NATIONAL STRATEGY REPORT ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION 2008 – 2010

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

2008

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INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) the European Union (EU) has been supporting Member States since 2006 in their efforts to achieve greater social cohesion in Europe. This has been done in an effort to raise the visibility of the EU's social values in the eyes of its residents. The OMC helps in deepening the mutual exchange of experience and expanding the involvement of interested parties both at the national and European level. Through the OMC awareness of the multi-dimensionality of exclusion and poverty has been raised and a common approach to social protection reforms has been firmly established. This is based on the principles of accessibility, adequacy, quality, modernisation and sustainability. National reports prepared in the past years have shown that taking account of all objectives has helped in raising policy effectiveness and improved the quality of public spending.

In March 2008 the conclusions of the EU's Spring Summit included the provision that the Council "has reconfirmed the importance of the social dimension as an integral part of the Lisbon Strategy and has emphasised the need of deeper integration of economic, employment and social policies". The social dimension was strengthened in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy right at its first re-working in 2005.

The interconnection and strengthening of the mutual influence of economic and social policies, as well as employment policies supports and leads to the fulfilment of the adopted Lisbon objective. Social protection systems and social inclusion policies can contribute essentially to the employment growth and to the sustainable economic growth and, on the other hand, economic growth that is based on the growth of productivity and on competitiveness is a pre-condition of sustainability of the social protection systems and social inclusion policies.

In the coming years Slovakia, along with other EU countries, will have to come to terms with demographic changes such as a falling birth rate and ageing population. Ongoing reforms are creating the realistic conditions so that people in Slovakia have also in the future access to quality health care and a just pension reflecting their actual activity during their economically active life.

The report presented here is a second edition of the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion. Thanks to the integrated process the last strategic reports in the EU framework focused on a more limited sphere of priorities. A positive interaction has begun between the realisation of the national social protection and social inclusion strategies and national reform programme strategies for growth and employment. This report, too, links to the Slovak National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, as well as other national strategic documents from various fields. The aim is to focus on strengthening the modernisation of social protection systems (feeding out). The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion represents - as in 2006 - a pillar of social inclusion in the National Strategy Report.

The National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2008 - 2010 is a document that contributes to maximising the value and effectiveness of the OMC process. It achieves this as a means for the exchange and mutual acquisition of knowledge and experience. It represents the intention to continue in the

implementation of the model of sustainable development, social cohesion, and in modernisation of the social protection system.

With the aim of providing a balanced overall picture of the Slovak Republic's main priorities and measures in the field of social protection and inclusion, this report deals with the following topics

- social inclusion,
- pensions, and
- health and long-term care.

The strategic approach of the Slovak Republic in the field of social protection and social inclusion reflects the knowledge of the overall process of globalisation and demographic changes and the related challenges in the field of ensuring economic growth, sustainability of public finances, raising employment, reducing unemployment and improving social inclusion.

The aim of this report is to assess the tasks, measures and objectives set in the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006 - 2008 in accordance with the fulfilment of common objectives for the field of social inclusion, pensions, health care and long-term care.

1 COMMON OVERVIEW

1.1 Assessment of the social situation[1]

Over the years 2006 – 2007 Slovakia's gross domestic product continued to grow quickly in real terms. Real **GDP** growth at 2007 prices reached 10.4% (EU27 2.9%), which in comparison with 2006 represents a 1.9 percentage point increase. GDP per capita at purchasing power parity in 2007 was 68.5%. Labour productivity growth (calculated from GDP) was 1.2 percentage points faster than growth in the average real monthly wage in Slovakia's economy. In 2007 real wage growth (4.3%) contributed to a low annual rate of inflation at 1.9% (in 2006 the rate of inflation was 4.3%). **Wage differentiation** between regions continues to deepen. In 2007 only the Bratislava region exceeded the national average (131%). The lowest nominal average wage was in the Presov region (74 % of the national average). According to labour price statistical sampling data for 2007, the average hourly wage for women was less than 74.2% of that for men.

The number of immigrants in 2007 was 8624 persons, i.e. 0.16%[2]. The number of emigrants did not rise significantly. The migration balance in 2007 was 0.13%. Compared to 2006, a **5.8% fall in natural population growth** was recorded in 2007[3]. The number of SR residents grew in 2007 by 7361 persons, i.e. by 0.12%, which is 1.36‰.

The fertility (1,25 in 2007) remains below the EU25 average (1.5). Even despite the low fertility, the average number of household members in Slovakia is the highest, together with Malta, in the EU25 (3.1 in 2005), where this is primarily due to the higher number of households in which three or more adults live together with children 27.1% (EU25 12.4%) and the high number of households in which three or more adults live without children 17.4% (EU25 14.9%).

The **ageing process** displays long-term growth, which is gradually accelerating. In 2005 the average age of living residents was 38.0 years and the ageing index had risen by 5.3 years against 2005 (70.7)[4]. Median life expectancy at birth (males 70.51 years and women 78.08 years in 2007) is still among the lowest of the EU25 member states[5].

The rate of economic activity (defined as the share of the number of economically active persons in the total number of persons aged 15 - 64 years) in Slovakia ranges around 68.2% (men are 75.8% and women 60.7%) and in recent years has been falling slightly. The reason for this lies particularly in the decrease in the rate of economic

[1] A supplementary or more detailed analysis of the mentioned indicators is given in Annex 1.1.
[2] To a certain degree this was influenced by a high number of immigrants from Romania - 2465 persons.
[3] In 2007, against 2006, the number of live-births rose by 520 persons, while there was a concurrent rise in the number of deaths by 555 persons; the natural increase was 0.11 ‰ (live births 10.08 ‰ and deaths 9.98 ‰), which is similar to that in 2006 (live births 10.00 ‰ and deaths 9.98 ‰); in the period between 2001 – 2003 the natural increase was negative ranging from minus 0.2 to minus 0.1 ‰.
[4] In the case of this aging index the productive age group (65+) is compared against the pre-productive age group.
[5] Unless stated otherwise, when comparing the SR and EU this concerns figures for the EU25.

activity among younger age groups, e.g. in consequence of remaining longer in the education system, voluntary unemployment, an increase in the number of women on maternity leave, etc. The acceleration in the rate of economic growth has created a favourable environment for improving labour market conditions throughout 2007. The trend of growth in employment has continued, which dates from 2001, and is accompanied by falling unemployment. Despite significant year-on-year growth in employment of 2.1% (in 2006 2.3%), the overall **employment rate** in 2007 was only 60.7% (men 68.4% and women 53.0%), which is still below the EU27 average (65.4%). Positive trend was recorded in the growth of employment of elderly active age groups (55 - 64 years), where their employment rate grew by 2.4 percentage points to 35.6% of the economically active population (men 52.2%, women 21.2%).

The **unemployment rate**[6] (11.1%) fell in 2007 by 2.3 percentage points against 2006. The reported unemployment level for 2007 was the lowest for seven years. Despite this, it is still above the EU average (7.1%). The difference between unemployment among women and men (2.8 percentage points) remained essentially unchanged. Most afflicted by unemployment are two eastern regions: the Kosice and Presov regions, and the Banska Bystrica region in the south of Slovakia, with unemployment rate of 20 %. The overall situation in unemployment is worsened by the fact that approximately 70.9% of those unemployed have been without work for more than one year and the rate of long-term unemployment, despite its falling trend in the SR, has for some years now been the highest in the EU. The rate of recorded unemployment[7] at the end of 2007 reached 8.43%, having fallen on a year-on-year basis by 1.94 percentage points. The average length of registration in 2007 was 10.9 months, representing a year-on-year fall of 0.31 months. In Slovakia the main problem of the high rate of unemployment is the surfeit of people with little or no qualifications and the need for structural reform in the content of education in accordance with demands of the labour market. The specific rate of unemployment among young people (15-24 years of age) was 20.1%, which was 6.5 percentage points lower than in 2006, where this figure fell for both genders (by 7.1 percentage points in the case of women and 6 percentage points in the case of men). Although Slovakia, after Poland, has the second best indicator in the whole of the EU, as regards the share of the population aged 18-24 years of age with completed basic education, with 7.2% of young people dropping out of the education process (6.3% women and 8.1% men) without further education in 2007, this is not reflected positively in labour market indicators, as might be expected, precisely for the aforementioned reasons. A serious problem is the early school leavers in the case of children from vulnerable Roma communities. According to the "Report on the Living Conditions of Roma Households" (UNDP 2006), as many as 35% of Roma over 25 years of age did not complete elementary school. Likewise, approximately the same share, 36.6%, finished their education with elementary school. Only 24.3% continued in further education after completing elementary school, but of these almost 9% unsuccessfully and their career preparation ended with the status of unfinished education. Only 15.4% of the Roma population reached secondary-school or higher education.

[6] The Statistics Office, Labour Force Selective Sampling Survey.
[7] Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the SR.

Based on the EU SILC 2007 harmonised statistical survey of incomes and living conditions and preliminary data for 2007, the **poverty-risk rate[8] was 11% (men - 10%, women - 11%)**. Relative poverty rates reflect the country's income distribution. In comparison with previous years a substantial fall in the poverty-risk rate was seen, in comparison with 2005 by 2.8 percentage points, and in comparison with 2006 by 1.1 percentage points. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold itself in 2007 (7394 SKK) was 31% higher against 2005 (5664 SKK), and 16% higher against 2006 (6395 SKK). Based on the upper and lower quintile, i.e. the share of the sum of incomes of the 20% of persons with the highest incomes and the 20% of persons with the lowest incomes, this indicator for 2007 was found to be 3.5%. At greatest risk of poverty are incomplete families with children (26%) and families with three or more children (26%). Also the classification of individuals by age indicates that it is children and young people under 17 years of age (17%), who in Slovakia are substantially most at risk of poverty, as for example elderly people above 65 years of age (8%). In the case of the 18 - 64 age group a fall in the poverty-risk rate was seen, of 2 percentage points. **Other indicators, too, are used for comprehensive assessment of poverty and social exclusion, for example material deprivation[9]. In 2006 the extent of material deprivation was 8.3%, while the figure for 2005 was 7.4%. Despite the year-on-year fall in material deprivation, a rise in the share of persons materially deprived below the poverty threshold was recorded. In 2006 17.2% of people below the poverty threshold were materially deprived, while the figure for 2005 was 18.7%.**

In the case of poverty a problematic element is its reproduction from one generation to the next. The lifes of children are greatly influenced by the circumstances of their parent's lives, for example by their education and income. The PISA outputs (2003) showed a highly significant relationship in Slovakia between a child's results at school and at the socio-economic background from which he comes. In Slovakia the most significant factor affecting the risk of poverty is unemployment (45.1%), where unemployed men are somewhat more at risk (50.7%) than women (40.9%).

Other groups at risk of social exclusion include **disabled persons,** particularly as regards their participation in social life and access to the labour market. In connection with the integration of disabled persons into the labour market a positive trend was recorded in the growth in the number of employed disabled persons against 2006. The year-on-year growth in this figure was faster than the overall growth in employment. Of the total number of employed persons in 2007, 1.3% were disabled persons and their number fell on a year-on-year basis by 1400 persons, or by 4.4%. At the same time a positive drop was recorded in the registration of disabled jobseekers against 2006. A group afflicted by multiple exclusion are **marginalized Romani communities.** In the framework of sociographic mapping[10] 1 575 settlements were identified, of which 149 (120 000 to 150 000 residents) are considered segregated settlements, i.e. the settlements are located on the edge of a town, or village, without

[8] Threshold for its assessment is 60% of the median of the national equivalent disposable income.

[9] Deprivation is usually defined as the enforced insufficient satisfaction of needs as regards the level and manner common in the given society as a result of lack of resources of all types. This indicators captures the multi-dimensionality of poverty and social exclusion. Items of material deprivation include, on the basis of the EU SILC sample survey, economic burden, durables and housing. The material deprivation in the case of individuals is then a lack of at least the minimum number of items in each of the given 3 dimensions in the case of an individual (i.e. accumulation of partial deprivations), which thus gives synthetic information on material living conditions.

[10] Sociographic mapping of Roma settlements in Slovakia, 2004.

access to water mains and where the share of illegal housing is above 20%. Another vulnerable group suffering multiple forms of social exclusion are **homeless persons.** In addition to the fact that they have no material security, they suffer a lack of supporting social relationships, limited access to the labour market, health care, culture, etc. At present we have no official estimates available of the total number of homeless persons in Slovakia. There are however, partial statistics, which reflect the situation in certain cities. Other long-term problem groups of the population are released prisoners and persons with a drug or other dependency, whose problems are to a large degree intertwined, and therefore a complex approach to their solution remains necessary.

Share of expenditure on social protection by category in total GDP in 2005 was 7% for pensions and survivors benefits; 4.8% for sickness benefits and health care, 1.5% for invalidity; 0.7% for unemployment, 1.9% for expenditure on families with children; and a 0.5% on expenditure relating to housing and social exclusion. The target expenditure in 2005 for social protection represented 16.9% of GDP. In comparison with 2004 this represented a year-on-year growth of 1.3 percentage points. According to the structure of social protection expenditure in 2005, the greatest share of expenditure pertained to pensions and survivors benefits (42.5%) and sickness and health care (29.5%).

1.2 Overall strategic approach

The need to continue in the task of modernising key fields of public policy in Slovakia remains essential as regards the sustainability of economic growth, the dissemination of new knowledge in Slovakia and their subsequent effective utilisation for social cohesion. This requires taking individual steps aimed at fast and long-term sustainable economic growth, raising social mobility[11], strengthening social cohesion, ameliorating the influences of demographic development and improving the economy's adaptability to changes in the internal and external environment. This process links also to launching the new cycle of the Renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs (2008 - 2010), which again emphasises its social dimension, i.e. the importance of social cohesion. The interconnection and strengthening of the mutual influence of economic and social policies, as well as of employment policies supports and leads to the fulfilment of the adopted Lisbon objective.

Social protection systems and social inclusion policies can contribute substantially to employment growth and sustainable economic growth, whilst on the other hand economic growth founded on productivity growth and rising competitiveness underpins the sustainability of social protection systems and social inclusion policies. With the aim of providing a balanced global picture of the main priorities and measures of the Slovak Republic in the field of social protection and inclusion the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008 - 2010 (hereinafter simply the report) deals with the topic of social inclusion, pensions, health care and long-term care. The strategic approach of the Slovak Republic in the field of social protection and social inclusion reflects knowledge of the overall process of globalisation and demographic changes and the related challenges in the

[11] **Social mobility** is the movement of individuals, but also of social groups in the society's stratification system from one social position to another.

field of ensuring economic growth, sustainability of public finances, raising employment, eliminating unemployment and raising social inclusion.

The Slovak Republic has already in recent years undertaken major structural reforms in the social system, pensions and health care, as well as in related fields, such as management of public finances and taxes. The review of the effects and effectiveness of steps taken will continue over the years 2008 - 2010, and in relation to the social impacts will bring in further changes where necessary for achieving modernisation and stabilisation of these systems for social protection and social inclusion, as well as for their financial sustainability. Subsequently, developing fields, particularly human capital and the knowledge economy will be stabilised and strengthened.

The basic objective of the SR's social policy is to create for its citizens a legislative and institutional framework and to adopt and carry out measures ensuring the maintenance and development of human, economic, social and cultural rights and resources leading to ensuring a decent standard of living for everyone, supporting gender equality, ensuring equality of opportunity and eliminating all forms of discrimination. The strategic priorities of the Slovak Republic in 2006 - 2008 in the above three areas through the reflection of the three common targets of the Open Coordination Method for Social Protection and Social Inclusion and in the harmony with the principles of Slovakia's Competitiveness Strategy to 2010 (the Lisbon Strategy) and of the National Reforms Programme 2006 - 2008 bring summary information, intentions, and steps the implementation of which are considered key by the Slovak Republic in 2006 - 2008. The intention is to **emphasize the links and interactions of the strategy steps in the individual areas of social protection and social inclusion aimed at meeting of the target for growth, employment, and social cohesion.**

Common objective (a)
Promote social cohesion, equality between men and women and create equal opportunities for socially disadvantaged groups of the population by means of adequate, accessible, financially sustainable, adaptable and effective social protection systems and social inclusion policy

The Slovak Republic is striving primarily through effecting **legislative changes** in the Act on Employment Services to create conditions for labour market changes directed towards pro-gender and pro-family measures. Concurrently the objective is to raise the number of jobs and likewise raise the quality of them. A positive step enabling a more efficient solution of the issue of discrimination in the labour market may be considered the amendment to the Anti-Discrimination Act, which sets out the reasons for the prohibition of discrimination, changes the definition of harassment and now defines sexual harassment.

Besides legislative activity, an important role is played also by **white papers and strategy materials** prepared and coordinated by the Slovak Government Council for Gender Equality. One of these has been the preparation of a **National Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Gender Equality**. An important component of support for gender equality is also support for harmonising family, personal and working life.

Support for social cohesion is provided also by means of the Slovak system for **assistance in material need**. In connection to the incomes of individuals assessed in the broader context of the whole family, the state provides an applicant and the whole of his family assistance for securing basic living conditions. It also helps people in supporting their active involvement where possible. The Slovak system provides families not only basic assistance in material need, but also specific health-care, housing and protection allowances (for those who cannot work) and an allowance supporting the activation of persons in material need. Other tools are subsidies provided for food and school needs for supporting education for children from a socially disadvantaged background, or from families in material need. With the aim of raising support for access to education and motivating children from low-income families, a new tool is being introduced in the framework of the system of assistance in material need, which will be conditional upon fulfilling compulsory school attendance. Alongside assistance in material need, other state benefits are also aimed at supporting children and the family. Particularly in the case of those most vulnerable in the family - children - it is necessary to focus not only on solving the acute material need, but also on the preventive level, meaning securing living conditions and supporting education which will provide them greater chances to avoid the risks of poverty in the future.

It is at the same time essential that activation elements in the system of assistance in material need are directed at **supporting the philosophy of active inclusion**[12]. Assistance in material need and protection should have the nature of preventive measures and temporary solutions only in the case of those whose potential can be activated. For this it is necessary that alongside social protection systems, active inclusion in society is intensively supported by means of creating job opportunities supporting the return to the labour market, where this means initiating in particular programmes for supporting employment growth, strengthening human resources and capacities for application in the labour market (including support for education and preparation for the labour market), because education and paid employment are the most efficient prevention against the risks of poverty. For achieving this objective the Slovak Republic has some years now been using not only its structural reforms for supporting economic growth, but also a broad spectrum of programmes for supporting employment. These have included also programmes aimed at active labour market measures supporting disadvantaged groups of jobseekers, and which the SR is successfully implementing in a broad scope also by using the respective financial instruments from the European Community.

Social policy to a large degree influences **health** and health is an important determining factor for life opportunities. It is necessary to take steps for reducing persistent and substantial inequalities in the results of **health care**. The next steps of the government will lead to including the health perspective into all policies. Social protection can ensure equivalent access to health care and prevention, where according to need, also for groups at risk of social exclusion. The positive effects of ongoing reforms of the pension system and health care are being seen in the

[12] Active inclusion of persons most removed from the labour market is based on an integrated strategy built on three pillars: sufficient income support to prevent social exclusion, access to an inclusive labour market, better access to quality services

sustainability of public finances and labour market behaviour. Successful measures in the field of health care are improving the quality of life and productivity. The main challenge is to enable for all access to high-quality health care reflecting the latest technological procedures, and to concurrently ensure sustainability. Equally important are steps for raising the affordability of health care for all citizens, solving financial barriers in access to health care, emphasising activities aimed at supporting and preventing diseases prior to medical care and solving barriers to the use of these services. For supporting reforms, strengthening capacities, particularly in convergence regions, resources from the Structural Funds will be used with the aim of improving access and developing human resources.

More intensive coordination between health care and social services is deemed a decisive factor for achieving appropriate continuity in care, enabling a high level of quality and efficient utilisation of resources in providing long-term care services in an institutional or community environment. For ensuring a high level of quality, it is necessary to implement measures concerning unified standards and mechanisms for verifying quality in connection with enacted assessment methods.

Over the years 2008 - 2010 changes in **Slovakia's pension system** are under preparation, starting with a change to the date for the valorisation of pensions, which will contribute to raising the annual income of all pensioners, thus increasing the annual rate of benefits of all pensions received against the annual average wage in the given year. At the same time the sphere of state insured persons will be expanded to include assistants performing personal assistance to severely disabled persons under defined conditions, set out in detail in the Social Insurance Act. A relaxation of the conditions for claiming an invalidity pension is also proposed. In the second capitalisation pillar the legislative framework will be improved for raising the quality of information from the side of pension management companies provided to savers and subjects involved in old age pension saving. Likewise it is planned to adopt measures to substantially raise the informedness of participants in pension saving.

Social protection and aid to persons seeking asylum in Slovakia is provided in close cooperation with the migration authority, with non-governmental, church and charity organisations, whereby the conditions are created for securing basic human needs and protecting human rights for asylum seekers. The conceptual solution for inclusion of asylees is based on a systematic approach taking account of the material and financial conditions, socio-economic development of Slovakia's regions, applicable legislation, the institutional base and available qualified human resources. In the framework of Slovakia's integration strategy, the thorough inclusion of these immigrants into all general support instruments in the sphere of health care, housing policy, employment and other spheres of social life, the migration authority promotes a strategy of full inclusion. In the framework of towns and villages it is necessary to create conditions for the integration of foreigners into society, primarily through access to the housing fund by means of social apartments. These persons are concurrently disadvantaged jobseekers, meaning that for supporting their integration and their entry to the labour market it is necessary to improve the conditions for employability. In the framework of comprehensive integration in the case of these target groups, financial assistance from the European Refugee Fund (ERF) programme is used.

Common objective (b)
Promote effective and mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives of greater economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy

The Slovak Republic considers the highest possible rate of employment to be one of the basic criteria of a successful state economic and social policy. In cooperation with social partners and municipal government authorities, the Government will support permanently sustainable economic growth and the strengthening of social and territorial cohesion by implementing policies supporting permanently sustainable employment, supporting the reduction of unemployment and economic inactivity and helping raise social inclusion. Particular attention will be devoted to developing the social economy and creating social enterprises, as a new tool for supporting employment.

Besides the Slovak Republic's key strategic frameworks, in which employment support policies in conjunction with efficient social policy form the main pillars, e.g. the Government's Programme Declaration, National Reform Programme and National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, these principles are also taken over into practical tools in the framework of concrete development programmes. In the new programme period the Slovak Republic has incorporated the philosophy of interconnecting employment support and support for active social inclusion into the Operational Programme **Employment and Social Inclusion**. Its global objective focuses on four key aspects: supporting employment growth, strengthening the fall in unemployment, creating tools for social inclusion and investing in building capacities. Its main objectives focus at once on supporting a growth in employment and reducing unemployment, whilst are also directed at supporting social inclusion and raising the employability of people at risk of social exclusion from the labour market. For Slovakia a holistic approach to active social inclusion policy represents a key tool for supporting growth and employment that goes beyond the boundaries of the medium-term Lisbon Strategy. These challenges will remain current also after 2010.

The strategy is fully in accordance with the main priorities and objectives of the Renewed Lisbon Strategy and new integrated principles. Therefore it has been used as the basis and cornerstone also for the National Reform Programme for Slovakia.

In the **social field** the SR Government will continue to realise policies that are in accordance with traditional European values (individual responsibility, equality of opportunity, role of the family and community in care for problem groups, maximising opportunities for a person to apply themselves, responsibility of society in the fight against poverty) and will place emphasis particularly on:

- co-responsibility of the individual and his family for solving their own situation and for creating an adequate social and economic background,
- balanced social support in all phases of an individual's and family's life,
- motivation of the individual to activity and creative activity by means of social policy,

- reducing absolute poverty by means of tools facilitating people in solving their difficult social situation,
- keeping an effective social network and creating an environment for the most appropriate own solutions of municipalities and local authority regions,
- keeping a flexible labour market as a basic prerequisite for creating new job opportunities, stable work and thereby creating room for reducing costs on the social system.

The **amendment to the Labour Code**, effective as of 1 September 2007, took over the new changes resulting from the development of European law (directives), as well as requirements resulting from the European judicial practice. The legal amendment has deepened the freedom of contract in the field of agreeing working conditions between the employer and employee. The amendment to the Labour Code ensured a balanced legal standing between the participants to a labour-legal relationship. For this reason those provisions that in their application had proved disadvantageous either for the employer or employee in the labour-legal relationship have been amended.

The amendment to the Labour Code also incorporated the **principles of flexicurity**, flexible and reliable working conditions, particularly flexible forms of work, an equal balance between the rights and obligations of employers and employees, equal treatment, strengthening the social dialogue, employee mobility, agency employment, provision for working on standby, the principles of dignity in work.

Based on the Employment Forecast to 2015, the projected development of workforce resources indicates that growth in the economically active population could in the near future cover labour market requirements in the SR. The results of the forecast indicate that it will be necessary to focus the management of migration policy in the SR particularly on the period after 2010, when although growth is still expected in the economically active population, this growth will nevertheless be substantially lower than in the years before 2010. With regard to the labour market situation **it is a priority of the SR to raise employment from internal resources by means** of active labour market measures, including programmes aimed at education and preparation for the labour market and at jobseekers. The employment of migrants is seen to be a supplementary source of workforce.

With a view to meeting the Lisbon objective, that is to achieve a 60% rate of employment among women by 2010, it will be necessary to eliminate several barriers, making it possible to raise the employment of women in gender-untraditional occupations, reducing the rate primarily of long-term unemployment among women, reducing the gender wage difference and creating conditions for harmonising family and working life.

The sustainability of the social protection systems and social inclusion policies depends on the growth, i.e., on the success of the support for competitiveness and productivity. Sustainable reduction of poverty and elimination of social exclusion requires more massive investment in developing the human capital of policymakers, providers of services and measures, and in excluded persons as set out in the Lisbon Strategy for Slovakia and the National Reform Programme 2006 - 2008, as reflected

also in the National Strategic Reference Framework and Operational Programmes for 2007 – 2013. The Structural Funds will be used also for supporting deinstitutionalisation and strengthening community services.

The steps taken in the field of the fight against child poverty are an example of linking and strengthening the interaction of social policy and employment policy. Eliminating child poverty and preventing the reproduction of poverty from one generation to the next represents a key priority for Slovakia's Government. Measures for the fight against child poverty form a complex system harmonising the approach in the framework of employment policy and labour market policy, state family and social support and tax policy, working from the principle that employment and education are the key tools in preventing and eliminating poverty and social exclusion. The steps are directed at supporting access to education for children from low-income families and motivate them to participate in school attendance through a system of school subsidies and social scholarship grants for children right from pre-school education through to university. These steps will be strengthened by implementing a new tool in the system of assistance in material need, by means of a benefit for children in material need who comply with compulsory school attendance. Attendance at school is the condition for paying out the additional child benefit to the parent in a period of compliance with compulsory school attendance. In the case of participation in education and labour market preparation, active labour market measures make it possible for a parent caring for a child prior to compulsory school attendance or a person caring for a child prior to compulsory school attendance to be reimbursed costs for food, lodging and travel from their residence to the place of the education and labour market preparation. A contribution for services for a family with children may also be provided for reimbursement of a part of proven costs for a child's stay in pre-school facilities or for child care provided by an eligible natural person.

Common objective (c)
Promote good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy

The main targets of the Slovak Republic include **improving the governance and good administration** at the central, regional, and local level. An important component is the development of cooperation, creation of partnerships between individual subjects at the horizontal and vertical level, as well as the engagement of all stakeholders, including excluded groups in the design, implementation and monitoring of social protection and social inclusion policies. Despite some progress that Slovakia has achieved in this field, attaining this objective remains a key political challenge.

For ensuring good governance, accessibility and transparency in attaining the overall strategic objectives and for supporting social cohesion, a mechanism built on close cooperation of the social partners and local authority bodies will enable a new approach to the administration of public affairs. Concurrently, the establishment or reinstatement of industry sector and regional tripartites will be supported. Despite the fact that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should be important actors in public policy making, relations with local and state administration authorities are still not

sufficiently established. An exception is the Slovak Network Against Poverty as an extraordinary partner of the SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family in this field.[13]

It is necessary to continue in the process of decentralisation of social services and to create new forms of providing social services at the regional and local level.

The **territorial concentration** of activities and financial resources covering these activities is of particular importance in Slovakia. Regional disparities in Slovakia are substantial. The territorial concentration of resources is solved separately for regions included in the framework of the objective Convergence and for the Bratislava county region included in the group of regions eligible for support from the objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment. This separate approach reflects also the setting of priority axes in the Operational Programmes. A separate priority axis was created for the Bratislava county region despite the fact that employment policy in Slovakia, in contrast to other activities, is not concentrated in growth poles.

In the field of **social dialogue** Slovakia lacks a centre that would coordinate activities aimed at supporting social dialogue at all levels between the individual social partners (e.g. drawing up joint analyses, studies, exchanging experience, etc). The aim will be to create and form a consensus for fine tuning reforms in the field of employment policy and labour market policy and to accelerate the fulfilment of the National Reform Programme in the field of employment with regard to macroeconomic relations and supporting sustainable economic growth. For this reason the creation of a centre for social dialogue that would oversee activities and professional structures focusing on the need for a professional background for employers, trade unions and the Government, i.e. the social partners at all levels (central, industry sector, regional, local and firm) for all forms and types of social dialogue is being considered.

Appropriate monitoring plays a significant role in realising measures and, in the case that effective mechanisms are not yet in place, it is necessary to ensure these.

With regard to the problematic field of obtaining statistical data, as was highlighted by the last National Report for 2006 - 2008, the SR Government has put measures in place for solving the situation. Projects for ensuring full utilisation of national indicators, efficient cooperation in the field of monitoring, analyses of problem phenomena and the planning and development of institutional and staffing capacities in the field of the monitoring and evaluation of poverty and social exclusion are currently underway in Slovakia and their realisation will continue over the period 2008 - 2010[14].

A further challenge remains **mainstreaming in the field of social inclusion** in designing individual policies at the national, regional and local level.

[13] (SNAP, Slovak Network against Poverty) associates twenty-five non-profit organisations operating in the field of social protection and social inclusion, with groups at risk of social exclusion. SNAP was registered as a civil association by the SR Ministry of the Interior on 2 November 2006, and in November 2008 it will hold its first general meeting in cooperation with the SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, something which may be perceived as a start of a new era of partnership relations and partnership dialogue.

[14] More in part 2.6 – Better governance

The SR considers the evaluation of the impacts of regulation to be a priority task, whereby it identifies with the objectives of the Renewed Lisbon Strategy. In this regard it has prepared a Consistent Methodology for assessing selected impacts. The Consistent Methodology represents a common procedure for assessing the impacts of all draft materials that ministries and other central government bodies are planning to submit for comment proceedings. In addition to this, it contains specific procedures for assessing economic, financial, environmental and social impacts. In November 2008 a Peer Review will take place in Slovakia with a view to evaluating social impacts.

2 NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON SOCIAL INCLUSION (NAP-INCLUSION)

2.1 Progress in relation to the National Strategy Reports 2006 - 2008 and to challenges listed in the Joint Report 2007

Based on analyses of experience and the development of the situation in earlier periods the NAP/SI 2006 - 2008 focused on measures targeted at disadvantaged groups most at risk of poverty and exclusion - i.e. particularly children, juveniles, young adults, families with children, unemployed persons (particularly long-term unemployed persons), disabled persons, marginalised Roma communities, homeless persons, released prisoners and persons with a drug or other dependency.

The priority objectives for 2006 – 2008 were set as follows:

1) *Reduce child poverty and solve the inter-generational reproduction of poverty by preventive measures and support to families with children*
2) *Raise inclusion and fight against discrimination of vulnerable population groups by supporting the availability of public services, developing local solutions and raising participation of excluded groups in the life of society*
3) *Improve access to the labour market and to raise the employment and employability of disadvantaged jobseekers and groups of the population at risk of exclusion*
4) *Strengthen governance, implementation and monitoring of policy measures at the national, regional and local level*

In the framework of the individual objectives, tools were defined and quantifiable sub-objectives and indicators were set, the evaluation of which forms a part of Annex 2.2 *Scoresheet of priority objectives, quantifiable objectives and indicators of the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2006 - 2008*

These tools included **structural reforms carried out in the SR and the use of complex, multi-tool approaches**. **Structural reforms** have influenced the whole field of social inclusion and social protection policy. They have required and will continue to require assessment of impacts, as well as of the effectiveness of the proposed measures. This is necessary so that it is possible to strengthen those development fields requiring this. As is becoming clear, the most efficient measures are those that invest in developing human resources and creating jobs.[15] **Complex, multi-tool approaches** combine the efforts of multiple policies. Cross-sectional themes and key fields are the labour market, social aid and protection, education, housing, public services and equal opportunities. This field includes in particular direct transfers (assistance in material need, state social benefits), or measures leading

[15] Raising Slovakia's competitiveness through supporting human resources development has appeared to have been key over the past years. The Ministry for the Economy, too, perceives their quality in the field of reducing poverty as decisive. Proof for this statement is the white paper of the Programme for Education, Training and Consultancy for Selected Groups of Persons Interested in Pursuing Business in 2008. This concerns an indirect aid in the form of free training sessions as well as consultancy for the persons interested in pursuing business. For 2008 a budget of SKK 4 million was approved for the mentioned initiative of the Ministry for the Economy, which is provided by the National Agency for Development of Small- and Medium-Sized Enerprises. This measure is applicable by the end of 2013.

to reducing expenses of individuals and households (material aid, school subsidies for children, provision of services) or measures aimed at supporting active inclusion, including access to education, employment and participation in social life.

Priority objective 1 was aimed at **reducing child poverty**. An objective was set also to solve the **inter-generational reproduction of poverty** by preventive measures and support to families with children. In the framework of this priority objective an important role was played by **education policy**. This has become one of the key tools in Slovakia in the fight against the inter-generational reproduction of poverty. By ensuring equal chances in access to education and the possibility of achieving quality education regardless of the socioeconomic background from which a child comes, the integration of children from at-risk and marginalised groups into the standard school environment has been secured. This measure has been realised primarily by adjusting education policies and by support measures during education (beginning with support for access to pre-school education). A principal role and system instrument in this field has been the **Education and Upbringing Act** adopted in May 2008. This act takes the principles of education to be equality of access to education, the prohibition of all forms of discrimination (particularly segregation), lifelong learning, preparation for a responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding and tolerance, equality of men and women, friendship between nations, between national and ethnic groups, and religious tolerance, integration of the SR education system into the European education area with regard to own experience and traditions, the prohibition of the provision or disclosure of information or the misuse of information resources that could lead to the corruption of morality or to the incitement of nationalist, racist or ethnic hatred or to other forms of intolerance. Despite cardinal comments to the draft Education Act, the act's submitter did not incorporate Government Resolution no. 282 of 21.3.2007 (point B.2) concerning the task of creating a uniform system of school guidance in the interest of ensuring integrated, complex, available and qualified childcare corresponding to its needs.

In addition to this, inclusive policies in education have been realised and will continue to be realised through **financial support programmes,** e.g. contributions and subsidies in support of access to education for children and pupils from low-income families, in the form of meal subsidies, school needs, motivation contributions for children in kindergartens and elementary schools, subsidised scholarship grants for secondary school students from the European Social Fund, social scholarship grants for university students, and contributions for supporting transport for primary school pupils. Support for access to education for children from low-income families, right from pre-school education, continued through a system of subsidies.

Motivation scholarship grants have appeared to be a strong, but double edged, stimulus. Despite some enlightenment, over the period monitored enrolment of Roma pupils in special remedial schools, even at the parents' initiative, has continued. Roma pupils in consequence of a specific learning disorder, (but which does not require education in a special remedial school) have not achieved the results in ordinary schools allowing them to receive the school merit scholarship grant. The more easily obtained better learning results in special remedial schools, making the child eligible for the scholarship grants are becoming a motive for parents in requesting enrolment in special elementary schools. Individual regional offices of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Romani Community have publicised this issue through

significant media activity in an out-of-court environment in the case of the application of segregation or discrimination practice of local authority bodies, schools and school facilities. In cooperation with community social workers they have provided assistance in solving the problems of failure at school and the absenteeism of Romani pupils.

They have supported and developed tools and programmes for integrating children from groups at risk of exclusion **or marginalised groups into the standard school environment**. **These tools have included** a zero school year[16], a transitive class, advisory tools, out-of-school education, preparatory courses, tutoring, various types of innovative and acceleration programmes and work programmes with parents conducted in schools, community centres, work in the field, etc.

In the field of education for children **with special education needs**, SR legislation has enabled, in the framework of the education system, education in the form of individual integration in the ordinary schooling system, education in the form of social integration in special classes of ordinary schools, education in special remedial schools. In this way children and their statutory representatives are provided assistance from the side of pedagogical-psychological advice centres, centres for educational and psychological prevention, diagnostic centres and treatment-upbringing sanatoria and special-teaching advisory facilities. Education gained in special remedial schools, other than education gained in special remedial schools for mentally disabled pupils, is equivalent in the SR with education gained at elementary and secondary schools.

The level of education, particularly in segregated and separated Romani localities does, though, despite the mentioned measures, remain insufficient. Based on the Assessment Report on the results of the 1st stage of the Programme for Supporting the Health of the Disadvantaged Romani Community over the Years 2007 - 2008, which was realised at segregated and separated Romani localities in the east of Slovakia, high absenteeism of children at school is typical, primarily in winter months, which may be partially caused by a lack of adequate clothing and footwear. The generally low education level, together with the very low percentage of employed Roma means low income, a direct consequence of which is the deepening of socio-economic inequalities. In families in material need it is not uncommon for priority to be given to any gainful activity whatever, even by using children of compulsory school age. Parents excuse absence from school, whereby they misuse their right for violating their child's right to education, whilst neither the school nor school founder have resources to prevent them in doing so, and so turn for help in solving this problem also to the Government Plenipotentiary for the Romani Community.

European Social Fund resources contributed substantially towards realising the development of inclusive education. Priority support of the programming period 2007 - 2013 is given to ensuring access to education and building education infrastructure. At present emphasis is placed on the thorough realisation of tools for preventing

[16] The zero year of elementary schools is intended for children reaching the physical age of 6 years as at 1 September, not achieving the maturity for school, coming from a socially disadvantaged background and with regard to their social and language background do not have prerequisites to manage the contents of education for the first year of the elementary school over the period of one school year.

segregated education, particularly over children from marginalised Romani communities.

In the interest of achieving greater solidarity with families with children measures have been adopted over the years 2006 - 2008 for raising support for families by means of an increase in **direct financial contributions in the framework of state social benefits**. The sums of material-need aid, as well as state social support benefits for children and families have been increased in parallel with the growth in the costs of low-income households and the development of overall inflation. An important preventive tool in the field of protecting children against poverty is the institute of substitute alimony[17]. The new law has expanded the sphere of eligible persons and simplified the process of providing substitute alimony. This act has contributed significantly to reducing the risk of poverty for children from incomplete families, who, from the aspect of the threat of poverty, are among the most vulnerable groups of children.[18] At the same time financial assistance has been interlinked with active labour market measures supporting increased employability and employment of excluded persons or persons at risk of exclusion. With regard to legislative changes[19] in the provision of state social benefits made in 2006 - 2008 it may be said that the steps taken are leading towards attaining priority objective 1 in the field of supporting families with children.

A working group was set up in 2007 comprising representatives of selected ministries, the SR Statistics Office and scientific-research organisations to propose and solve tasks necessary for reassessing the living minimum. Analytical studies and their conclusions formed the source material for preparing the document "Report on the Construction of the Living Minimum". It may be said that important source material was gained for reassessing the construction of the living minimum, it was not, however, possible to verify the level of the living minimum from the aspect of meeting households' essential expenses. There is at present a lack of quality data on the expenses of low-income households; no minimum basket of consumer goods has been defined, while both analyses are important for setting the living minimum in relation to households' basic needs. As next steps the report proposes that a new concept of the living minimum be drafted soon and that the groundwork be laid for improving the quality of selective sampling on households' incomes, expenses and consumption. The new white paper will reflect the multitude of approaches to reassessing the living minimum and the need to build it on households' basic living needs, or minimum acceptable living standards.

Priority objective 2 is aimed at **raising inclusion and at the fight against discrimination of vulnerable groups of the population.** The means for this objective has been **improved accessibility of public services, the development of local solutions and increased participation of excluded groups in the life of society.**

[17] It is paid out in the case that a parent does not fulfil his/her alimony obligation set by the courts, and when the orphan's pension or the sum of ophan's pensions of an uprovided-for child does not reach the level of the minimum alimony set by the Family Act.

[18] Source: Department of State Support and Strategy of Social and Family Policy, SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family

[19] See Annex – Deduction

The Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion from 2007 defines the need to realise active inclusion as one of the basic challenges for strengthening the social inclusion of at-risk groups of the population into society.

The following have served to raise social inclusion in Slovakia:

- raising the availability and quality of social services,
- modernisation and broadening of the variability in providing social services,
- raising quality and effectiveness in executing measures for socio-legal protection and social guardianship,
- social work conducted in the field,
- community work,
- and other integration activities.

These were aimed at supporting the abilities of individuals, families and communities to actively participate and lead an independent life, use the standard tools of employment and education policies, support their integration into society and the labour market, avoid exclusion and at community development. This was achieved whilst thoroughly fulfilling and taking account of the protective function of social policy.

The intention was:

- to support the flexibility of services and measures aimed at preventing and solving poverty and exclusion,
- for made-to-measure solutions according to the needs of the given locality,

by means of

- raising the availability of social services,
- raising quality and effectiveness in executing measures for socio-legal protection and social guardianship for all at-risk, threatened and marginalised groups of the population,
- measures aimed at enabling people to remain in their natural social environment,
- modernisation and development of social services and other measures and forms of aid aimed at the family and at raising internal activation of individuals,
- the development of social services of a low-threshold nature and other measures conducted in various environments,
- raising the quality of services in the field of solving the problem of violence against women.

The following served for realising this objective:

- targeted provision of subsidies for expanding scarce services and measures
- targeted provision of subsidies for developing services and measures in deprived localities or innovative inclusive measures,
- focusing on strengthening infrastructure - through the settings of Operational Programmes,
- continuing in the realisation and further expansion of support programmes for developing community and field social work in villages (prioritising marginalised localities),
- developing local infrastructure, prioritising marginalised localities.

In the field of **socio-legal protection of children, social guardianship and advisory - psychological services**, Act no. 305/2005 Coll. on socio--legal protection of children and social guardianship and on the amendment of certain acts as later amended was implemented in Slovakia over the years 2006 - 2008 and has been amended three times, and the process of its fourth amendment is currently under way. According to current results from monitoring the implementation of socio-legal protection and social guardianship law, it may be said that this has brought a positive trend in development in this field.

In the field of **support tools for housing development**, particularly in the field of credit and subsidy policy, support is aimed primarily at raising the affordability of housing having a social dimension - rented housing. Raising the affordability of housing for groups of the population at risk of social exclusion (particularly marginalised Romani communities) is being solved by introducing more favourable conditions for supporting the construction of rented apartments, with a higher share of subsidy in the total financing for their realisation[20]. The SR will continue in this form of support for raising the affordability of rented housing also over the period 2008 - 2010. In using these economic tools the principles of gender equality, equal opportunities as well as support for raising the possibility of housing for disabled persons are applied.

In the field of education an edict on the award of social scholarship grants to university students entered into force in 2006, raising the level of the maximum scholarship grant in the school year 2006 - 2007[21]. In 2008 the SR Government approved a White Paper on Education of Romani Children and Pupils, including the Development of Secondary School and University Education. The Government also approved the Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Advice. The objective is to create the conditions for acquiring qualifications during active life. A priority in this is to develop key competencies and raise one's own chances in the labour market. This strategy pays particular attention to supporting gender equality and creating the conditions for disabled persons. The SR in a new law on lifelong learning is planning to create conditions for recognising the results of non-formal and informal learning for obtaining qualification. This would strengthen social inclusion and reintegration into the labour market.

The Government Plenipotentiary for the Romani Community (hereinafter "GPRC") at the Office of the SR Government in its grant scheme is realising a scholarship grant programme in cooperation with the Open Society Foundation for secondary school pupils and university students. In this programme the GPRC in 2007

[20] From the budgetary chapter of the Ministry of the Construction and Regional Development, in the framework of the **Housing Development Programme,** funds are provided in the form of subsidies to municipalities and non-profit organisation for the purpose of procuring rented apartments with a limited spatial and price standard, intended for housing of socially weaker groups, for procuring rented low-standard apartments intended for housing marginalised groups, for the construction of technical infrastructure conditional for the construction and use of new apartments and eliminating systematic faults of apartment buildings. For ordinary apartments a subsidy of 20% to 30% of the procurement costs of apartment construction is provided and for low-standard apartments it is 75 to 80% of the procurement costs of apartment construction.
Another tool is the **State Housing Development Fund**, which supports the construction of apartments in apartment buildings and in family houses in the form of providing advantageous loans. Loans are provided only to households up to the set level of income and with a limited standard of floor space of the apartment.

[21] From SKK 2500 for disabled students to SKK 7200.

provided scholarship grants for 112 secondary school pupils and 25 university students[22]. Furthermore, in the framework of its grant scheme, it supported several projects in a total subsidy of 42 million Slovak koruna, including also 39 projects for improving the quality of life of socially disadvantaged groups, for community centres in 16 villages, learning (17 projects) and the creation of project documentation for the construction of municipal rented apartments (for 19 subjects).

In connection with the need for supporting the social inclusion process and for strengthening integration processes, the **development of cultural needs of disadvantaged groups of the population** over the period 2006 - 2008 was made more effective and given greater depth. One of the basic preconditions to a successful integration process has been to utilise and strengthen cultural mechanisms with the aim of facilitating marginalised groups of the population in access to creating social values and their participation in redistributing these values. Based on the document Strategy for Developing Cultural Needs of Disadvantaged Groups of the Population to 2007[23] the SR has ensured financing for the cultural needs of disadvantaged groups of the population. An important tool for supporting social inclusion processes has been the grants system, in the framework of which the programme Culture of Disadvantaged Groups [24] has been created.

An objective of the SR has also been to continue in supporting access to **health care** for all groups at risk of poverty and exclusion, and with the objective of truly strengthening social solidarity in marginalised localities. Activities for improving the access of marginalised communities to health care, with particular regard to marginalised Romani communities, have also continued. The main task in this case has been to systematically ensure the availability of health care in the selected localities and to expand the activity of health workers focusing on work in the community. The availability of health care for disabled persons has been solved also through progressively establishing barrier-free access at individual health facilities.

Slovakia's objectives in the field of the **development of an information society and e-inclusion** have included, among others, the inclusion of disadvantaged groups into society through the development of an information society, and ensuring widespread availability of the Internet and public-administration information systems, as set out in the Lisbon Strategy for Slovakia and relevant action plans. In October 2007 the Operational Programme Information Society was approved, which defines priority fields for informatisation and the volume of Structural Funds intended for it.

Over the years 2006 - 2007 work has continued in systematic activities for **preventing all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other expressions of intolerance** in accordance with the action plan, which has been regularly prepared since 2000. Over the course of 2006 training sessions were held for mayors and municipal authority staff, in addition to seminars on the issue of gender equality and eliminating discrimination in the labour market, on the issue of violence

[22] Source: Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Romani Community

[23] The programme is aimed at persons with a health disability, Romani communities living in settlements, children and youth, elderly people, migrants, homeless, women belonging from marginalised groups, etc.

[24] In the framework of the mentioned programme, over the period of 2006 – 2007 financial amounts of SKK 3 million and SKK 6 million were distributed for ensuring cultural activities.

against women, etc. The draft action plan for 2009 - 2011 is currently under preparation.

Improvement in access to the labour market and increased employment and employability of groups at risk of social exclusion has been realised in the framework of **priority objective 3.**

Support for inclusion in the labour market has been accomplished through:

- continuing in the realisation of programmes in the field of supporting employment and solving unemployment, with an emphasis on developing their quality and effectiveness,
- perfecting and introducing new forms of support and assistance targeted at disadvantaged groups at risk of exclusion,
- taking account of the principal of providing a greater intensity of aid in districts in backward regions, The aim was to achieve a still greater reduction in regional disparities, and to support job creation.

Act no. 139/2008 Coll. amending Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services and on the amendment of certain acts as later amended, introduced new active labour market policy tools supporting the employment and employability of disadvantaged jobseekers, including long-term unemployed jobseekers and supporting the motivation of employers to create jobs and to employ people from these groups.

New active labour market measures are aimed at:
- support for raising the employability of jobseekers,
- support for disadvantaged groups of jobseekers to enter and remain in the labour market, particularly for the long-term unemployed,
- support for keeping in employment in particular long-term unemployed persons, disabled persons and persons who have entered employment and, due in particular to their low qualification, perform low-paid work.
- achieving better targeting of new active labour market policy measures for disadvantaged jobseekers,
- extending the groups of disadvantaged jobseekers that receive support,
- activation of partnerships created at the regional and local level *for solving problems of regional employment, particularly on the basis of projects or programmes*,
- engaging towns, villages and creating associations of them for solving their citizens' unemployment,
- expanding the competencies of public employment services aimed at accelerating the turnover in the register of jobseekers,
- searching for new forms of realising active labour market policy in favour of disadvantaged groups of jobseekers,
- making use of the social economy and social enterprises for raising employment.

The new act creates a legislative framework for fulfilling objectives flowing from the Lisbon Strategy, as well as from recommendations of the European Council on the basis of the National Reform Programme. The new act also provides for the

realisation of priorities and activities from the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion.

From the aspect of the **social inclusion of the long-term unemployed**, a significant step has been the widening of the sphere of disadvantaged jobseekers. This concerns, for example, a person who became unemployed due to redundancy for organisational reasons, due to a threat of occupational illness, due to reaching the maximum admissible exposure at the workplace or due to reaching an age at which the original employment cannot be performed, a person who did not complete systematic career preparation at secondary school, a person who had not gained any paid employment before imprisonment, a person discharged from institutional care and protective upbringing, a person released from prison or custody. Widening the group of disadvantaged jobseekers has enabled active labour market policy tools to be targeted more efficiently at those groups of persons most at risk of social exclusion.

A significant role in the field of raising employment and social inclusion has been played also by financing from the Structural Funds[25]. These have been used to raise the availability, quality and effectiveness of **measures for socio-legal protection, social guardianship, social services, community development** and other programmes for inclusion in the labour market and in society. Massive investments have been allocated to the human resources of providers of services and measures, as well as excluded groups and communities.

A key task has been to **support equality of opportunities in access to the labour market and to support the integration of disadvantaged population groups at risk of exclusion into the labour market**. By means of Operational Programme tools for utilising the ESF, support has been provided for social development programmes aimed at solving employment and social inclusion at the local level. This has been happening particularly through local social inclusion partnerships, programmes aimed at fighting discrimination against ethnic groups in access to the labour market and in the labour market. Increased emphasis has been placed on ensuring compliance with the principles of equal opportunity in access to the labour market and in the labour market.

The role of new law in the field of employment services has been to create the legislative conditions for the **development of communities and community work**. In the case of individuals or communities that are excluded or at risk of exclusion it has been crucial to support the development of self-sufficiency and the activation of internal resources and involvement in the life of society and decision-making. Local social inclusion partnerships have represented an innovative form of cooperation among representatives of the public, private and civil sectors, aimed at solving social problems. Local social inclusion partnerships and other local partnerships created with the objective of developing disadvantaged communities have represented a way of engaging the target group itself in solving the problem so that they are not simply the project's object, but also a subject of it. They have at the same time created a broader platform for solving problems, which has included representatives of general government, the business sector, non-profit organisations and the target group

[25] More on the Structural Funds and the National Strategic Framework in Chapter 2.2

community. In the framework of SOP Priority 2 Strengthening Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities in the Labour Market, under measure 2.1 Improving the Employability of Groups at Risk of Social Exclusion, the NP VI Improving the Employability of Groups Affected by and at Risk of Social Exclusion by Means of Social Inclusion Partnerships in the old programming period was: aimed at the local social inclusion partnerships. The project had the objective of raising the employability of socially marginalised groups by means of social inclusion partnerships.

One of the tasks flowing from the SR Government Programme Declaration in the period 2006 - 2008 was to review the possibilities for and create the conditions for the emergence and development of **social enterprise**. In the framework of the objective to strengthen cohesion and social inclusion the amendment to the Act on Employment Services created the legislative framework for the establishment and incorporation of social enterprises and for supporting the creation and maintenance of jobs in a social enterprise with effect as of 1 September 2008. Social exclusion is first and foremost a consequence of unemployment, therefore social enterprise focuses on supporting the integration of disadvantaged jobseekers in the open labour market. An important role in creating partnerships with social enterprises, with the objective of implementing programmes for local development and development of local social capital, will be played by the local authority, non-governmental organisations, as well as businesses.

In the framework of the EQUAL Community Initiative projects, which is aimed at facilitating activities supporting the European Employment Strategy – solving all causes of discrimination and inequality in the labour market and related social exclusion – five social enterprises have been established[26]. Moreover, projects in the framework of measure 2.1 (Strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organisations as an actor in mitigating inequalities in the labour market, with an emphasis on non-governmental organisations providing community public services) have focused on the topic of social enterprise from the broader aspect.

By using the Social Development Fund the **realisation of programmes targeted at backward localities in the interest of supporting social cohesion** was continued. The programmes were aimed at community development directly in the given region or locality, and supporting activities leading to the direct engagement of excluded groups, to raising their self-sufficiency and involvement in decision-making. It is expected that the decentralisation of further competencies in the field of assistance in material need will strengthen local objectives in solving poverty and social exclusion.

Priority objective 4 was aimed at **strengthening the management, implementation and monitoring of political measures at the national, regional and local level with the participation of all stakeholders.** For ensuring a complex, and thus efficient, approach in designing social inclusion policies and measures in the framework of this objective:

- coordination in policymaking within individual institutions was strengthened,
- interdepartmental cooperation was strengthened,

[26] According to the Act on Employment Services these enterprises, however, do not have the status of a social enterprise. The provision on the social enterprise will enter into effect on 1 September 2008 in the amendment to the Act on Employment Services.

- a standard method of cooperation at the vertical level was created,
- emphasis was placed on mainstreaming activities.

Key actors in the SR were engaged in the process of preparing the documents National Strategic Reference Framework of the SR for 2008 - 2013 and the Bratislava County Operational Programme and the Regional Operational Programme. Representatives of at-risk groups worked in the framework of working groups and participated in seminars and conferences. They were also involved in comment proceedings. Most of their comments were accepted.

For ensuring **broader awareness of the issue of poverty and social exclusion**, for exchanging information and best practice, the Government website on social inclusion **was created**. The page is updated on an ongoing basis. (http://www.socialnainkluzia.gov.sk/si)

Activities have also continued in this period aimed at creating and developing the formation of various types of partnerships for the needs of inclusive policies, including **local social inclusion partnerships** in the intentions of the social development fund, as well as other local partnerships created with the aim of developing disadvantaged communities. Cooperation has been achieved by representatives of labour offices, central government, local authorities, non-profit organisations, businesses and people from socially excluded groups working together through local social inclusion partnerships, established at regional, district and municipal level. Social inclusion action plans have also been established at individual social inclusion partnerships, where these have included also micro-projects for solving the employment problem of groups affected and at risk of social exclusion.

With regard to the European Commission objectives supported by the Renewed Lisbon Strategy in the field of impact assessment for new legal regulations, the SR has prepared a “Consistent Methodology for Assessing Selected Impacts”, which received Government approval in May 2008. The uniform methodology has set a common procedure for all fields of impact assessment and relates to all draft materials that are to be submitted for comment proceedings. In addition to this, it contains specific procedures for assessing economic, financial, environmental and social impacts. The methodology defines social impacts as meaning primarily impacts on households’ finances, social exclusion, equal opportunities, gender equality and on employment. A pilot project will run from September 2008, during which the uniform methodology will be tested on selected materials. The pilot project will be assessed along with proposals for updating the process following the pilot implementation by the end of March 2009, whereby the consistent methodology should begin to apply from July 2009.

In the field of **quality and reliable information and data** primarily in the field of social statistics, the situation has been improved through qualitative changes in sampling at the level of the SR Statistics Office and by using the EU-SILC harmonised survey on income and living conditions. Data collection and formation of indicators at the regional and local level will be solved in the framework of national projects, which are described in part 2.6 Better Governance. Additionally further investment is necessary for the creation of analyses and monitoring of policies and measures, poverty measurement and analyses, research and summary processing of

information, collection, dissemination and exchange of best experience, primarily as regards human resources development. In 2008 one project will come to an end, the output of which will be the creation of new national indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion. At the same time a draft method for their regular monitoring will be prepared. The basic objective is to make the monitoring framework for assessing development in the process of social exclusion in the SR more efficient. The output will be an analytical study, reference manual and report on the realisation of pilot surveys.

As regards supporting **equality between men and women**, the SR at present has effective national legislation relating to gender equality as a component of human rights and thereby also to the solution of social inclusion. One of the most important legislative changes accomplished in the SR may be considered to be the adoption of the Antidiscrimination Act, which incorporated in the legal code the constitutional principle of equal treatment in labour-legal relations, in the field of education, social security, health care and access to goods and services. The amendment to the act, effective as of April 2008, specifically governs the prohibition of discrimination in the field of social security, health care, the provision of goods and services, in education and in labour-legal relations and similar legal relations. The act furthermore extends protection against discrimination and contributes to raising legal certainty. The Antidiscrimination Act has become one of the most important tools for further progress also in the field of social inclusion. As of 1 January 2008 the SR Government Council for Gender Equality began work, the task of which is to ensure the implementation of gender equality at the level of regional and local authorities. The SR **Government Council for Gender Equality** will prepare a National Strategy for Gender Equality (the "Strategy"), In the framework of the monitored objectives, the strategy will pay regard to the issue of social inclusion. It will concurrently work from priorities defined in the National Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion Strategies 2008 - 2010 An important dimension of the Strategy is the fact that experts from the field of antidiscrimination law were involved in its preparation, in consequence of which the Strategy will be linked to the issue of social protection and prevention of social exclusion.

In connection with the principle of the child's best interest, a document has been prepared entitled **National Action Plan for Children 2008 - 2012** (NAP for Children). The objective of NAP for Children is primarily to contribute to building and developing an integrated and effective system of protecting the rights and legally protected interests of children. Tasks resulting from it will focus primarily on the area of coordinating policies and independent mechanisms for the protection of children's rights, for children's education, upbringing, care, health, health care and nutrition, and coordinating social and other measures for improving the health of children and their families. In connection with social inclusion, two sub-fields have been defined within the Plan: "Social and Other Measures for Raising the Standard of Living of Children and Their Families" and "Children and the Family, Family Environment and Substitute Care". A component of the NAP is the establishment of a Ministerial **Committee for Children**. The Ministerial Committee for Children will fulfil their tasks as a:

- coordinating body[27],
- advisory and supervisory body[28],
- initiative body in the field of children's rights and the exercising of children's rights[29].

An important political and social role in the future will be played by the SR **Government Council for Seniors** as an advisory body to the SR Government. Concurrently the work of the transformed **Government Council for Disabled Persons** will be strengthened. The tasks of the Government Council for Seniors and the Government Council for Disabled Persons in the framework of their target groups lie primarily in:

- coordinating the realisation and updating of adopted national programmes,
- developing activities leading towards concrete activities with the objective of raising the quality of life of elderly people and disabled persons,
- assessing ministries' materials,
- proposing appropriate solutions, presenting requests,
- cooperation with local state administration bodies, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and other institutions whom this problem concerns and with mass communication media, as well as cooperation with international institutions.

[27] It will ensure accordance and continuity of departmental policies, measures, programmes and other activities, the activities of all stakeholders, it will mediate information transfer from abroad, it will cooperate with central government bodies and with the institution for the protection of children's rights, it will ensure international cooperation…

[28] It will monitor the fulfilment of government policy objectives and prepare the Government's draft measures leading towards the provision and realisation of children's rights, discuss and assess draft materials concerning children's rights, prepare opinions for the Government, initiate harmonisation of the SR's law with the Convention on the Rights Rights of the Child, propose and give statements as to the use of state budget funds in solving the children's affairs …

[29] It will monitor the fulfilment of government policy objectives and prepare governmental draft measures leading towards the provision and realisation of children's rights, establish professional working groups for solving especially complex problems, cooperate with children's organisations and other children's representatives, and create the conditions for the expression of children's opinions, submit initiative proposals …

2.2 Key challenges and priority objectives

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (hereinafter NAP/SI) represents a strategic document focusing on social inclusion policy. It has been created in accordance with the methodological guidelines of the European Commission and with the principles of the open method of coordination. It describes the priority objectives and the measures to attain them, which ones link to the previous NAP/SI, and which ones the Slovak Republic considers crucial to attaining the objective of preventing and eliminating poverty and social exclusion. The document links to the Government Programme Declaration for 2006 - 2010, the Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21, and others. It covers the field of social inclusion and sets priority objectives for the respective period reflecting the long-term vision in this field. The attainment of priority objectives is also supported by the Operational Programmes, which are based on the National Strategic Reference Framework in connection with drawing finance from the Structural Funds over the years 2007 - 2013. The priorities focus on individuals and population groups most at risk of poverty and exclusion, namely children and young people, families with children, unemployed persons, in particular of the long-term unemployed, marginalised Romani communities, disabled persons, homeless persons, released prisoners and persons with a drug or other dependency.

In its priority objectives, NAP/SI for 2008 – 2010 corresponds to the NAP/SI for 2006 – 2008, where it merely expands and adjusts particular indicators. The only difference lies in priority objective 4, which in the new NAP/SI is taken over into chapter 2.6 Better Governance.

2.3 Priority Objective 1

Reduce child poverty and solve the inter-generational reproduction of poverty by preventive measures and support to families with children

Political measures

The SR is continuing in realising measures **in the field of education** as one of the key instruments in the fight against the intergenerational reproduction of poverty. Providing equal chances in access to education and the possibility to attain quality education regardless of the socio-economic background from which the child comes, primarily by adjusting education policies and implementing support measures during the education process will ensure the integration of children coming from at-risk and marginalised groups into the standard school environment. Greater emphasis will be placed on participation in pre-school education, in light of the positive effect on pupils' results at school and with regard to raising the flexibility of their parents on the labour market. Conditions will be created for providing equal chances regarding education and the possibility of attaining quality education regardless of the background from which the child comes so that pupils in at-risk and marginalised groups are able to apply themselves in further study at secondary schools and universities, or directly in the labour market. Conditions, too, will be put in place for education in the Romani language.

For preventing social exclusion and strengthening social inclusion the proposed Act on Lifelong Learning creates specific conditions for recognising the results of non-

formal and informal learning, with the aim of acquiring partial or complete qualification, which will be a motivating factor for raising individuals' participation in lifelong learning.

Work will continue in supporting and developing instruments for raising the education level of children at risk of social exclusion and for bringing marginalised groups into the standard school environment, along with tools for raising statutory representatives' awareness of their responsibility for their children's education.

In the period 2008 - 2010 the preparation of two new legislative amendments is planned, where these will closely relate to care for infants up to 3 years of age and the possibility for parents to perform gainful activity. A new tool for supporting families with children is the proposed legislative adjustment of the **childcare allowance**. Introduction of the childcare allowance will create an equal starting point for all parents of children up to 3 years of age who try to balance and combine work and private life. Introduction of the childcare allowance will concurrently require the drafting of a new Act on the **Parental Allowance**, which should be provided only to parents who personally care for a child, do not perform gainful activity and consequently lose income from work in the period of personal childcare[30]. As of 1 January 2008 a top-up payment to child benefit has been paid for an unprovided-for child of parents receiving pension benefits. Such parents, since they do not perform gainful activity, cannot apply a claim for a tax bonus for a dependent unprovided-for child under the Income Tax Act.

In the interest of achieving greater solidarity with families with children measures will continue to be implemented over the period 2008 - 2010 for raising support for families by means of an increase in direct financial contributions in the framework of **state social benefits**. These measures aimed at children will likewise be reflected in changes in the system of assistance in material need, through the introduction of a new benefit for children in material need who comply with compulsory school attendance. Proper targeting and subsidiarity will at the same time remain preserved in the system of assistance in material need. Motivating elements aimed at activation and co-responsibility of individuals and families in solving their own adverse situation and protection against poverty remain important. The intention remains that the level of benefits and contributions for solving material need should correspond to basic life necessities.

Furthermore it will be necessary to **raise the quality and quantity of social work in the natural family and open environment** and other activities aimed at work with the biological family. In connection with providing quality childcare for children from children's homes and with ensuring an increase in the employability of professional parents, a national project will be realised in the period 2009 - 2010, involving all SR county regions.

[30] Source: Department of State Support and Strategy of Social and Family Policy, SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
Reduce the risk of child poverty by 2011 by 4 percentage points against 2004	Child poverty-risk rate (0-15 years of age)
Bring the risk of poverty among incomplete families with children close to the average level for the V4 countries	Poverty-risk rate of incomplete families with children
Reduce the difference between the poverty-risk rate of households with children and the risk rate of childless households	Poverty-risk rate of households with children
	Poverty-risk rate of childless households
Improve access to education for children and pupils from low-income families	Number of children attending kindergartens to which a subsidy has been provided
	Number of children attending elementary schools to which a subsidy has been provided
Raise the integration of Romani children into standard primary and secondary schools	Proportion of Romani pupils in special elementary schools and special education facilities to those in elementary schools
	Raise the proportion of children completing all elementary school years in the number of children accepted for study to at least 80%
	Proportion of Romani children leaving elementary school with completed basic education
	Proportion of Romani pupils accepted for study at secondary schools, secondary vocational and technical schools

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
Reduce by 2011 the proportion of children in institutional care in the total number of children in substitute care by 8 percentage points against 2004	Proportion of children in institutional care in the total number of children in substitute care
Reduce the average length of stay of a child with court-ordered institutional care in a children's home[31]	The share of children with court-ordered institutional care in a children's home in the total number of children who in the given year left children's homes to return to their original family environment, were placed in substitute family care, or became independent, and to whom institutional care had been ordered
Increase the number of children placed in professional families / independent groups / specialised independent groups established exclusively in separate family houses or in separate apartments in a residential building, where the one family house / apartment is to house only the one professional family / independent group / specialised independent group[32]	The share of children placed in professional families / independent groups / specialised independent groups established exclusively in separate family houses or in separate apartments in a residential building, where the one family house / apartment is to house only the one professional family / independent group / specialised independent group in the total number of children placed in children's homes
Increase the percentage of Romani pupils who complete secondary school	The share of Romani pupils leaving secondary school with completed basic education
Increase the number of children from the eligible population attending kindergartens	The share of children from the eligible population attending kindergartens against the preceding period

[31] **Table 3.: Average length of a child's stay in a children's home**

	2005	2006	2007	2010 (target)
Average length of stay of a child in a children's home	4 years and 9 months	4 years and 1 month	4 years and 5 months	3 years and 6 months

The purpose of this objective is to support the quality performance of measures of socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship, and which will focus on solving the situation of the three target groups of children with court-ordered institutional care:

- a child in whose best interest it is to carry out measures in favour of reinstating their biological family,
- a child in whose best interest it is to carry out measures in favour of their placement in substitute family care,
- a child/young adult in whose best interest it is to carry out measures in favour of support for increasing the quality of their preparation for becoming independent.

[32] This objective will allow responsible subjects to activate themselves towards improving the performance of measures of socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship in children's homes and towards the permanent increase in the number of professional families/independent groups/specialised independent groups whose spatial conditions and location cerate the conditions for raising the probability of the child's social inclusion. Fulfiling this objective will assist in reducing the number of groups of children placed in a single a children's home.

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
Reduce the number of Romani pupils in special elementary schools and special educational facilities	The share of Romani pupils in special elementary schools and special educational facilities

Monitoring method

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, SR Statistics Office, Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education, Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, United Nations Development Programme.

Sources and management

Financing: National budget; Structural Funds (ESF, ERDF); municipal and upper-tier territorial unit budgets

Responsible: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Ministry of Education, Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Municipal Authorities, Upper-Tier Territorial Units

2.4 Priority Objective 2

Raise inclusion and fight against discrimination of vulnerable groups of the population by supporting the availability of public services, developing local solutions and raising participation of excluded groups in the life of society

Political measures

A key tool in the coming period will remain that of raising social inclusion, by means of improving the availability and quality, modernisation, variability and provision of social services, as well as the quality and effectiveness of measures for the socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship particularly that performed in the natural family environment and in the open environment, and by means of community social work and other integration activities. It is necessary to perform these according to the needs of the individual, family, group or community in order to support their abilities and active participation to lead an independent life and to support their integration into society and the labour market, since active inclusion is a strong means of supporting social integration and integration in the labour market of the most disadvantaged population.

The intention for the future is to support flexibility of services and measures aimed at preventing and solving poverty and exclusion, as well as made-to-measure solutions according to the needs of the given locality:

- raising the availability of social services,
- quality and effectiveness in executing measures for socio-legal protection and social guardianship,
- measures aimed at enabling people to remain in their natural social environment,
- modernisation and development of social services and other measures.

With effect as of 1.1.2009 the Act on the **financial allowances for compensation of severe disability** will be adopted. The Act will provide for individual compensation instruments for persons with severe disabilities and arrange the conditions for their provision. The Act introduces the categorisation of aids and a list of building works, materials and equipment; and regulates the various forms of performing personal assistance; and valorises individual financial allowances. The aim of the law is to preserve, restore or develop the abilities of natural persons, as well as their families to lead an independent life. At the same time a priority is to create the conditions and support for the integration of persons and their families into society, with their active participation in this process.

The adoption of the **Social Services Act** with effect as of 1 January 2009 will further likewise advance development also in the field of social services of a low-threshold nature for individuals, as well as their families; in the field of social services for severely disabled persons, persons with an adverse state of health, but also for seniors and other target groups, as well as in the field of improving the quality of services in solving the issue of violence against women.

As regards public services, **social services** are a segment in which throughout Slovakia demand exceeds supply for all types, and the capacities of existing social services facilities are insufficient. The unmet need for capacities of social services facilities is an objective consequence of Slovakia's demographic development (growth in the number of pensioners) and the adverse state of health of its citizens, particularly those in higher age categories and the existence of combined severe disabilities in the younger generation. According to current data from individual local authority county regions, the numbers of people on waiting lists for placement in all types of social service facilities is as follows: Bratislava county region – 3135, Nitra county region – 2343, Trnava county region – 1858, Trencin county region – 4123, Zilina county region – 3499, Banská Bystrica county region – 1804, Presov county region – 84, Kosice county region – no available data. **Productivity in social services** in Slovakia is lower than average in the national economy and when compared internationally. Measures that the Government is to adopt in future will contribute to bringing conditions in the social services sector closer to the parameters of modern systems abroad. These measures will govern legal relationships in providing social services for defined target groups that find themselves in a state of social need. The sphere of activities falling under social services will be defined concretely; new types of social services will be regulated, as will the professional activities by means of which they are performed. The conditions for providing and financing social services will be set out, including the provision of social services by non-public providers. The new financing mechanism will be based not primarily on financing institutions, but rather public funds will flow into the system mainly from the side of demand, in order that the system corresponds as far as possible to the changing requirements of social service clients. Legislation currently under preparation also regulates the competence of general government bodies, introduces a system of community planning and regulates the interlinking of social services and health care, including the financing of social and long-term care. It sets out the qualification requirements necessary for performing work in the field of social services, regulates the education of social

services staff, including the accreditation of education programmes, provides for supervision over compliance with these legal provisions[33].

An indispensable tool in solving the inter-generational reproduction of poverty and marginalised communities and raising the inclusion of vulnerable groups is the provision of a comprehensive services in existing or newly-built local community centres and creating networks of them at the level of county regions in cooperation with the regional and local authorities of the respective upper-tier territorial unit.

An extraordinarily important field of social policy is the **provision of transport services** to groups at risk of social exclusion, where these include in particular pupils of compulsory school-age and pre-school children from settlements, persons with limited movement, the elderly, disabled persons, etc. For ensuring the mobility of this group it is necessary to create appropriate conditions for access to public transport (create barrier-free entrances, adjustment of platforms as an essential prerequisite for transporting people). These measures have been realised at the level of central government bodies. Specifically, this concerns enabling access for people with limited mobility (vulnerable users of the transport) to public transport, creating the conditions for their mobility, creating conditions for the progressive renewal of the fleet in all types of transport so that by 2015 they meet the appropriate requirements for carrying disabled persons. At present disabled persons, sight-impaired persons and socially weaker persons have non-discriminatory access to public transport. In the field of rail, suburban bus transport and urban public transport these social groups are provided with special 50% deduction on fares[34]. The availability of transport for disadvantaged groups is solved in, among others, the Operational Programme Transport. One of its objectives is to ensure quality public transport services and to create the conditions for enabling mobility for people with reduced movement and limited ability of orientation.

Over the years 2008 - 2010 further measures will be adopted for **supporting the affordability of housing** and the construction of apartments intended for low-income and excluded groups. With the aim of improving the social standing of persons at risk of social exclusion, the conditions will be created for supporting rented housing and for supporting homeownership. Raising the availability of rented housing will help significantly towards reducing the significant regional differences that weaken social solidarity across the population.

An intention for the coming period is to continue in supporting access **to health care** for all groups at risk of poverty and exclusion and in marginalised localities, with the aim of truly strengthening social solidarity. Activities for improving the access of marginalised communities to health care, with particular regard to marginalised Romani communities, will further continue. The task here is to systematically ensure the availability of health care in selected localities and to expand the activity of health workers focusing on work in the community.

In the framework of the Operational Programme Information Society (OPIS) there is a plan for the future to **digitise collections in the field of Slovakia's cultural heritage**.

[33] Source: Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21

[34] Children under 6 years of age free of charge, holders of a severe disability card - a 50% reduction, holders of a severe disability card – sight impairment a 50% reduction + guide – free of charge, pensioners over 70 years of age – SKK 5 per each 50 km.

The archiving of documents in text format and their digitisation will enable disabled users and seniors to directly use collections with the aid of assistance technologies or by conversion into formats perceivable for them (Braille, large print, narration). With the aid of **informatisation** the SR should achieve more effective public services, including health care and social care. The SR will ensure that the informatisation of general government creates equal opportunities for all by means of publicly accessible electronic services. In its implementation there will be applied the principle of ensuring access for disabled persons, using language support understandable to the user and taking account of the recommendations of "The Web Accessibility Guidelines" set out in the framework of the initiative Web Access by the World Wide Web Association. Implementation will work also from basis of the differing socio-economic situation between individual regions and population groups.

OPIS, in the framework of the implementation of the special education programmes for marginalised Romani communities will ensure the training aimed at raising the education of marginalised Romani communities in the field of information communications technology and computer literacy by using the "learning by doing" method. In addition to this, the specific project **multifunctional documentation-information centre of Romani culture in the Slovakia** will be implemented in the framework of priority axis 2 of the OPIS. Its activity will provide central government staff, students, the professional and lay public with easier access to complex information on the history, life, traditions and culture of Roma living in Slovakia.

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
Improve availability, quality and variability in the provision of social services	A Social Services Act, defining social services, the conditions of their provision, evaluation of quality, etc.
	Share of the increase in places in social services facilities by region in the total number of residents by region
	Increase in places in social services facilities by type of social service
	Number of clients to whom services are provided
	Number of functioning community centres or other local solutions at which social services are provided.
	Diversity and scope of social services provided at social service facilities.

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
Raise the quality and effectiveness of measures for socio-legal protection and social guardianship	Quality of measures for socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship performed at facilities implementing court orders[35]
	Number of clients for whom measures for socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship are performed in the natural family environment
	Number of participants completing further education programmes aimed at raising the quality of services and of measures for the socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship in the broader social environment.
Map the current social network of all types of facilities for children (from the aspect of qualitative characteristics) and summarise data on the demographic development of the child population in Slovakia[36]	Analysis
Raise the availability of housing and the construction of apartments intended for vulnerable groups of the population	Sharer of municipal rented apartments in the total number of completed apartments
	Number of supported rented apartments of a lower standard
	Number of loans provided from the State Housing Development Fund

[35] This objective / indicator will support the current development trends in the approach to the clients, highlighting the importance of the permanent increase in the standard for carrying out measures in the socio-legal protection of children and social guardanship in connection to the requirements resulting from the current structure of social problems of the given region. On this basis it is necessary to support the improvement of the organisational arrangement of facilities intended for the execution of a court decision (particularly children's homes) which will correspond in particular to the following characteristics:

- a children's home that will be established by professional families / independent groups /s pcialised independent groups exclusively in independent family homes or in independent apartments located in apartment buildings, where the children's home in one family house/apartment will be established by only one professional family / independent group / specialised independent group,
- a children's home that will be established in one building of at most four independent groups or specialised independent groups (maximum numbers),
- a children's home that will establish specialised independent groups or professional families with specialised focus,
- a crisis centre that will establish professional families,
- a crisis centre / resocialisation centre established in accordance with the current needs for ensuring the performance of measures in socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship in the framework of the region for children / young adults / persons of full age ,
- ambulatory facilities performing socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship.

[36] A new objective will be to support more coordinated and efficient fulfilment of the objective as regards raising the quality of measures in socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship at facilities intended for the execution of a court order by means of mapping the current network of child facilities (i.e. not only of the facilities indented for the execution of measures of socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship) from the aspect of quantity and quality, together with the data on demographic development in child population. In this way:

- the scale of the provided measures in socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship at the existing facilities will be expanded, and which will reflect the needs of the given region,
- the quality of the measures performed in socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship will be increased,
- strengthening of ties and the linkage of services and measures will be supported in the framework of the network of these facilities.

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
	Number of micro-loans provided from the side of the non-governmental organisations (or local authorities) for housing development for vulnerable groups of the population
	Number of bonuses provided from non-governmental organisations (or local authorities) for housing development for vulnerable groups of the population
Expansion of programmes contributing to improving the social inclusion of marginalised groups	Number of programmes and projects for supporting local associations and communities from the ESF
Improve access to health care for all vulnerable groups in marginalised localities	Number of community workers in the field of health education aimed at work in disadvantaged separated and segregated Romani communities
Improve access to financial programmes and tools for all vulnerable groups in marginalised localities	Proportion of persons who gained access to financial programmes and tools in marginalised localities compared to the preceding period
Improve access to untraditional forms of education for all vulnerable groups in marginalised localities	Proportion of persons who gained access to **untraditional forms of education** in marginalised localities compared to the preceding period

Monitoring method

SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, SR Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, SR Ministry for Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Social Development Fund, municipalities, upper-tier territorial units.

Sources and management

Financing: National budget; Structural Funds (ESF, ERDF); municipal and upper-tier territorial unit budgets

Responsible: SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, SR Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, SR Ministry for Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Social Development Fund, State Housing Development Fund municipalities, upper-tier territorial units.

2.5 Priority Objective 3

Improve access to the labour market and raise the employment and employability of groups at risk of exclusion

Political measures

Employment growth is the most effective means of economic growth in developing an inclusive society. A persistent problem of the labour market in the Slovak Republic

has been long-term unemployment, particularly the employment of disadvantaged and marginalised groups of the population. New active labour market policy measures to date targeted at these groups have proved an effective tool for integration and for supporting employment. Supporting social inclusion of multiply disadvantaged jobseekers, including marginalised groups who are most removed from the labour market will be directed at including them by means of the labour market and by means of education and preparation for the labour market. Through realising activities and measures the Slovak Republic will, as it has done so to date, support integration, not segregation, solutions and advance thorough antidiscrimination policy.

The European Union considers the **quality of jobs** to be the best arm against poverty and social exclusion. Work offers the possibility of developing a person's potential and his/her ability to join society. EU Member States are increasingly applying "active inclusion" as a means of achieving integration into society and the labour market In addition to standard active labour market policy measures, special assistance in the SR is necessary according to specific needs, with subsequent support for access to using standard employment services.

In the next programming period 2007 - 2013 the Slovak Republic will continue and more intensively to support the targeting of European Social Fund resources at **demand-oriented projects** aimed at trialling and realising **active labour market policy** instruments for multiply disadvantaged and marginalised groups, and as well as to realise and expand national projects in those programmes that have proven efficient. Measures will be in accordance with the EU Member States' Employment Policy Guideline no. 17 to "Implement employment policies intended to achieve full employment, improve quality and productivity at work, and strengthen social and territorial cohesion" and no. 19 to "Ensure inclusive labour markets, enhance work attractiveness, and make work pay attractive for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people and the inactive".

The SR will continue expanding existing support programmes for raising disadvantaged jobseekers' employability, focusing strongly on their labour market integration[37]. A national project aimed at creating a comprehensive programme supporting young people to become independent and supporting their inclusion into the labour market will begin in September 2008 in selected county regions in Slovakia.

The **Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion** over the programming period 2007 - 2013 will address the main problems of the Slovak labour market, which are primarily a low rate of employment, a high rate of unemployment, highly structured unemployment, manifested in a mismatch between demand and supply in the labour market. The reason for this mismatch is the fact that the qualifications of the workforce do not correspond to employers' needs, and long-term unemployment, which contributes to exacerbating regional differences existing in Slovakia. Therefore it has been necessary to adopt appropriate measures for bringing balance in the labour market.

A key task is, and has been, to support **equal opportunities** in access to the labour market and **support the integration of disadvantaged groups** at risk of exclusion in

[37] These include learning and training programmes for labour market, programmes for supporitng job creation, second-chance programmes,...

the labour market, with particular regard to marginalised Romani communities. The Slovak Republic will continue in activities leading to social inclusion, targeted at employment and the employability of groups at risk of social exclusion and at raising the number of job opportunities for members of these groups. One of the main tools for implementing activities aimed at social inclusion has been the Social Development Fund, which realises support for social inclusion in backward regions in Slovakia.

An inseparable part of these measures is also the creation of a system for anticipating changes in the labour market. A new tool for active labour market policy in the SR is **social enterprise**[38]. In March 2008 SR MoLSAF published a call for the project "Establishment and Networking and Social Enterprises". In accordance with the global objective of the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion and in accordance with the European Employment Strategy it is proposed to validate this new tool for solving employment with particular emphasis on disadvantaged jobseekers. The project's intention is to create favourable conditions for the development of social enterprises. By means of their economic activity they will fulfil a social objective, this being to create job opportunities for persons disadvantaged in the labour market, and thereby contribute to their re-inclusion into society. Their social benefits will lie also in the supporting municipalities through providing services to the local community and in the field of realising regional development programmes. The objective of creating networks of social enterprises will be to bring about a mutual exchange of information and experience, mutual cooperation in solving the issue of employment by means of persons disadvantaged in the labour market, cooperation in realising activities necessary in towns and municipalities and which represent a benefit for the region's development.

Special attention must be given to the situation of **immigrants and ethnic minorities** in connection with their employment and access to the labour market. Since they constitute disadvantaged jobseekers, they require increased support for integration and for improving the conditions of their employability. In the framework of Slovakia's integration strategy: the thorough inclusion of immigrants into all general support tools in the sphere of health care, housing policy, employment and other spheres of social life, the Migration Authority of the SR of the Ministry of the Interior promotes a strategy of **full inclusion**.

[38] A social enterprise is a legal entity or natural person that employs persons who were prior to their acceptance to the labour relation disadvantaged jobseekers, in a number of at least 30% of the total number of its employees, provides support and assistance to these employees to find a job in the open labour market, it uses at least 30% of the funds gained from the income from its line of business for the creation of new jobs or for improving the work conditions, and is entered in the register of social enterprises.

The **Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women** for the years 2005 - 2008 will end this year. A new Action Plan will be created in 2008. An important agenda will be formed by the update to the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women for the years 2009 - 2012 and the preparation of a First Report on the State of the Application and Gender Equality in Slovakia and other agendas, for example the Report on the Realisation of National, Pilot and Demand-Based Projects of the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion and the Report on the Application of the Horizontal Priority: Equal Opportunities in all Operational programmes.

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
Reduce the rate of long-term unemployment (more than 12 months) by 2011 by 1.9 percentage points against 2007	Rate of long-term unemployment (more than 12 months)
	Rate of registered long-term unemployment (more than 12 months)
Raise the share of jobseekers placed by means of labour offices in the total number of jobseekers deregistered by 2011 to 30%	Number of jobseekers gaining employment through labour office mediation
Ensure that the share of working disabled persons in the total number of working persons does not fall below 1.5%	Share of working disabled persons in the total number of working persons
Reduce the rate of youth unemployment (15 to 25 years of age) by 2011 by 0.9 percentage points against 2007	Youth unemployment rate (15 to 25 years of age)
Reduce the share of people living in jobless households	Share of children (0-17 years of age) living in jobless households
	Share of adults (18-64 years of age) living in jobless households
Improve the quality of public employment services, with an emphasis on disadvantaged groups in labour market	Share of activated disadvantaged jobseekers in the total number of activated jobseekers
	Share of disadvantaged jobseekers placed in the labour market by means of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family in the total average number of jobseekers deregistered
	Shower of disadvantaged jobseekers who used professional advice services in the total number of disadvantaged jobseekers

Quantifiable objective	Indicators
	Share of disadvantaged jobseekers who used professional advice services in the total number of jobseekers who used professional advice services
	Average number of staff at the respective OLSAF providing employment services in the average number of jobseekers
	Average number of staff at the respective OLSAF providing special advisory services to jobseekers in the total average number of OLSAF staff
Expansion of social development programmes aimed at solving employment and social inclusion at the local level	Number of ESF programmes and projects aimed at labour market integration of groups excluded or at risk of exclusion
	Number of jobs created and sustained for jobseekers by means of local social inclusion partnerships and other local partnerships created for the purpose of developing disadvantaged communities
Support for the development of social enterprise	Number of newly established social enterprises

Monitoring method

Headquarters of Labour Social Affairs and the Family, SR Statistics Office, Social Development Fund, upper-tier territorial units, municipalities

Sources and management

Financing: National budget, ESF

Responsible: SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family and Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Social Development Fund, National Labour Inspectorate

2.6 Better governance

For ensuring quality policymaking and effective and sustainable social inclusion measures and public administration, as well as for ensuring the participation of excluded groups in decision-making, steps in the coming period will continue to focus **on capacity building and improving general government and non-profit organisations in the field of their management and design of inclusive policies**.

With the aim of creating an environment raising the competitiveness of Slovakia's economy and workers, a **national flexicurity system** will be created. This will also mean achieving flexible conditions and better social protection for alternative labour-legal relations. The national flexicurity system will be created by elaborating all four

components of flexicurity and the eight common principles agreed in the EU into action measures and activities and ensuring their effective implementation. An evaluation of flexicurity policies will form a component of the progress report in the implementation of National Reform Programmes in 2009.

A working group has been created for preparing the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2008 - 2010. The working group comprises central government staff, who concurrently cooperate with the affected institutions in the framework of local authorities or the non-governmental sector. The SR will in future continue in **strengthening coordination** in policy making in the framework of individual institutions and continue to give preference to **interdepartmental cooperation**, and as well as cooperation with the non-governmental sector.

For ensuring quality policymaking, uniformity in the legislative process and for ensuring better orientation in searching legislative materials, a **system for monitoring the legislative process** has been created. Making materials in the legislative process available in one place contributes to the transparency of the process and brings it closer to citizens and institutions (local authorities, non-governmental organisations etc) and in the end result contributes to avoiding excessive administrative burdens.

- **Measures intended for the coordination and integration of social inclusion policies into all levels of administration**

In the programming period 2007 - 2013 the degree of involvement of regions in implementation of the Joint Regional Operational Programme has been significantly strengthened in comparison with the 2004 - 2006 programming period.

The SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family as the managing authority for the European Social Fund (ESF) in the Slovak Republic has set up three **monitoring committees** – for the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, for the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 and for the Single Programming Document of the EQUAL Community Initiative. In creating the monitoring committees emphasis has been placed on the parity representation of representatives of the central government, regional and local authorities, the business sector, non-governmental organisations and social partners. Regard has also been paid to the equal representation of men and women. The monitoring committees sit as a rule two or three times a year. A European Commission representative is also invited to individual meetings, and who fulfils the function of an advisory body.

Solving the **competencies of towns and municipalities in social inclusion**, the problems of Romani communities and marginalised groups remain open problems of the Slovak Republic, but also of its towns and municipalities. From the position of territorial local authorities these competencies may be arranged through observing the civic principle and in laying down precise and motivating rules in the social field. The position of towns and municipalities has been strengthened in the Employment Services Act. The position of local authorities has been strengthened not only in committees for employment issues, but also by the fact that municipalities, alongside

organising minor municipal services, have also made use of other forms, for example voluntary services and social enterprises.

- **Mobilisation and involvement of actors**

For mobilising all relevant persons into the Open Method of Coordination, the mentioned working group has been given the task of preparing the National Report. National Reports for previous periods were available in printed form and in electronic form on the SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family website.

With the aim of raising awareness and knowledge about this field a social inclusion website has been set up containing key information on this field and hyperlinks to EU documents on social inclusion. (http://www.socialnainkluzia.gov.sk/si)

Headway has been made in strengthening the realisation of NAPS-SI intentions primarily by thoroughly ensuring the performance of measures in the field and by **improving staffing and institutional provision** from the side of local authorities and the state. The NGO sector has played an important role in the possibility for realising activities in the field of legislative processing of defined conditions. Structural Fund resources, realised by demand-based and national projects have also been directed into these priority areas. Over the course of 2008 the National Project XIV has been running, entitled "Targeted Professional Education for Employees of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family at Social Affairs and the Family Sections". It focuses on raising quality and efficiency in providing aid services, advice and measures provided by staff of the Social Affairs and Family Section by means of educating civil servants and employees in performing work in the public interest. The National Project XII entitled "Modernisation of Employment Services by means of Education for Staff of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family", realised also in 2008, is aimed at providing innovative education of civil servants and employees in performing public-interest works at the employment services sections of labour offices and by means of the European Social Fund with the exception of the Bratislava County region, with the objective of raising their quality, effectiveness and professionalism.

- **Mainstreaming social inclusion**

Mainstreaming in the field of social inclusion in the SR remains a challenge in designing individual policies at the national, regional and local level.

An example of **good practice in the framework of mainstreaming** has been the project entitled "Improving and Expanding Resocialisation and Rehabilitation Care for Persons Dependent on Psychoactive Substances". Details are given in Annex 2.6. All expert working groups operating in the framework of this project, in accordance with the application of the mainstreaming method, intentionally comprised Slovak, French, Finnish and Polish experts actively working in the field of resocialisation care. Particularly positively perceived has been the active participation of experts working directly with clients, who conveyed the contemporary opinions and expectations of their clients over the course of the resocialisation process. In this way the outputs of the working groups gained a real dimension, which in large part is in

accordance with the support for involving groups at risk of social exclusion in the decisions and processes that affect them directly.

- **Monitoring and evaluation**

In connection with the need for **statistical monitoring of the living conditions of the selected target groups**, in August to September 2008 a National Project was prepared, entitled " Statistical Monitoring of the Living Conditions of Selected Target Groups", as an eligible activity under the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion, which will run until December 2011. It arises from the need for regular surveying and evaluation of relevant indicators of the social situation of Slovakia's Romani community, which the acquisition of time series will enable. Knowledge and recommendations gained in the course of realising the project are contributing directly to improving the social conditions of marginalised Roma. An improvement is expected in the settings of indicators of long-term unemployment, as well as the poverty-risk rate indicator. The settings of active labour market policy measures will also be refined, so that they are more interlinked with the system of social aid and social security, as well as with education and housing policy. The project connects to the National Action Plan "Decades of Romani Population Inclusion for the years 2005 – 2015" and should have direct significance for the horizontal priority of the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion "Marginalised Romani Communities".

By means of the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion education in the field of using social inclusion indicators will be undertaken for central government and local authorities in 2010 in all SR county regions as a National Project.

In connection with better monitoring, **new national indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion** will be created in 2008 in the framework of the National Project – i.e. tertiary indicators[39]. At the same time a draft method for their regular monitoring will be prepared. The basic objective is to raise the efficiency of the monitoring framework for assessing progress in the process of social exclusion in Slovakia. The output will be an analytical study, reference manual and report on the realisation of pilot surveys. Training will be provided for general government staff; a workshop will be held for presenting the project's results, attended by representatives of approx. 30 relevant institutions at various horizontal and vertical levels (representatives of central government bodies – the SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, SR in Ministry for the Interior, SR Ministry of Finance, representatives of SR county authorities, experts from practice, etc). A related project has been established for calculating and using the limits of absolute poverty. The objective has been to determine the degree of absolute poverty in Slovakia and to apply the concept of an absolute poverty limit.

In the field of management and monitoring an important information and oversight role is played by the media. It is therefore necessary to think through an effective media strategy for informing the public on documents of national importance in the

[39] These indicators will capture the specifics of poverty and social exclusion in Slovakia. They will supplement the Laeken indicators and material deprivation indicators, monitored in the framework of EU SILC.

social field, including the National Report, Lisbon Strategy and Open Method of Coordination.

3 NATIONAL STRATEGY ON PENSIONS

The position of the Slovak Republic in meeting the individual objectives defined by the European Commission in connection with the adequacy of pension benefits, the financial sustainability of pension systems and their modernisation was comprehensively presented in the document "National Report on the Strategy of Achieving of Adequate and Sustainable Pensions", submitted to the European Commission in August 2005. This material was updated in 2006 in the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for the Years 2006 - 2008, in the third chapter National Strategy Report on Pensions.

In this regard, it is our intention to provide, within Part three of the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, information on progress in relation to the challenges of the National Report 2006 - 2008 and to provide an answer to the objectives defined by new measures and changes adopted in the second half of 2006 and in 2007 that the earlier National Reports did not cover..

The pension system in the Slovak Republic consists of three parts:

1st part - mandatory pension insurance, defined benefits, pay-as-you-go, operated by the Social Insurance Agency on the basis of Act No. 461/2003 Coll. on social insurance, as later amended (hereinafter the "Social Insurance Act"), effective as of 1 January 2004,

2nd part - mandatory old-age pension saving, defined contributions, capitalisation financed, operated by pension management companies on the basis of Act No. 43/2004 Coll. on the old-age pension saving system and on the amendment of certain acts as later amended (hereinafter simply the "Old-Age Pension Saving Act"), effective as of 1 January 2005,

3rd part - voluntary supplementary pension saving, defined contribution, capitalisation financed, operated by supplementary pension companies on the basis of Act No. 650/2004 Coll. on the supplementary pension saving system and on the amendment of certain acts as later amended, with tax advantages, effective as of 1 January 2005, and **voluntary targeted saving and life insurance**, regulated by Act No. 595/2003 Coll. on income tax, as later amended, with tax advantages, effective as of 1 January 2005.

3.1 Progress in relation to the National Strategy Reports 2005 - 2008 and to challenges listed in the Joint Report 2007

Various measures, presented in previous National Reports[40], are currently influencing the pension system in Slovakia, or are still gradually being implemented and cannot be viewed as being one-off instruments. Some of these legislative steps **have not been completely successful in fulfilling the purpose** for which they were adopted, meaning that they have not solved existing disproportion in the pension system and a space has opened for their further supplementing and development, e.g. in the field of

[40] The National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for the years 2006 - 2008, Part 3 National Strategy Report on Pensions

tightening the early retirement pension and straitening the space for speculative transfers between pension fund management companies during the period when old-age pension saving was built or this period was culminating (see the following subchapters).

The present government of the Slovak Republic in its programme declaration for the years 2006 - 2010 declares: "A priority of the Government will be **to ensure the financial stability** of the pay-as-you-go pension system so that, together with the old-age pension saving system, adequate material security in old age is safeguarded. With the aim of creating a fair pension system that will be sustainable and fundable in changing economic conditions with a greater degree of solidarity, the Government is reforming the pension security system. The financial situation at the Social Insurance Agency cannot be solved at the detriment of insured persons and benefit claimants. An element of voluntariness will be brought into the old-age pension savings system so that its existence does not disturb the stability of the pay-as-you-go system. The Government will retain the present structure of pensions." In this regard Act No. 555/2007 Coll. (hereinafter simply the "Amendment") was passed, amending the Social Insurance Act, Old-Age Pensions Saving Act and Supplementary Pension Saving Act with effect as of 1 January 2008. The amendment is aimed not only at improving the Social Insurance Agency's balances, but also implementing changes resulting from knowledge of application in practice and due to the need for harmonisation with other legal regulations.

3.2 Adequacy of pensions

The purpose of this part is to explain in detail how the requirements for pension adequacy, intergenerational solidarity and justice are currently met and how they will be met in future.

One of the most important parameters characterising the adequacy of benefits provided by the pensions system is the **replacement rate**, expressing the relation between the level of pension benefits paid out and the individual's previous income. The construction of the pension benefit calculation in the new form of the pay-as-you-go financial system is adjusted so that following the expiry of the transitional period of applying a reduction and adjustment (anti-reduction) to the average personal wage point it represents a replacement rate of approximately 50% of the individual's average income in the case of 40 years of pension insurance. The average level of old-age pensions compared to the average wage in the economy for newly-awarded and all old-age solo pensions paid out over the period 1989-2007 is given in the annex[41].

The following table shows replacement rates for newly-awarded pensions in the period 2004 - 2050 and various wage levels and based on 40 years of pension insurance:

[41] In the relation of the average old age pension to the average wage, since 2004 early retirement pensions have not been included in the calculation. Early retirement pensions are on average SKK 500 higher than old age pensions, where the condition of the necessary length of pension insurance for the award of an old-age pension being only for 10 years contributed to this disparity. With effect as of 1 January 2008 was this period extended to 15 years.

Table development of replacement rate from 2004														
Wage level	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2030**	**2050**
Minimum wage	97 %	79 %	77 %	73 %	71 %	68 %	65 %	63 %	60 %	57 %	54 %	51 %	52 %	52 %
Average wage	51 %	49 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	51 %	51 %	51 %	51 %	51 %	52 %	52 %
Maximum assessment base	33 %	38 %	39 %	40 %	42 %	32 %	33 %	35 %	36 %	37 %	37 %	38 %	39 %	39 %

The table shows that the adjustment to the average personal wage point guarantees a higher benefit (as regards the level of earnings) particularly for insured persons paying from the minimum assessment base (i.e. low-income insured persons). The decline in the replacement rate from 2009 in the table in the case of the maximum assessment base is caused by the increase in the maximum assessment base from 3 to 4 times the average wage, whilst preserving limits on the level of a pension benefit, introduced by the amendment entering into effect as of 1 January 2008 (a maximum of 3 average personal wage points).

One of the basic conditions for claiming an old-age pension, or an early retirement pension is to obtain the necessary number of years' pension insurance, which as of 1 January 2004 was reduced from 25 years to 10 years. In practice the situations have risen that a claim for an old-age pension arose upon reaching normal retirement age and obtaining only 10 years' insurance, in consequence of which the level of the old-age pension was, at the time of its award, very low. With the aim of protecting insured persons (future pensioners) the amendment **extended the period of pension insurance** necessary for a claim for an old-age pension and early retirement pension from 10 years to 15 years. In connection with the extension of the period of pension insurance necessary for a claim for an old-age pension and early retirement pension from pension insurance, the period of old-age pensions saving for paying out an old-age pension from the old-age pension savings system was extended from 10 years to 15 years. Since the capitalisation pillar – old-age pension saving - also gives no guarantee as to the level of the minimum old-age pension to be paid out, this change will contribute to the protection of future pensioners participating in the two-pillar pension system structure (pension insurance and old-age pension saving), before a low pension from the capitalisation pillar.

For an insured person who at the date of reaching normal retirement age did not satisfy the conditions to claim an old-age pension, the amendment allows an **invalidity pension to be awarded** and paid to this person also after they have reached normal retirement age. A further guarantee that the level of an old-age pension or early retirement pension will be at least at the minimum level of the original invalidity pension for an insured person reaching normal retirement age, is given by a provision in the Amendment on the calculation of the old-age pension at minimum from the average personal wage point (earnings), from which the invalidity pension was awarded, as well as by the fact that in the case where a newly-awarded old-age

pension would be lower than the invalidity pension then being paid out, that pension whichever is the higher, will continue to be paid out.

On the basis of the Old-Age Pension Saving Act the transitional period during which natural persons who already had pension insurance could decide to voluntarily move over into the old-age pension saving system lasted until 30 June 2006. The time interval from 1 January 2005 to 30 June 2006 may be considered a sufficiently long period for an individual to reach a decision as to whether they wish to participate in the old-age pension savings system, but in practice several situations arose that significantly limited this possibility (work abroad, unemployment). For this reason the amendment introduced the possibility of additional entry to the capitalisation pillar – old-age pension saving for natural persons who had not joined the old-age pension savings system by 31 December 2007. The old-age pensions saving system was open for these persons until 30 June 2008.

3.3 Financial sustainability of the pension system

The aim of this part is to present a credible policy strategy that balances the social objectives listed in the preceding part whilst retaining the financial sustainability of the pension system and safeguarding healthy public finances.

The introduction of a two-pillar structure of the pension system (mandatory pension insurance and old-age pension saving) has two financial effects on its pay-as-you-go funded part. The first effect, which is adverse for its balance, is the constant **outflow of premiums into the capitalisation pillar (old-age pension saving)**. This effect is multiplied by the higher number of participants in the capitalisation pillar (old-age pension saving) against that forecast in the capitalisation pillar as it was conceived. The second effect, which is favourable for its balance, lies in the fact that from the moment when insured persons participating in the two-pillar construction start retiring, their pension claims in the pay-as-you-go funded part will be reduced proportionately by the contribution that they paid into the capitalisation part.

The Ministry's prognoses point to the fact that in the case of the rate in the capitalisation part (9%) the break-even year is 2034. Over the period 2005 – **2034** the one-pillar construction is better than the two-pillar, whilst over the period **2035** – 2085 the opposite is true: the two-pillar construction reports lower deficits. Funds forming 14% of GDP may over the period 2005 – 2034 be viewed as the **transformation costs** of introducing a two-pillar construction with a 9% rate. We remark here that the mentioned transformation costs do not take account of funds from privatisation intended for covering the deficit arisen through the introduction of the capitalisation part.

Despite tightening the conditions for savers to transfer from one pension fund management company to another (expiry of a minimum two-year period since the preceding transfer, or entry into the old-age pension savings system) with effect as of 1 August 2006, no significant fall in the number of transfers has resulted. A solution to this situation was brought by Act No. 677/2006 Coll., amending the Old-Age Pensions Saving Act, introducing another administrative and financial barrier for preventing **unjustified spring speculative transfers** between individual pension fund

management companies. Since 1 January 2007 transfers between pension fund management companies have been conditional upon the issuance of an acceptance slip by the Social Insurance Agency and payment of a 500 SKK fee.

With the aim of **raising social solidarity** the maximum assessment bases for payment of premiums for pensions insurance and the solidarity reserve fund premium was increased as of 1 January 2008 from the original 3-times the average wage in the SR economy to 4-times the average wage in the SR economy, whilst retaining the limit for setting the sum of pension benefits. Despite the fact that this measure increases contributions in the case of higher-income insured persons on the side of the employer and employee, and thereby also the total cost of labour, its introduction was necessary for improving the financial situation of the pay-as-you-go funded pension system. Concurrently the maximum assessment base for payment of contributions for old-age pensions saving was also raised from 3-times to 4-times the average wage in the SR economy.

With effect as of 1 August 2006 and with the aim of tightening the conditions for awarding the early retirement pension, the possibility to retrospectively apply for an early retirement pension was cancelled; the claim for this pension arises at the earliest on the date of submitting an application for the pension, where this may be submitted at most twice a calendar year. Practice has, however, shown that, despite this tightening, the purpose of the early retirement pension has still not been fulfilled and in the majority of cases the early retirement pension has become an attractive alternative for securing income alongside income obtained from gainful activity. In relation to this fact the effects of the main reform step, namely extending the normal retirement age, were substantially eliminated, and thus negatively impacting on the Social Insurance Agency's finances. For this reason the amendment, with effect as of 1 January 2008 tightened the legal regulation the **claim to an early retirement pension**, allowing it to be awarded at earliest two years before retirement age. The Amendment also cancelled the possibility of non-reduction in the sum of the early retirement pension for the period of the 6 months up to retirement age, which had been possible under the condition of not applying any unemployment benefit claim.

The amendment with effect as of 1 January 2008 allows all savers who had concluded a contract on old-age pensions saving in the period to 31 December 2007 to return to the pay-as-you-go funded part, thereby also solving the situation of those savers for whom old-age pension saving is disadvantageous. Savers had the possibility to notify the Social Insurance Agency in writing by 30 June 2008 that they do not wish to participate in old-age pension saving. In connection with this measure the SR Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs and Housing asked the Ministry to draw up the material "An Analysis of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Remaining in the Second Pillar (old-age pension saving) for Individual Groups of Savers". This analysis in its individual chapters analyses in detail the advantages and disadvantages of the pay-as-you-go funded part and the capitalisation part, the yields to date in the capitalisation part and in conclusion gives recommendations for individual groups of savers (savers shortly before retirement age, invalids, persons insured by the state and low-income groups of the population).

In line with the SR Government's programme declaration, the Amendment introduced an **element of voluntariness** into the law governing old-age pensions

saving so that its existence does not disturb the stability of the pay-as-you-go funded system. For persons first entering the labour market after 31 December 2007 their mandatory participation in old-age pensions saving was changed to voluntary (i.e. these persons will have the possibility to decide whether to participate in old-age pensions saving within six months from the start of their first pension insurance). Concurrently mandatory participation in old-age pension saving was cancelled for persons not performing gainful activity and for whom due to proper childcare or caring for severely disabled persons old-age pensions saving contributions are paid by the state.

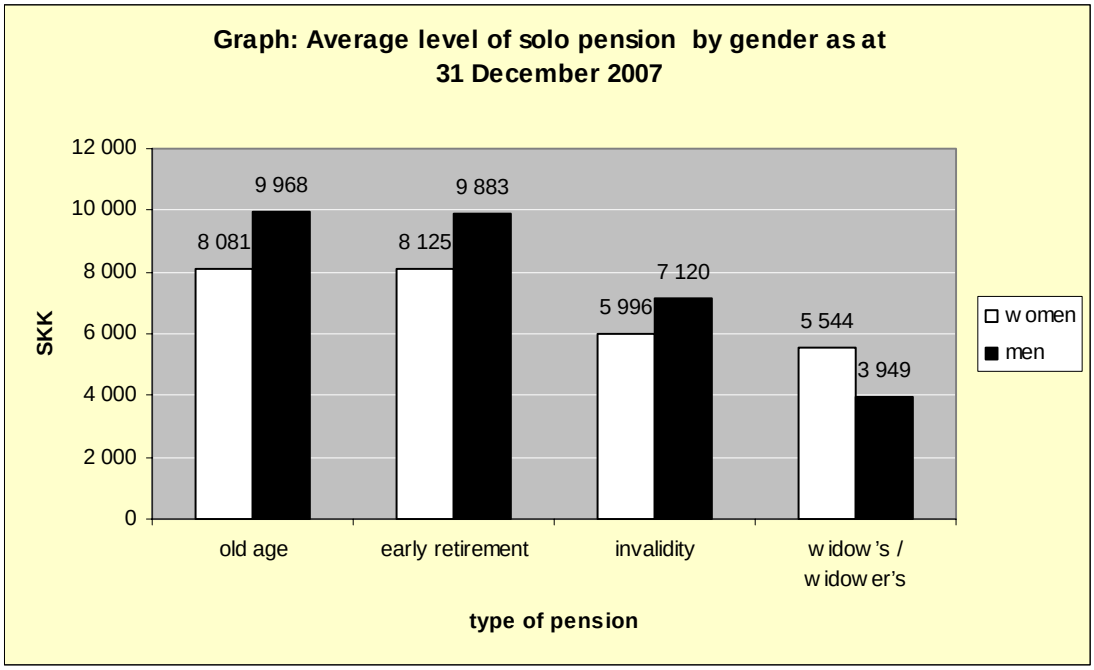
With the objective of raising the protection of assets in pension funds and raising the security of investments, pension fund management companies and supplementary pension fund management companies are obliged to set up and maintain an **effective risk management system** in the interest of preventing losses and harm to savers in consequence of the incorrect performance of activities of pension fund management companies or supplementary pension fund management companies. A risk management system is a system ensuring the timely and adequate identification of risks, measuring the size of risks, monitoring risks, mitigating the size of risks and due reporting of all significant risks; it includes the strategy and organisation, information flows and information system for risk management, the system of concluding transactions and the system for introducing new types of transaction.

3.4 Modernisation of the pension system with regard to the changing needs of the economy, society and individuals

The purpose of the parties to determine the requirements for further changes in the pension system with regard to societal and economic changes and assess the pension reform process.

On the basis of Act No. 677/2006 Coll. with effect as of 1 January 2007 the five-member board of directors of the Social Insurance Agency was cancelled in order to improve the efficiency of its management, whereby its competencies were taken over by a government appointed general director. At the same time the number of members on the supervisory board was reduced from 15 to 11, whilst retaining its creation on the tripartite principle (chairman - Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, 3 Government representatives, 3 trades union representatives, 3 employer association representatives and 1 benefit claimants representative) and its competencies were strengthened. The function of chief controller was also established, who oversees the financial management and efficiency in the management of the Social Insurance Agency's own assets (internal control). The chief controller is elected and recalled by the supervisory board.

Differences between the levels of pension benefits for men and women are depicted clearly in the following graph. The graph clearly shows that in the case of all types of pension benefits, with the exception of the widow's/widower's pension (more advantageous conditions for women, resulting from the historical context in the law effective up until 31 December 2003) the level of pension received by men is an average approx. 1100 – 1800 SKK higher.



Source: Social Insurance Agency

The current situation is caused not only by the higher incomes of men during their working career (on average 25.8% higher in 2007), but also their longer working career. Normal retirement age is set at 62 years for men and women; all those men at present to retire at 62 years of age, where women will reach the uniform retirement age of 62 years only in 2024. In the transitional period the normal retirement age on the side of the men here is higher, resulting also in a longer period of pension insurance (see table below), which is one of the parameters in calculating pension benefits.

Table: Period of pension insurance (in years) for newly-awarded pensions

	Old-age pension			Early retirement pension		
Year	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
2004	42.4	36.7	38.8	42.3	37.8	40.2
2005	43.0	36.2	38.4	42.7	38.5	40.7
2006	40.4	34.0	35.8	42.4	38.6	40.9
2007	41.3	33.8	35.6	41.9	38.7	40.8

Source: Social Insurance Agency

As can be seen from the table, the average period of pension insurance in the case of men for newly-awarded old-age pensions is 5 - 7 years longer than in the case of

women. Overall this development may be seen as unflattering, it is, however, probable that with the gradual advance of women to the uniform retirement age, the situation will improve. A positive influence in the future should come from the coverage of pension insurance periods in the case of defined situations (caring for children) - where pension insurance premiums and contributions for old-age pensions saving will be paid by the state. This should be accompanied also by measures for harmonising work and family life, with the objective of approximating the wage levels of men and women.

The Amendment, and effective as of 1 January 2008, introduced the obligation for the Social Insurance Agency to allow an insured person **passive access to information** on changes to the balance of their individual account free of charge via its website. The Social Insurance Agency has disclosed information to insured persons on changes in their individual account balances for the calendar years 2004 to 2007 within the timetable since 1 July 2008. The Social Insurance Agency will send insured persons information on changes in the balance of their individual account for the period of pension insurance upon request. An insured person may request information be sent on changes in their individual account balance once yearly at earliest as of 1 April of the calendar year. The Social Insurance Agency is obliged to send the insured person information on changes in the balance of their individual account within 60 days from the date of receiving the request.

With the aim of raising the security and transparency of the old-age pension savings system the Amendment with effect as of 1 January 2008 introduced the obligation for pension fund management companies and their depository to provide the National Bank of Slovakia **information** every working day **on transactions with assets in the pension fund** and on the balance of assets in the pension fund, by electronic data transfer over secure communication. The structure, scope, content, form, and breakdown, dates, manner, procedure, place and methodology for providing this information is laid down by the National Bank of Slovakia in a generally binding regulation. This information must be understandable, transparent, provable, must provide a true picture of the reported facts and must be submitted in time. If the submitted information does not correspond to the prescribed methodology or if reasonable doubts as to their veracity or completeness arise, the pension fund management company and its depositor are obliged at the National Bank of Slovakia's request to submit source documentation and submit an explanation within the deadline set by it.

3.5 Priority objectives for 2008 to 2010

The purpose of this plan is to present measures that are to be prepared and will enter into effect over the course of the years 2008 to 2010

A draft act amending Act No. 461/2003 Coll. on social insurance as later amended and on the amendment of certain acts is currently found in the legislative process. The proposals given in this act to contribute to fulfilling the SR Government's programme declaration, a link to requirements of application practice and at the same time represent a continuation of measures adopted in the past.

With effect as of 1 January 2009 a **change is proposed in the date of pension valorisation**, changing it from 1 July to 1 January. The shift in the valorisation date will contribute to raising the annual incomes of all pensioners, and thereby the annual replacement rate of all claimed pensions will be raised in relation to the annual average wage in a given year. It is proposed that a different determinant period be taken account of in raising pension benefits, this being the year-on-year growth in consumer prices for the first half of the calendar year preceding the respective calendar year and for the first half of the calendar year preceding the respective calendar year by two years and the year-on-year growth in the average wage in Slovakia's economy, likewise for the first half of the calendar year preceding the respective calendar year and for the first half of the calendar year preceding the respective calendar year by two years. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the Slovak Republic has selected such a determinant period for setting the valorisation percentage as leads to approximately the same valorisation percentages that would result under the currently applicable law.

Expansion in the sphere of state insured persons to include assistants performing personal assistance to a severely disabled person, provided this activity under a contract on performing personal assistance should last at least 140 hours a month and under the conditions set out in § 15 (1) (e) of the Social Insurance Act as later amended (has not reached normal retirement age, is not an early retirement pension claimant or invalidity pension claimant and has submitted an application for pension insurance for reason of performing personal assistance) and their assessment basis is to be derived from the minimum wage, as in the case of persons claiming a financial allowance for care. At the same time an extension is proposed in the period over which the premium is paid for the selected sphere of state insured persons, and this for maternity benefit claimants. This change has been undertaken due to the fact that the current law for state payment of the insurance premium for pension insurance is more disadvantageous for persons who are employees or compulsorily insured self-employed persons and draw maternity benefit from sickness insurance as opposed to persons who are not gainfully active. In order to eliminate this discrimination it is proposed that the state pay insurance premiums for pension insurance for employees and self-employed persons not only in the period from entering parent will leave, but also in the period of claiming maternity benefit.

In 2010 **new conditions for claiming the invalidity pension** should be in effect. At present many cases still arise where a person as at the date of their invalidity's recognition does not satisfy the condition of having the necessary pension period to be eligible to claim the invalidity pension, namely that over the past 10 years prior to their invalidity's recognition they did not have pension insurance for at least 5 years. This is caused by their diminished possibility of applying themselves or remaining in the labour market due to their state of health, which in the end leads to their invalidity. In connection to this, it is proposed to relax the conditions for eligibility for the invalidity pension, where this will, instead, be determined on the basis of the insured person's age and their period of pension insurance for the whole period of their active life, not only the last 10 years.

In the second capitalisation pillar – old-age pension saving - adjustments are made to the rules for investing and rules for comparing the yields of individual funds, where this results from experience to date and lies primarily in a review of the limits and

restrictions handling pension fund assets and a review of the rules for risk distribution. It is also proposed to change the fee for transferring between pension fund management companies as follows: After a year a transfer is free of charge and within a period shorter than one year the level of the fee remains unchanged, at SKK 500, or €16. It is proposed to refine the legislative framework for improving the quality of information provided to savers and other subjects participating in old-age pension saving from the side of pension fund management companies. An adjustment is also in the inheritance of savings from the second pillar – old-age pension saving - following death to a saver, who will then be able to deposit the saved inherited funds in their own personal account at a pension fund management company.

In the third part of the pension system in Slovakia there should be a liberalisation of the rules for investing, and expansion of the financial instruments, a relaxation of certain limitations and limits in accordance with the standing of supplementary pension funds as funds with voluntary participation. As in the second capitalisation part, in the third part, too, it is proposed to adopt measures that will significantly raise the informedness of pension saving participants in particular through the disclosure of clear information on the yields of individual supplementary pension funds.

4 NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR HEALTH CARE AND LONG-TERM CARE

4.1 Key challenges, priority objectives for health care and long-term care

Slovakia's population is beginning to achieve the trend of a Western European type of population, i.e. a growing share of the population in productive and post-productive age. A decline can be seen in the pre-productive age group and a growth in the population in productive and post-productive age. Through the influence of the diminution in the child component of the population and the growth in the number of people in post-productive age the average age of living inhabitants and the ageing index will continue to rise.

Demographic development in Slovakia has thus in recent years exhibited a trend of rising median life expectancy, in consequence of which we are witnessing a gradual rise in the number and total share of citizens over 65 years of age, and who will require more health care and social care. The median life expectancy at birth of men is 70.5 years and in the case of women and 78.08 years. The prolongation of life in Slovakia is accompanied, *inter alia*, also by concerns over the increasing costs connected with the increased need for health care and providing long-term care.

In the case of health care an important parameter as regards demographic development is not merely the quantitative growth in resources and thereby also expenses on health care, but in particular the quality of growth in the system of providing health care, with an emphasis on prevention and a healthy way of life. In accordance with these objectives emphasis is placed upon preventive programmes, such as the Oncology Programme, Cardiovascular Programme and the Government-approved National Programme of Care for Children and Young People. The objective of these programmes is to reduce the incidence of chronic illnesses in the population, and the adaptation of general health care to the needs of the elderly population in accordance with WHO policy.

Based on the development of non-infectious illnesses and prognostic indicators, it may be expected that the number of deaths due to non-infectious aetiology will rise. Based on this overview of the state of health of the population it is deemed necessary that public health care in the coming period should put more emphasis on changing people's attitudes to their own health. For fulfilling this task we feel that it is imperative to thoroughly raise prevention in all fields and, no less importantly, to realise the objectives of the National Programme for Supporting Health, as well as other preventive programmes for screening of selected oncological illnesses, prevention of cardiovascular illnesses, to reduce the incidence and effect of risk factors that may contribute to their occurrence.

In the field of long-term care as defined by various international organisations, this care in Slovakia is understood to mean help to a person reliant on others' help. This help includes help in activities of daily living, which in the SR are governed by the Social Assistance Act. The objective is that care-dependent persons, and this also in connection with the prolongation of life, have their quality of life assured, so that they are enabled to remain in their natural family environment as long as possible.

At present long-term care in Slovakia is provided in the social services system in the client's home environment or in an institutionalised form by means of professional providers and in the system of financial allowances for compensation of severe disability by non-professional, family carers. According to experts' estimates, and available data, care for people reliant on others' help is still performed prevailingly by the informal sector (mainly family, friends, neighbours). It must, however, be mentioned that, in connection with demographic and social changes in society and the resultant change in the model of the traditional family, as well as with the increased employment of women, the number of family carers in relation to the care for the elderly and care-dependent persons is decreasing. In the past, however, it was prevailingly women who took on the task of caring for family members, something that cannot always be combined with employment. This trend still persists. For example, women represent as many as 83 % of all recipients of the financial allowance for caring, which as at December 2007 was provided to 51 140 carers in Slovakia, whilst 26 % of carers are over 60 years of age.

Despite the fact that in providing this long-term care no provision of health care is essential, this activity is a part of the complex care for persons reliant on others' help, and for this reason there is increasingly seen the need for integration of social and health services in this field. This field requires legislative regulation, including multi-source financing of long-term care from resources set aside for social care and from health insurance company funds. A problem of long-term care in Slovakia remains the fact that the healthcare department today has not considered care provided, for example in medical institutions for the long-term ill, psychiatric institutions or hospices, to constitute long-term care.

The main challenges for long-term care in Slovakia, as in other European countries are an ageing population, demands for an increased need for help to care-dependent persons and the coordination of health care and social services. The field of care for dependent persons and the social services field are also an important sector of employment, since they generate new job opportunities. With the aim of balancing the demands for long-term care, the SR in preparing the draft Social Services Act, on which intensive legislative work is under way, is working from the common objectives of social protection and inclusion, that is: availability, quality and the financial sustainability of social services.

In the interest of ensuring the expediency, targeting and efficiency of social services it is essential to create a legal space that will allow for the variability of social services and codify the client's right for the provision of social services whilst preserving their human dignity. On the plane of statutory provision it is furthermore necessary to safeguard the quality of social services, inseparable from professionalization through the introduction of a uniform system for the education of personnel working in social services, as well as through the introduction of a system of assessing the quality of social services provided. This also concerns the need for a response to the consequences of adverse demographic development, an ageing population and the prolongation of life expectancy, and the related problems of ensuring long-term social-health care for dependent persons and ensuring its sustainability, adequacy and quality, as well as the needs of clients and providers. Pursuant to the submitted draft, social services may be deemed services in the public interest and are mostly provided

not for profit, though the draft Social Services Act does allow for the provision of social services in the framework of self-employment or business.

4.2 Healthcare section

4.2.1 Progress in relation to National Strategy Report 2006 - 2008 and challenges identified in the 2007 Joint Report

Under Act no. 576/2004 Coll. on health care, services connected with the provision of health care and on the amendment of certain acts as later amended, health care is defined as a set of work activities performed by healthcare workers, including the dispensing of medicines, healthcare aids and dietetic foods with the aim of prolonging a person's life, raising their quality of life and advancing the healthy development of future generations. Health care includes prevention, dispensing, diagnosis, treatment, biomedical research, nursing care and midwifery.

Urgent health care is health care provided to a person in the event of a sudden change in their state of health, posing an immediate threat to life or to any vital function that without the rapid provision of health care, could seriously endanger the health of that person, bring about sudden and unbearable pain, or cause sudden changes in behaviour and action, under the influence of which the person concerned poses an immediate threat to themselves or their environment. Health care provided at childbirth is also urgent care. Urgent health care includes the transfer of the person to a healthcare facility without delay, urgent transfer between various healthcare facilities and the urgent transfer of donors of organs, tissues and cells intended for transplant, and which is carried out by emergency healthcare service providers.

Health care is provided in the form of outpatient health care, and general care, which is provided by general practitioners for children and adolescents, and by general practitioners for adults. Slovakia has 3475 general practitioners, of whom 1196 are for children and adolescents, and 2279 are for adults. A first-aid medical service is provided within the framework of general outpatient care, at least in the scope corresponding to the public minimum network of providers. Specialised outpatient medical care is provided by a network of outpatient clinics, of which there presently 10 101.

Act No. 662/2007 Coll. amending Act no. 576/2004 Coll. on health care, healthcare provision related services and on the amendment of certain acts, introduced healthcare districts, i.e. districting doctors of first contact (general practitioners for adults, general practitioners for children and adolescents, gynaecologists, dentists) whilst preserving the freedom of choice in choosing a healthcare provider. The underlying philosophy of districting is that a doctor treats every patient and that health care is available and provided to all citizens. The step gives the patient certainty that they will not be left without an attending doctor. A healthcare provider has a defined healthcare district in which he/she is obliged to provide health care to persons permanently or temporarily resident in this healthcare district. The introduction of zoning is expected to bring benefit primarily to patients from socially weaker families and from the Romani community, where parents do not visit doctors, or the doctors have no record of them whatsoever. We expect that districting will be of benefit also in the field of prevention, vaccination and monitoring of the vaccination programme.

Institutional health care is provided by general and specialised hospitals, medical institutions, hospices and nursing care homes. Institutional health care in Slovakia is

provided on approximately 36 781 beds. Pursuant to SR Government Regulation no. 751/2004 Coll. health insurance companies are obliged to conclude contracts for at minimum 29 080 beds. The institutional emergency service is provided in the framework of hospital-based institutional care at least in the scope of the public minimum network of providers.

Act No. 653/2007 Coll. amending Act no. 578/2004 Coll. on health care providers, health care workers, professional associations in health care and on the amendment of certain acts, set out in the framework of the public minimum network a fixed network taking account of the need to ensure quality urgent health care in the case of a person received from the emergency healthcare service. Concurrently the term "end network" is defined, which in the framework of the public minimum network providers provides specialised health care in the respective catchment area.

The minimum network of healthcare providers is regulated by SR Government Regulation no. 751/2004 Coll. on the public minimum network of healthcare providers as later amended.

In the field of health insurance, incomes to the public health insurance system, including the balance of funds from the preceding year are expected in 2008 to total SKK 105.6 billion. In 2008 the state's payment is quantified at SKK 30.5 billion, with a projected number of 3 011 927 insured persons and a 4.5% rate for calculating the insurance premium. Incomes from premiums from economically active persons reflect the development of macroeconomic indicators and tax revenue forecasts, and it is expected that these incomes in 2008 will total SKK 65.1 billion. Insured persons have the right to select their health insurance company, which they may change once per year (always as at 1 January of the following year) by submitting an application to their health insurance company by 30 September of the respective calendar year. Healthcare provision is prevailingly paid for by public health insurance. The scope of health care funded from the public health insurance is set by legal regulation.

4.2.2 Priority policies related to the Common Objective (j)

The public network of healthcare providers is formed by all providers licensed to provide health care. The minimum network of healthcare providers is laid down by SR Government Regulation as the arrangement of the minimum possible number of publicly available providers within the territory of the respective local authority region in a number and composition that ensures efficiently available, smooth, systematic and professional health care. Health care provided on the basis of public health insurance is available to everyone irrespective of gender, age, race, religious denomination or social status. Health insurance companies are obliged by statute to secure health care for their insured persons. The availability of health care for disabled persons has been solved also through progressively establishing barrier-free access at individual healthcare facilities.

The SR Minister of Health through the SR Office of Public Health Care in cooperation with regional public health care offices is running the programme "Supporting the Health of Disadvantaged Communities in Slovakia". The programme is broken down into stages. In the 1st stage the programme was realised in

marginalised Romani communities. The direction, or ambition, for the 2nd stage, beginning 2009, is to extend the programme to include other disadvantaged groups in the SR population – refugees, the homeless. In total 10 regional public health care offices are involved in the programme, along with 30 community workers in the field of health education. Community workers are pursuing outreach training in health education, disease prevention, keeping healthy and distributing health education materials in selected Romani settlements. Community workers are cooperating with schools, field social workers with doctors (general practitioners for adults, general practitioners for children and adolescents, gynaecologists, dentists), with municipal authorities, health insurance companies and non-governmental organisations.

Indicators are:

- growth in the number of insured persons of health insurance companies from the inhabitants of segregated and separated Romani settlements and localities – connected with the number of health insurance cards issued.
- Increased attendance of Roma at outpatient doctors, which is connected with heightened responsibility for their own health,

4.2.3 Priority policies related to Common Objective (k)

A priority task of the SR Ministry of Health is to ensure the health care provided for SR citizens. The solution of this priority results to the SR Ministry of Health directly from the Government's Programme Declaration together with financial provision for the healthcare services system. The SR Ministry of Health through legislative measures directs healthcare provision strategy, the network of institutional and outpatient healthcare facilities, raising the quality of provided health care and patient security.

The SR Ministry of Health is currently preparing an amendment to its edict amending edict no. 428/2006 Coll. on minimum requirements for staffing and material-technical provision for individual types of healthcare facilities, where this focuses on setting the minimum material-technical provision and staffing at all institutional healthcare facilities, which will contribute to improving quality in the provision of health care and patient security.

Under Act No. 581/2004 Coll. every health insurance company in Slovakia is obliged to evaluate the quality of healthcare providers and rank healthcare providers according to their success rate in fulfilling criteria for quality indicators. These indicators, drawn up by the SR Ministry of Health in cooperation with the individual health insurance companies, serve for monitoring selected fields of health care provision. One of the criteria in collecting quality indicators is also the patient's own evaluation of the healthcare provider.

4.2.4 Priority policies related to Common Objective (l)

The SR Ministry of Health as the central government body for health care, in the framework of its competence professionally guides healthcare provision, issues standard diagnostic and standard therapeutic procedures and coordinates research activity in health care and the application of scientific research results in practice. The objective is to improve the quality of health care in line with the latest results of

research in the field of medical science and medicine based on evidence. Standard diagnostic and standard therapeutic procedures, issued by the Ministry in the form of expert guidelines, are an integral component of the overall system of quality in health care service provision, in which healthcare workers are provided instructions for optimal procedures in providing health care. The role of expert guidelines is to introduce new, effective and uniform diagnostic and medical procedures in the treatment of selected, society-wide serious illnesses. The standardisation of diagnostic and medical procedures, together with setting the level of material-technical provision and staffing of healthcare facilities, creates suitable conditions for designing criteria for evaluating the quality of health care provided.

The SR Ministry of Health supports the development of programmes regarding prevention, timely diagnosis and treatment. In accordance with the European Strategy for the Health and Development of Children and Adolescents the Ministry prepared the National Programme for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Slovakia for 2008 - 2015. The Programme was approved by the SR Government on 26 March 2008 in resolution no. 129. The programme's main priorities are the health of mothers and newborns, nutrition and physical activity, infectious diseases, injuries and violence, the environment, the adolescent age and psychosocial development and mental health. The programme contains concrete objectives in the field of child and adolescent care, these being mainly tasks for improving care for the healthy development of children and adolescents, tasks for the development and coordination of services meeting the needs of pregnant women, newborns, improving the quality and availability of health care for children and adolescents by creating a system of child trauma centres, creating the conditions for children in need of hospitalisation, according to the Charter of Rights of the Hospitalised Child, ensuring the management of the solution of pathological states relating to prenatal, perinatal and postnatal development period of children, etc.

4.3 Long-Term Care

The part of the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2006 - 2008 focusing on the National Strategy for Long-Term Care in the introduction briefly describes the forms of providing long-term care in Slovakia, among which we include social services, a financial allowance for care and a financial allowance for personal assistance.

Social services provided within the framework of social assistance represent one of the forms of solving a person's state of social destitution and who alone is unable to ensure care for their own person, care for their household, protection and assertion of their rights and legally protected interests or secure contact with the social environment, particularly due to their age, adverse state of health, social maladjustment or loss of employment. Social services have one of the legal resources for mitigating or overcoming the social consequences of severe health disability and are provided by municipal authorities and county authorities as the local authority bodies charged with these competencies by law. Forms of long-term care include, in particular, the provision of nursing care services and care in social services facilities (e.g. pensioners' homes, pensioner nursing homes, care service facilities, social services homes and sheltered housing facilities.

A further form of long-term care may be said to be also the **financial contribution for care**, which is included in the system of compensation for the social consequences of severe health disability. Its purpose is to ensure help for severely disabled persons dependent on day-long personal and proper nursing care in the course of essential acts of daily living, and with the aim of providing income for the carer, who may be from a tightly defined sphere of people – family members. In the framework of ensuring social protection of these carers, and amendment to the Social Insurance Act entered into effect in August 2006, on the basis of which the sphere of persons for whom pension insurance premiums will be paid by the state was extended to include also persons claiming a financial contribution for caring for a severely disabled person.

One of the most progressive forms of long-term care is social aid to severely disabled persons is personal assistance. One of the most-progressive forms of long-term care, provided as social assistance to severely disabled persons is **personal assistance**. This form of long-term care provides severely disabled persons with effective assistance in the field of mobility, communication, self attendance and assistance in household work. Its progressiveness lies primarily in the fact that it supports the independence of people with severe health disabilities and the philosophy of independent living, supporting their working, family and several activities leading toward their integration in society and is thus an important tool supporting the social inclusion of severely disabled persons. A severely disabled person to whom a personal budget is provided directly themselves organises the process of obtaining assistance, chooses personal assistants and concludes an agreement with them on the performance of personal assistance, setting out the place, manner and frequency of the assistance, manner of payment, etc.

At the time of preparing the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion in 2006 several priorities and measures were set in the framework of the

individual common objectives (j, k, l) for the field of long-term care (e.g. guaranteeing the provision or securing of social services, new types of social services, including respite, the creation of conditions for developing community planning, ensuring the interconnectedness of health care and social assistance, ensuring the quality of social services and independent supervision over them, quality standards, the creation of a new funding system for social services, putting public and non-public providers on an equal legal footing, improving support for families that care for a dependent member).

Achieving these measures has been conditional, in particular, upon new legislation governing the provision of social services (including long-term-care) In the SR Government Programme Declaration for 2006 to 2010 the Government undertook to create a legislative environment for the development of social services that would guarantee their recipient decent living conditions and would be directed toward their activation. And objective is also to ensure the interconnectedness of social services and health care and to provide regulation for a new system of funding them.

At present the draft Social Services Act is being prepared in the paragraph wording. It has been the subject of several public discussions with representatives of central government, local authorities and representatives of the third sector. The draft act, in view of its contents, competencies and financing, requires an appropriate time interval for discussion among the professional and lay public and it is essential to make maximum efforts towards reaching a compromise right at the stage of its preparation, in particular with local and regional authorities and non-governmental organisations operating in the field of social services. It is at the same time necessary to allow an appropriate time in particular for local authorities to prepare and meet tasks that the act is to charge to them, in terms of staffing, material, equipment and, in particular, funding. For this reason it has not been possible to submit the draft act at the original date for a meeting of the Government and Parliament by the end of 2007; this task was shifted to the second half of 2008 in the Plan of Legislative Tasks of the SR Government for 2008, and the act is expected to enter into effect on 1 January 2009.

For this reason the measures and priorities set in the National Report in 2006 remain current and it will be possible to evaluate their realisation only once the act has entered into effect and following its implementation. The proposed method of realising them is set out in the following parts focusing on priority policies related to the common objectives.

4.3.1 Progress in relation to National Strategy Report 2006 - 2008 and challenges identified in the 2007 Joint Report

The National Strategy Report for Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2006 – 2008 listed as one of the basic challenges the fact that after the transfer of competence in social services provision in the framework of their decentralisation to municipal authorities and county authorities there may arise the problem that municipal authorities in particular are insufficiently equipped in terms of staff, professional knowledge, materials, equipment for performing this competence. As a result, many people dependent on assistance, for example on a care service either do not have their needs satisfied at all or their needs are satisfied only partially.

Likewise, the availability of social services is significantly influenced by the policies of county authorities and municipal authorities. Even despite the fact that county authorities draw up a white paper for social services, social prevention and social advice in their territory, a part of which is also an analysis of the actual state of social services provided and a definition of priorities for further development, the network of social services facilities and social services in the field is insufficient and unevenly distributed regionally, and does not cover eligible demand from citizens for development from the aspect of the variety of social services and their physical availability.

Additional problems continue to be posed by the insufficiency of conditions enabling people to remain in their natural home social environment. Likewise there is an absence of support services, respite social services for families providing care for a dependent member. A shortcoming already mentioned is the insufficient coordination of long-term social and health care and undeveloped community planning and community development.

With the objective of realising and fulfilling measures set out in the National Report for 2006 - 2008 the draft Social Services Act lays down the obligation on municipal authorities and county authorities in the framework of their prescribed competencies to provide or securing at the latest within 60 days social services based on the provision of assistance to a care-dependent person (in activities of daily living). If a municipal authority or legal entity established founded by the municipal authority or county authority cannot provide this service, due follow example to a lack of capacity, it is then obliged to secure this service at a number of social service provider (e.g. a non-public provider). In the case that life or health is seriously threatened, the social service must be provided or secured without delay. This measure fundamentally raises the availability of social services for recipients, particularly those in facilities where people currently are held on admission waiting lists for up to several years. Our interest is to cancel the admission waiting lists within two years so that the social service in the facility is provided to all people on the list, provided they are actually dependent on this service.

With the objective of providing a broader spectrum of social services at the field, outpatient and inpatient level, the draft Social Services Act prescribes a number of new types of social services. As regards long-term care we can mention, in particular, specialised facilities (for clients with a selected type of disability e.g. Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis), rehabilitation centres, borrowing of aids, interpreting service, mediation of interpreting service and personal assistance (by means of agencies), guide and reader service (accompaniment in basic social activities and helping in communication), monitoring and signalling the need for aid (by means of signalling or audiovisual equipment connected to a central despatching centre). Through instituting some of these social services we are responding to practice, since many of these services already exist in practice, though have no legal basis and consequently problems arise in funding them.

A respite service is also introduced, something which has so far been absent in Slovakia, yet long established in other advanced economies. This service is intended for carers who provide care to their relatives in the framework of a financial contribution for care, with the objective of preventing a deterioration in their physical

and mental health. It may also be viewed as a preventive measure in respect of the carers, who in consequence of constant physically and psychologically demanding care without rest, they themselves, too, often become dependent on others' help. The respite service is provided for 30 days within one year and during these days the municipal authority provides or secures the appropriate social service / care for the patient.

The draft Social Services Act also regulates the possibility for supporting community development, community work and rehabilitation with the objective of avoiding adverse social situations and solving local social problems. And with this objective, a municipal authority on the basis of national priorities for the development of social services and in cooperation with other providers and recipients of social services and other legal entities and natural persons draws up a community plan of social services. The community plan, in addition to analysing the current state in the provision of social services, the needs of their recipients, and sociological and demographic data, contains also a realisation timetable and evaluation method.

A further modern step regulated by the act and which contributes to putting the conditions for social service providers on an equal legal footing irrespective of whether they are public or non-public providers of social services, is the mandatory registration of all providers, since also public providers (a municipal authority and legal entities established or founded by a municipal authority or county authority) will be able to provide social services only if they are entered in the register of providers and fulfil the conditions laid down by the act. The body entering providers in the register, for both public and non-public providers of social services is the county authority, which also for this reason is not a direct provider of social services, but secures them by means of a legal entity that it establishes or founds with this objective.

With the aim of ensuring interconnection and coordination of health care and social services, the provision of health care at selected facilities is regulated, in the scope of nursing care acts by the facilities' duly qualified staff (healthcare nurses). The act also creates the legal conditions for social services to be provided also by institutional health care facilities to a person no longer requiring health care, but to whom social services cannot be provided in the home environment or at a social services facility.

In relation to the requirement that the need for long-term care or care in the framework of social services does not lead to poverty and financial dependence, the draft act raises income protection in the provision of social services, or guarantees a residual income after paying for a social service in connection to the sum of the living minimum. At the same time it is explicitly stated that no payment is to be made for the provision of assistance in the case of dependence on the assistance of another person (i.e. for assistance in self-attendance tasks).

The principal strategic and conceptual document is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the Slovak Republic adopted not only in the field of long-term care, but is a cross-sectional document concerning the policies of all common objectives (j,k,l). On 26 September 2007 the Convention was signed by the President of the Slovak Republic and subsequently the Government of the Slovak Republic charged the ministers of the selected departments to carry out an analysis of

the accordance of SR legal regulations with the commitments resulting to the Slovak Republic from the Convention and after making this analysis draft measures will be presented to the SR Government for implementing the tasks flowing from the Convention. At present we are in the period when we are examining what legislative and non-legislative measures need to be adopted to enabling disabled persons to actually use their rights as result from the Convention in all fields of their life and what funds must to be set aside for realising them.

In an effort to best harmonise activities connected with the analysis and with the process of ratifying the Convention a working group has been set up comprising representatives of individual departments, representatives of disabled people and local authority representatives, as well as a Slovakia's representative on the working group "Disability High-Level Group". Since August 2008 a new Government Council for People with Disabilities has been in place as an advisory body to the Government, and which is chaired by the SR Deputy Prime Minister and representatives of disabled people will have a significant standing on it. The ambition of this council will be to prepare and propose concrete actions enabling the Convention to be implemented in practice, as well as to monitor its fulfilment.

4.3.2 Priority policies related to the Common Objective (j)

The Report for 2006 - 2008 stated that at present the SR does not have standards in social services provision. As an alternative to quality standards there is state supervision by the SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, which oversees adherence to fundamental human rights and freedoms of citizens in the provision of care at social services facilities, and thus whether also the overall quality of the services provided is in accordance with applicable legal regulations.

The quality of social services provided by non-public providers is, to a certain extent, guaranteed by the process of their licensing (registration), within the framework of which an assessment is made of the social service provider's staffing, material-technical, financial and spatial conditions.

We believe the levels of personnel qualification and education are an important factor in the quality of social services. For selected work activities in the field of social services in Slovakia, special qualifications are required in addition to educational qualifications, however no uniform education system is in place for social services personnel.

In the interest of realising measures set out in the 2006 National Report, the draft Social Services Act charges social service providers with the duty to draw up and fulfil procedural, personnel and operating conditions for the provision of social services (quality standards), the structure of which is precisely laid down in the act, which enables not only inspection bodies, but also independent institutions and the public to monitor and check the quality of social services. In the interest of achieving the most objective evaluation of social services provision, an evaluation system has been drawn up, using set criteria to score the actual quality of social services provision according to the fulfilment of individual conditions. It sets a maximum

number of points that a social services provider can achieve, and a minimum number of points that the social services provider must achieve to meet quality standards.

At the same time in the interest of quality assurance, other obligations have been placed on the provider, which include for example the duty to plan the course of social services provision (an individual development plan) according to the aims, needs and abilities of the social services recipient, the duty of the provider to comply with the maximum number of clients per employee and the percentage share of professional personnel in the total number of personnel at selected types of facilities, and with the aim of raising professionalism in work, the duty to draw up and implement a programme of supervision.

Furthermore, social services facilities are required to fulfil general technical requirements according to special regulations for the construction and buildings used by people with limited movement and orientation, to fulfil requirements concerning the internal environment of buildings and concerning low-standard apartments and accommodation facilities, as well as requirements for catering facilities, including a requirement for ensuring their barrier-free access.

For the first time SR legislation regulates qualification requirements for performing individual professions in the field of social services (social worker, social adviser, supervisor, carer, interpreter, social rehabilitation instructor and coordinator, work therapeutist, governess, healthcare facility personnel, etc). Qualification requirements are defined, along with further education necessary for performing selected work activities in the field of social services. With the aim of ensuring the fulfilment of the prescribed qualification requirements and with the aim of achieving quality further education in the field of social services, accreditation for education programmes is granted and revoked by the Ministry.

For ensuring quality in social services it is also necessary to have efficient supervision over their provision. For this reason the draft Social Services Act regulates supervision over social services, in the framework of which there will be supervision over compliance with this act and other legal regulations, for example in the provision of social services from the aspect of the observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms, in the conclusion of contracts on social services provision, in educational programmes and to decide on the imposition of fines in the event of a breach of regulations under this act.

In the interest of respecting the social services recipient’s choice, the draft act explicitly lays down their right to choose the type and form (the field, outpatient, in patient) of social services provision and their right to choose its provider. This right enables a recipient to remain in the home environment as long as they wish and to choose a social service provided in their natural environment (e.g. a nursing care service).

With the aim of avoiding maltreatment of a recipient the draft act prescribes that bodily or non-bodily restraints may not be used against a social services recipient. An exception is formed only by situations where the life and health of the recipient or other persons is directly threatened, and this only for the necessary time and that the provider shall give preference to using restraints of a non-bodily nature. Furthermore

in using restraints, it is permitted to proceed only in accordance with this act, whereby it is precisely defined what constitutes means of non-bodily restraint (verbal communication, distraction, active listening) and means of bodily restraint (special grasps, placement in a safe room, use of medicines).

4.3.3 Priority policies related to Common Objective (k)

The National Report for 2006 – 2008 describes the current system of social services funding, which is multi-source and includes financing from the state budget (by means of subsidies in the competence of the SR Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family and targeted subsidies from the SR Ministry of Finance), from municipal authority budgets and county authority budgets, and from defrayal payments from social service recipients, or from agreed prices paid (in the case of non-public providers) and from donations.

Financial contributions may also be provided to non-public providers from a county authority budget for training costs connected with the provision of social services, and which is claimable under conditions laid down by the act. The practice of financing non-public providers is, however, such that for the majority of them the financial contribution does not fully cover 100% of the costs as set by the act.

For recipients in the case of public providers the affordability of social services is guaranteed through statutory protection of citizens against payment for a social service that is inappropriate to their income, assets and family affairs, in the form of guaranteeing a certain residual income after paying for the social service, where this sum is set in connection to the sum of the living minimum, which is subject to annual valorisation. Such a guarantee, however, does not apply to a person living in a social service facility of a non-public provider.

In the field of direct financial stimuli for providing long-term care a monthly financial contribution is provided from the state budget for care by a carer who cares day-long personally and properly for a severely disabled family member, or a monthly financial contribution is provided to a severely disabled person for securing personal assistance.

The most fundamental problems of the current legal state affecting financial sustainability remain the insufficient funds for covering the needs of dependent persons, the unequal standing of public and non-public social services providers and the insufficient support for the family in caring for a care-dependent relative and insufficient support for a person remaining in their home environment.

With the aim of eliminating these shortcomings the 2006 National Report included measures the solution of which is arranged by the draft Social Services Act, allowing social services to be funded also from other sources as has been possible to date. This relates to funds from associations of municipal authorities and county authorities, from the health insurance company funds, from income from a social enterprise.

Particular importance may be ascribed also to the introduction of the financing of health (nursing) care provided by social services facilities in the manner that payment

for nursing care acts at selected facilities performed by qualified personnel competent for performing a healthcare occupation under special regulations, may be financed from public health insurance funds on the basis of a contract concluded by the social services facility with a health insurance company.

This financing method does not, however, mean that social services facilities cannot ensure nursing care also in a different presently valid way, i.e. by means of nursing care agencies or via licensed nurses.

The draft act regulates in a completely new way the financing of non-public providers from the side of municipal authorities and county authorities, whereby it raises the legal certainty of these subjects as well as the quality of social services provided. A financial contribution will be provided in the form of a financial contribution for operating and a contribution in the case of a person's dependence on the help of another person, the provision of which is guaranteed at least in the amount set by the act on the basis of the degree of the person's reliance on the help of another person. This contribution may be considered a contribution for a service, notwithstanding the fact that it is not intended directly for a social services recipient, but the provider, who will provide this service to the recipient. The method of calculating the financial contributions sets on an equal legal footing and the conditions for funding public and non-public providers and creates the basis for ensuring quality and available long-term care.

In the field of support for families caring for a dependent member, the draft Social Services Act provides for the provision of a respite service to carers caring for a dependent family member, with the aim of ensuring their necessary rest. A further form of respite service is the possibility of providing a care service also during care in the framework of the contribution for care, though at most in the extent of eight hours monthly.

Other support measures are regulated by the draft Act on Financial Contributions for the Compensation of Severe Disability, which should enter into effect jointly with the Social Services Act on 1 January 2009. This draft act regulates the valorisation of repeated financial contributions, extends the forms of performing personal assistance, extends the sphere of possible carers in the framework of the financial contribution for care and allows the contribution for care to be provided also during a respite service.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SR MoI	Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic
SR MoLSAF	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the Slovak Republic
OMC	Open Method of Communication
SR	Slovak Republic
NAP/Inclusion	National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
OPESI	Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion
OPIS	Operational Programme Information Society
NLI	National labour Inspectorate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SPD	Single Programming Document
EU SILC	EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions
I&MS	Information & Monitoring System for the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund
SDF	Social Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
NGO	non-governmental organisation(s)
IEIP	Institute of Education Information and Prognoses
HoLSAF	Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family
OoLSAF	Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family
UTTU	upper-tier territorial unit
ALMP	active labour market policy
LSIP	local social inclusion partnerships
WHO	World Health Organization
SŠ, VŠ	secondary school, high school (university)
NRP	National Reform Programme
SOP	Sectoral Operational Programme
EU	European Union
NP	National project
ICT	information & communication technologies