70 years benefit from a 50% reduction on the fare.
- Holders of certificates of a person with a severe health disability, a person with a severe health disability – blind – have a 50% reduction on the fare.
- A person accompanying a holder of a certificate of a person with a severe health disability – blind, or the guide dog benefit from a 50% reduction on the fare.
- Parents visiting a child placed in institutes in the SR are also granted a 50% reduction on the fare.

All the enterprises of the Slovak Bus Transport have been transformed into joint-stock companies. In the framework of renewing buses in 2003 the operators of the Slovak Bus Transport did not receive any contribution from the state budget for the purchase of new buses. Buses of suburban and town design purchased from the funds coming from the commercial activities and privatisation of operators were in 2003 equipped with low-level steps with an anti-slip design, the first two steps are covered in aluminium. Moreover, in the area of the middle doors, in the entry part, there is a space for the transport of wheelchairs. In the front part of the means of transport at least two places are reserved for persons with a severe health disability and a place for a person with a severe health disability – blind with a guide dog. The opening of the doors is safeguarded by an opening system in the case of something becoming trapped. New buses are equipped with a lit information system for announcing bus stops, in older types of buses this function is the driver's obligation.

**(2) Railway transport :**

- SR citizens aged up to 70 years are granted a commercial reduction on the fare in the amount of 25%, if they purchase a "Senior Card" (valid for 1 year, price SKK 100)
- Citizens aged above 70 years travel for a registration fare in the amount of SKK 5 for each commended 50<sup>th</sup> km of a slow or express train
- SR disabled citizens and holders of a certificate of a person with a severe health disability, a person with a severe health disability – blind, benefit from a 50% reduction on the fare of a slow or express train.
- A person accompanying the holder of a certificate of a person with a severe health disability – blind, or their guide dog travel free of charge. Wheelchairs are also transported Free of charge, and where the holder of a certificate of a person with a severe health disability – blind is a child, the pram of such a child is also transported free of charge.
- A reduction of 50% is also provided to parents or legal representatives visiting a physically or mentally handicapped child placed in facilities or schools within the purview of the Ministry of Education of the SR and Ministry of Health of the SR.

## Appendix 4 - Financial allocation of ESF funds for 2004-2006

### Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources – Financial allocation for the programming period 2004-2006

EUR current prices

Priority / measures	Intervention field	Total costs	Public											private resources	
			Total	Community contribution				National sources contribution							
				Total	ERDF	ESF	EAGGF	FIFG	Total	Central	region	Local	Other		
<b>Priority 1</b>		<b>290 932 511</b>	<b>238 233 807</b>	<b>185 436 044</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>185 436 044</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>52 797 763</b>	<b>52 797 763</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>52 698 704</b>
measure 1.1	21	78 920 697	78 920 697	63 136 557		63 136 557				15 784 140	15 784 140				
measure 1.2	21	155 718 729	103 020 025	77 265 019		77 265 019				25 755 006	25 755 006				52 698 704
measure 1.3	21, 23	56 293 085	56 293 085	45 034 468		45 034 468				11 258 617	11 258 617				
<b>Priority 2</b>		<b>31 237 143</b>	<b>31 166 501</b>	<b>34 283 292</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24 283 292</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6 883 209</b>	<b>6 883 209</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>70 642</b>	
measure 2.1	22	17 108 682	17 108 682	13 686 946		13 686 946			3 421 736	3 421 736					
measure 2.2	25	14 128 461	14 057 819	10 596 346		10 596 346			3 461 473	3 461 473				70 642	
<b>Priority 3</b>		<b>92 095 173</b>	<b>85 563 282</b>	<b>66 227 159</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>66 227 159</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19 336 123</b>	<b>19 336 123</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6 531 891</b>	
measure 3.1	23	29 139 952	28 994 251	21 854 963		21 854 963			7 139 288	7 139 288				145 701	
measure 3.2	23	48 881 950	42 495 760	33 113 579		33 113 579			9 382 181	9 382 181				6 386 190	
measure 3.3	23	14 073 271	14 073 271	11 258 617		11 258 617			2 814 654	2 814 654					
<b>Total</b>		<b>414 264 827</b>	<b>354 963 590</b>	<b>275 946 495</b>		<b>275 946 495</b>			<b>79 017 095</b>	<b>79 017 095</b>				<b>59 301 237</b>	

### Single programming document Bratislava Objective 3 - financial allocation for the programming period 2004 -2006

EUR current prices

Priority / measures	Intervention field	Total costs	Public											private resources	
			Total	Community contribution				National sources contribution							
				Total	ERDF	ESF	EAGGF	FIFG	Total	Central	region	Local	Other		
<b>Priority 1</b>		<b>52 040 913</b>	<b>41 849 567</b>	<b>21 683 714</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21 683 714</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20 165 853</b>	<b>20 165 853</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10 191 346</b>
measure 1.1	22, 25	34 693 942	25 369 944	13 010 228		13 010 228				12 359 716	12 359 716				9 323 998
measure 1.2	21, 25	17 346 971	16 479 623	8 673 486		8 673 486				7 806 137	7 806 137				867 348
<b>Priority 2</b>		<b>47 433 121</b>	<b>41 510 758</b>	<b>21 683 713</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21 683 713</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19 827 045</b>	<b>19 827 045</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5 922 363</b>	
measure 2.1	23, 24	34 964 985	31 183 888	16 262 784		16 262 784			14 921 104	14 921 104				3 781 097	
measure 2.2	181, 182, 184	12 468 136	10 326 870	5 420 929		5 420 929			4 905 941	4 905 941				2 141 266	
<b>Total</b>		<b>99 474 034</b>	<b>83 360 325</b>	<b>43 367 427</b>		<b>43 367 427</b>			<b>39 992 898</b>	<b>39 992 898</b>				<b>16 113 709</b>	

**Initiative EQUAL - financial allocation for the programming period 2004 -2006**

EUR current prices

Priority / measures	Intervention field	Total costs	Public											private resources
			Total	Community contribution				National sources contribution						
				Total	ERDF	ESF	EAGGF	FIFG	Total	Central	region	Local	Other	
<b>Priority 1</b>		<b>10 531 984</b>	<b>10 531 984</b>	<b>7 347 896</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7 347 896</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3 184 088</b>	<b>3 184 088</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
measure 1.1	21, 23	6 383 020	6 383 020	4 453 270		4 453 270			1 929 750	1 929 750				0
measure 1.2	22, 23	4 148 964	4 148 964	2 894 626		2 894 626			1 254 338	1 254 338				0
<b>Priority 2</b>		<b>7 681 891</b>	<b>7 681 891</b>	<b>5 121 261</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5 121 261</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2 560 630</b>	<b>2 560 630</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
measure 2.1	22, 23	7 681 891	7 681 891	5 121 261		5 121 261			2 560 630	2 560 630				0
<b>Priority 3</b>		<b>6 546 306</b>	<b>6 546 306</b>	<b>4 675 933</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4 675 933</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1 870 373</b>	<b>1 870 373</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
measure 3.1	24	6 546 306	6 546 306	4 675 933		4 675 933			1 870 373	1 870 373				0
<b>Priority 4</b>		<b>3 740 748</b>	<b>3 740 748</b>	<b>2 671 963</b>		<b>2 671 963</b>			<b>1 068 785</b>	<b>1 068 785</b>				<b>0</b>
measure 4.1	25	3 740 748	3 740 748	2 671 963		2 671 963			1 068 785	1 068 785				0
<b>Priority 5</b>		<b>890 655</b>	<b>890 655</b>	<b>667 991</b>		<b>667 991</b>			<b>222 664</b>	<b>222 664</b>				<b>0</b>
measure 5.1	22, 23	890 655	890 655	667 991		667 991			222 664	222 664				0
<b>Total</b>		<b>29 391 584</b>	<b>29 391 584</b>	<b>20 485 044</b>		<b>20 485 044</b>			<b>8 906 540</b>	<b>8 906 540</b>				<b>0</b>

**Notes:** 21 – Labour market policy, 22 – Social inclusion, 23 – Development of educational and vocational training, 24 – Labour Force flexibility. Business activities, innovation, information and communication technologies, 25 – positive activities on the labour market for women, 181 – Research projects done at universities and research institutes, 182 – Innovation and technology transfer, 184 – Training for research workers