

Questionnaire on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)

Slovak Republic

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

a)

► **The National Action Plan for Women in the SR was adopted by the Government of the SR** (see also Part 2 of the Questionnaire, letter A.b) as a follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and was approved in 1997. The document contains eight priority areas: to implement in practice the equal status of the woman in the family, workplace and society that is anchored in the legal system; to create space for the personal choice of development life strategies of women in the family, employment and society; to create conditions for the elimination of economic disadvantages that may lead to the material need of women; to form public opinion in respecting the equality of women and men; to create conditions for the protection and empowerment of women's health; to create conditions for the elimination of violation against women; to create conditions for the development of the personality and job opportunities of women with fewer development opportunities (such as women living in rural areas, Roma women, unemployed women, women insufficiently prepared for their role as mothers and disabled women); to support the activities of organizations oriented on the support and empowerment of women on the national and international levels. Presently, the material **National Gender Equality Strategy for the Period 2009 – 2013**, which will be submitted to the Government of the SR for approval by the end of March 2009, is being prepared instead of the National Action Plan for Women in the SR, the validity of which expired in 2007.

► **The Equality of Opportunities for Women and Men Concept**, approved in 2001, is the second document ensuring gender equality in the Slovak society. The Concept identifies the roles of the state and other subjects in the areas, in which gender discrimination is manifested most distinctively and defines 31 measures and recommendations for implementation with the active participation of non-state subjects. The application of the equality of opportunities concept in the SR incorporates its legislative and institutional ensuring, especially its practical implementation. State authorities, social partners, self-government, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and other involved subjects participate in the implementing of the Concept's measures.

► The Government of the SR got to work on resolving the issues of violence against women and in the families in 2004 when it approved the **National Strategy for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women and in Families**. The goal of the National Strategy was to coordinate and integrate the cooperation of all relevant involved parties in preventing the occurrence of violence, ensuring fast and effective assistance, effective use of existing legislation in practice and creating a sufficient knowledge basis on violence against women. The Strategy forms the basic framework for launching effective procedures in the prevention and elimination of violence against women and in families. The document analyzes violence against women and violence in the families in the wider social context as well; in the

context of international documents, it outlines the solutions of the given issues and defines the basic principles, aims and implementation principles of the Strategy. The Strategy specifies violence in relation to women, children, the elderly and the disabled as subjects who most frequently face the threat of violence in families. Furthermore it defines individual areas of intervention (criminal and civil areas, the area of assistance provision, prevention and research) within the framework of which the concrete operation goals, priorities and principle measures are formulated.

► In 2005, the Government of the SR approved the **National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2005 – 2008** for the effective fulfilment of the National Strategy for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women and in Families. Its basic aim was to implement adequate and effective procedures for the prevention and elimination of violence against women.

The National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2005 – 2008 emphasized the understanding of violence against women as gender determined by the fact that it incorporated concrete measures with the proposal for the resolution of issues in various time horizons. It included, in particular, the implementation of basic steps in the area of prevention, education, research and the building of an institutional framework of coordinated assistance to women who faced violence, not excluding the important area of improving the legislative background of these issues. The National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2005 – 2008 incorporated 27 tasks oriented on four areas: (I) the criminal and civil framework, (II) the provision of assistance to women who experienced or are experiencing violence, (III) prevention and (IV) research.

The evaluation report on the fulfilment of the tasks of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2005 – 2008 noted the fulfilment of several tasks in 2008. However the insufficient number and quality of services provided to women who became victims of violence remained a problem in particular. This especially relates to the accessibility and quality of services on European standards, the coordination of the work of assisting professions especially on the regional level and financing of the above mentioned services. The need for consistent coordination of all components of assistance to the victims of violence in the form of establishing coordination intervention teams in all regions of Slovakia was emphasized. Attention was drawn to the need for the improvement of the quality of education of all professions that are in contact with the victims of violence. The continuation of the collection of statistical data and the acquisition of research data was shown as important and will constitute a necessary condition for the improvement of activities in the prevention and elimination of violence against women in the period of 2009 - 2012.

► When adopting the National Action Plan for the Period of 2005 – 2008, it was emphasized that the evaluation of the achieved results in 2008 would be followed by the updating and supplementing of the material by newly formulated areas and measures in order to continuously move forward the solution of the issues. Based on the above, we are presently working on the completion of the follow-up document which will be submitted to the Government of the SR by the end of March 2009. **The National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period of 2009 – 2012** (the “NAP”) continues in the operation goals of the National Strategy for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women and in Families and develops them in compliance with new facts and requirements of the international documents and practice. The NAP tasks are predominantly formulated in the context of the previous plan with concrete measures in the originally

established four areas, while the area of research is extended by the issues of statistical findings and monitoring. Furthermore the material is supplemented by three extending areas i.e., the education and sensitising of assisting professions, violence against women at work and work with the perpetrators of violence.

In reference to the **monitoring mechanisms** of the effectiveness of the above mentioned national action plans, the National Action Plan for Women was evaluated annually and individual reports were submitted to the Government of the SR. The National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2005 – 2008 was evaluated at the halfway point and at the expiration of its validity. The same procedure is planned for the evaluation of the prepared National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2009 – 2012.

b)

► In 2006 the Slovak Republic submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women its summary **the Second and Third and Fourth Periodical Report to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**. The Report contained information on legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures that were adopted for the purpose of the introduction of the Convention's provisions to life and on the progress achieved in this respect from the discussing of the baseline report in June 1998 to 2006. In October 2007, the Committee sent the SR complementary questions, to which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs elaborated its responses and sent them back in December 2007. In July 2008, discussion of the shadow report that constituted the view of the non-governmental sector of the issues in question and the Second, Third and Fourth Periodical Reports of the Government of the SR to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women took place.

Based on the government report, follow-up documents and the discussion during the defence, the committee elaborated the Final Findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the Slovak Republic, which were recommended to the Slovak Republic via the Permanent Mission of the SR at the UN in New York in August 2008. In an effort to ensure settlement of the SR, the final findings and recommendations of the Committee the Report on Discussing the Second, Third and Fourth Periodical Reports of the SR to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the draft of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Final Findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women will be submitted to the Government of the SR in 2009. The above mentioned material contains the proposal of the subjects responsible for implementing the recommendations contained in the Final Findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for individual ministries and other responsible subjects. At the same time, parts of the relevant recommendations were projected to tasks formulated within the framework of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2009 – 2012.

c)

► The status of women in Slovak society is based on basic legislative norms and on international conventions that are binding for the SR. **The Constitution of the SR** comprises the general framework anchoring the ban on discrimination and equality before the law.

Article 12 of the Constitution guarantees basic rights and freedoms to all regardless gender, race, skin colour, etc., and states that no one may be harmed, privileged or disadvantaged due to these reasons.

► On July 1, 2004, Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on Equal Treatment in Some Areas and on Protection against Discrimination and on Changes and Amendments to Some Acts – **the Anti-discrimination Act** – which comprehensively regulates the implementation of the principle of equal treatment and establishes the legal instruments of protection in the event of its violation, entered into effect. It also bans all forms of discrimination due to gender and does not take into consideration that the reasons that lead to it were based on the reality of erroneous assumption. At the same time, Act introduces exemptions to the principle of equal treatment which allow for different treatment under specified conditions.

The Anti-discrimination Act bans the discrimination of persons due to gender in social security, healthcare, provision of services and goods and in education. At the same time, it bans discrimination due to gender in labour and similar legal relations and in this area discrimination due to pregnancy or motherhood is considered as discrimination and discrimination due to sexual or gender identification. The Anti-discrimination Act was amended in 2008 and this amendment broadened the originally defined forms of discrimination from 2004 (direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, unlawful sanction, instruction for discrimination and exhortation to discrimination) through the addition of another form, sexual harassment. Pursuant to the amendment from 2008, sexual harassment is defined as verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature the intention or consequence of which is or may be the abuse of an individual's dignity and which creates an intimidating, humiliating, degrading, hostile or insulting atmosphere.

► The **Manifesto** of the present **Government of the SR** of August 2006 includes Point 3.5 targeted on the support of gender equality:

3. 5 Gender Equality Support

The Government shall support the equality of women and men as an important factor in the development of democracy and the implementation of human rights while promoting its policy in order to fulfil the undertakings arising from the Lisbon Strategy and international conventions.

For this purpose, the Government shall ensure the regular monitoring of the equality of opportunities of men and women and the establishment of the institutional structures for the application of the gender aspect to all policies and decisions that are adopted within the framework of the decision-making processes at all levels of society management.

While implementing its policy, the Government shall strictly adhere to the principle of equal treatment of men and women and implement the steps towards the elimination of any forms of discrimination due to gender, religion or faith, racial origin, national or ethnic origin, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Within the framework of the preventative programs for the elimination of the domestic violence, the Government shall focus on more effectively ensuring a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach, effective assistance to the victims of violence and the creation of a wide framework of cooperating subjects providing services corresponding to the European standards in this area.

The Government shall pay attention to the agenda of gender equality, exert efforts to establish the European Institute for Gender Equality and demonstrate initiative in joining the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007).

► Act No. 311/2001 Coll., the Labour Code, deals with the issues of gender equality and equality of opportunities in the field of employment relations and employment. Article 6 of the Basic Principles of the Labour Code establishes that women and men are entitled to equal treatment regarding access to employment, remuneration and professional advancement, professional training and working conditions. Women are ensured the same working conditions enabling their participation at work taking into consideration their physiological prequalifications and with regard to their social function in maternity and to women and men with regards to their family obligations in the upbringing and care of children. The amendment to the Labour Code in 2007 developed the principle of equal treatment within the framework of remuneration pursuant to Article 141 of the Treaty on the European Community, Council Regulation No. 75/117/EEC and European Parliament and Council Regulation No. 2006/54/EC in compliance and with ILO Treaty No. 100 on the equal remuneration of working men and women for work of equal value. The principle of equal remuneration means the elimination of any discrimination due to gender in connection with all aspects and conditions of remuneration for the same work or for work of equal value.

Act No. 348/2007 Coll. that alters and amends Act No. 311/2001 Coll., the Labour Code, as amended and that alters and amends some Acts:

§ 119a

Wages for the Same Work and for Work of Equal Value

(1) The terms and conditions of these wages must be agreed upon without any discrimination according to gender. The provision of the first sentence pertains to every fulfilment for work and also for fulfilment that is paid or will be paid in connection with employment pursuant to other provisions of this Act or pursuant to special regulations.

(2) Women and men are entitled to the same wages for the same work or for work of the same value. Work of the same or comparable complexity, responsibility and difficulty that is carried out under the same or comparable working conditions and achieves the same or comparable productivity and work outcomes in employment with the same employer are considered as the same or work of equal value.

(3) If the employer establishes the system of a work position evaluation, the evaluation must be based on the same criteria for men and women without any discrimination due to gender. When assessing the value of the work of women and men, the employer may imply other objectively measurable criteria, besides the criteria incorporated in the Section 2 that can be applied for all employees regardless of gender.

► In reference to *violence against women*, the **amendments to the Criminal Act, the Rules of Criminal Procedure, the Act on Administrative Infractions, the Rules of Civil Procedures, the Civil Code, the Act on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Criminal Acts and the Social Assistance Act and Act on Social Services**, which may substantially contribute to the more effective process of eliminating violence against women, were adopted in the Slovak Republic. The effects of the amendments to these Acts are being assessed and their contribution indicates the improvement of the quality of solutions to the issues of domestic violence. The most essential changes have occurred in the field of violence that is designated under the wider term of “domestic violence” in the explanatory reports to the amendments to the Acts.

Criminal Code No. 300/2005 Coll. sanctions acts pertaining to the body of crimes of the battering of a close person or person entrusted to one’s care within a wider circle of persons in connection with extending the legal definition of the term, close person and person entrusted to one’s care. Not only persons in direct family relationships are considered as close persons or persons entrusted to care; this term also includes adoptive parents, adopted children, former husbands, cohabitants, former cohabitants, parents of a child and persons

who are closely related to them. The lawmakers broadened the objective aspect of the body of this crime and established longer sentences for its commission. The Criminal Act also introduces so-called protective medical treatment and enables the court to impose it on perpetrators who commit violent crime against close persons or persons entrusted to their care if it can be assumed that they would continue in these violent acts.

Act No. 195/1998 Coll. on Social Assistance as amended was altered and amended several times in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004, thus enabling the building of the network of specialized facilities for women affected by violence, in which specialized social assistance and aid, social and psychological counselling and other forms of specialized counselling were to be provided. Presently, the Act on Social Assistance is replaced by **Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on Alterations and Amendments to Act No. 455/1991 (Digest) on Trades (Trade Act) as amended.**

The amendment to the Act on the Police Department, implemented through Act No. **491/2008 Coll.**, enables policemen to banish an individual from common housing, in the event that an attack on life, health, freedom or particularly serious attack on human dignity of the person of risk could be expected based on the detected facts, especially regarding previous such attacks. The ban on entry for the banished individual to common housing within 24 hours from the banishment is part of the banishment from common housing. The policeman is authorized to banish such person from common housing even during his/her absence (§ 26 a).

d) Budgets to date: 0. The Slovak Republic does not have sufficient experience with gender budgeting.

e)

In Slovak terms **the Millennium Development Aims were transformed to national aims**, which establish the priorities and their solutions in the individual areas. The publication *Millennium Development Aims. The Road to Decreasing Poverty and Social Exclusion. Slovak Republic.* monitors the fulfilment of these aims on the national level. It was published by the UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava in 2004. (<http://mdgr.undp.sk/reports.php?sub=sk>)

Goal 3 reacts to the unequal status and opportunities of men and women in society, which constitutes the cause for the higher representation of women among the poor. In Slovakia, gender differences are especially related to the participation of women and men in decision-making in the economic and political spheres and segregation in the labour market related to income inequality. Gender inequality occurs in the labour market despite comparable levels of education among men and women. Women are predominantly found in the sector of the economy with lower average wages and in lower level positions in individual professions. Recently, a more distinctive widening of the wage gap between men and women has been registered. The main national goal is the elimination of the obstacles which prevent the equality of opportunities for men and women in all areas of life. Concrete plans incorporate the support of gender equality a) through the elimination of discrimination and violence in society, the family, the labour market, and b) through reconciliation of family and working obligations through family policy instruments and the flexible organization of labour.

Slovakia endeavours to take into consideration gender aspects across all national goals that are established based on the Millennium Development Aims.

f)

Issues of gender equality have constituted the subject of discussion on the grounds of several parliamentary and governmental bodies

► On the parliamentary level, the issues of gender equality were incorporated in the agenda of the **Slovak Republic National Council (NC SR) Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and the Status of Women**. László Nagy, the deputy of the NC SR, is its chair. The NC SR Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and the Status of Women is the initiative and control body of the NC SR. The Committee discusses bills, international agreements and some governmental programmes in terms of their compliance with the human rights and the rights of national minorities anchored in the Constitution of the SR and arising from the international undertakings of the SR. It pays special attention to gender equality. It cooperates with the ombudsman, central state administration authorities, the Nation's Memory Institute, the Institute for the Personal Data Protection, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and other institutes and non-governmental organizations active in the area of human rights.

► The **Commission for Equality of Opportunities** was established between 2002 and 2006 by the parliamentary Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and the Status of Women (see above). The Commission was predominantly composed of women from non-governmental and religious organizations, academia and the general government. The activities of the Commission were determined by the framework documents of the European Union, which are especially oriented on economic equality, human rights, the elimination of gender stereotypes, political participation and the elimination of violence. The role of the Commission was to comment on Acts and to come up with initiatives and concrete projects in the fields of gender issues and equality of opportunities.

► **The Permanent Commission for Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities** operates within the NC SR Committee for Social Affairs and Housing. Jana Vaňová, a deputy of the NC SR, is its chair. This permanent commission has initiative and consultative functions. Its job description is to consult on issues and express expert opinions regarding affairs within its competence and to submit recommendations to the deputies regarding legislative proposals discussed at the Committee of the NC SR. It monitors the fulfilment of the manifesto of the Government and adopts recommendations for the pertinent commissions of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The establishment of the permanent commission was designed to create conditions for a more coordinated strategy, prevention and solution of the issues regarding the status of women and family in society on the national level to enable all involved institutes (state, professional, local and non-governmental) to jointly participate in the creation of a coordinated programme for enriching the status of women and increasing attention to the issues of women and the family. As a result, the negative impact of the present status of women and their unequal opportunities will be eliminated more distinctively, thus creating a larger space for the bond with the practice and cutting the period of time from the generation of the idea to the deputy's submission of the proposal in discussions at commissions and at the National Council of the Slovak Republic on bills related to the empowerment of the role and status of women in society and their equal status.

► On the governmental level within the structure of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, the Division of Family and Gender Policy has been working on the issues of gender equality and equality of opportunities. In 2007, it became the **Division of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities** and its position was elevated within the framework of the Ministry (see also Part 3 of the Questionnaire, letter a)).

► Furthermore, on the governmental level, in 2006 the post of **Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge-based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities** was created. It deals with the universal issues of human rights as well as specific gender-related discrimination among others. The Department of Human Rights and Minorities also operates within the Governmental Office of the SR, which is the co-author of the anti-discrimination legislation and actively participates in its implementation on the national level and within the framework of EU structures.

- g) This does not apply to us.
- h) Sharpening the conditions in the market puts women at the greatest risk, because due to their family obligations they are in fact the labour force at greatest risk. As a result of the present world economic crisis, the Government of the SR has adopted measures of a general nature for increasing employment and women constitute an especially sensitive group.
- i) The sector action plans were not created in the SR; several documents exist which solve the characteristic issues for some sectors, such as the gender pay gap, reconciliation of family and working life, etc.
- j) In reference to resolving issues of gender equality in the SR, the partnerships with non-governmental organizations are considered as very beneficiary. Male and female representatives of non-governmental organizations prepare many expert reports. At the same time, male and female representatives of the non-governmental sector have the opportunity to participate in the design of various governmental documents and comment on them, especially through their membership in expert groups and committees, such as:

The Expert Group for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and in Families (established in 1999, renewed in 2005) at the Slovak Republic Government Council for the Prevention of Crime under the management of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic – the role of the expert group in cooperation with the providers of assistance to women is to elaborate the standards for ensuring adequate assistance and protection to persons, victims of violence for individual groups of involved workers (including law enforcement, social work, healthcare, education, etc.), as well as the common standards for ensuring the coordinated procedure of the involved professions for the adequate assistance and protection of women who face violence. At the same time, the expert group prepares reports and updates documents and prepares information materials and procedural manuals for the provision of assistance to victims of violence and education schemes for the professionals working in the field of justice, law enforcement, healthcare and social work who work with women and the victims of violence. The composition of the members of the expert group and the individual working teams reflect the profile of the given issues. Members include representatives of central state administration authorities, upper-tier territorial units, educational institutions and the non-governmental sector. Police officers, lawyers, healthcare and social workers, representatives of the involved non-governmental organizations, experts providing help on helplines, in counselling centres of the offices of

labour, social affairs and family, physicians, psychologists, pedagogues and the representatives of the self-government and others are members of the working groups.

The Consultative Committee of the Slovak Republic Government Council for Gender Equality – the Committee is a consultative-expert body of the Slovak Republic Government Council for Gender Equality which proposes current themes for Council sessions. It constitutes a forum for opinion exchange in the field of gender equality, related to the fulfilment of the undertakings of the Slovak Republic arising from its membership in the UN, European Union, European Council and International Labour Organization and for the solution of tasks in the area of gender equality on the national policy level. Male and female representatives of non-governmental organizations in the fields of gender equality, equality of opportunities and human rights protection and male and female experts from academic and other research and expert institutes, who apply for membership in writing to the chair of the Council, and are accepted constitute the members of this committee. The Government appreciates the work of non-governmental organizations and strives to propose through this committee to provide non-governmental organizations with the opportunity to prioritize certain themes and lead the dialogue with the Government. The proposals and conclusions from the sessions of the committee are submitted in writing to the executive committee composed of civil servants.

- k) No targeted special activities were carried out in the monitored period in the interest of increasing the involvement of men in the solution of the issues of gender equality
- l) The support of women in rural areas is a matter for the Ministry of Economy of the SR, the business activities of women in rural areas were in particular supported through the Agency for the Development of Rural Areas
- m) See Point h)

Part Two: Progress in the implementation of the Critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and Further Initiatives and Actions Identified in the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly

A.

a)

► The Twinning Project (PHARE): Strengthening Administrative Capacities in the Area of Gender Mainstreaming, October 2005 – November 2006, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

This twinning project was in compliance with the European policy of gender equality which is considered as the most important part of the stable and sustainable development; it also constitutes one of the basic priorities of the European Union. The above mentioned project was closely associated with the development of the European Structural Funds in

Slovakia and in other new member states, because respect for the gender aspect in these projects is obligatory and gender equality constitutes their horizontal dimension.

The goal of the application of the “gender mainstreaming” strategy is constituted by the incorporation of the gender aspect in all public policies on all levels of the society’s administration. In the interest of achieving the above mentioned goal, the experience and knowledge of French and German experts in the field of gender equality were provided.

The project with an overall length of 12 months, took three main directions that were complementary to each other. The French experts participated within the framework of all three parts; the German experts were involved in the education activities.

The project was implemented in all of the regions of Slovakia. The main target group was made up of male and female employees of the state administration and general government. Non-governmental organizations, university workers and social partners constituted the secondary group. The following were the main goals: (1) to strengthen institutional mechanisms in the field of gender equality, (2) to train 300 persons from the target groups in the field of gender mainstreaming and (3) to inform and communicate regarding the issues of gender equality with an orientation on the Slovak general public. The project consisted of the following activities:

1. Elaboration of the draft National Gender Equality Strategy
2. Establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming Committee (composed of referential persons for the field of gender equality from individual state administration authorities and institutions)
3. Organizing of six-day educational seminars for male and female employees of the state administration and self-government
4. Organizing of thematic workshops for specific target groups
5. Organizing of two study trips to France and Germany
6. Organizing of the training of trainers in gender equality
7. Compiling of the document – The Diagnostics of the Slovak society in Terms of Gender
8. Building and launching of a website dedicated to gender equality issues in Slovakia
9. Compiling of a best experience manual in the field of gender equality in Slovakia
10. Organizing of the launching conference
11. Organizing of the closing conference

In reference to the project outputs, it is necessary to mention the creation of the new website www.gender.gov.sk. Furthermore the best experience manual in the field of gender equality in Slovakia was published. During the project more than 300 persons were trained in the field of gender mainstreaming and 20 male and female delegates participated in the study trips to France and Germany. The draft National Gender Equality Strategy was elaborated and the network of focal points for gender equality was established within the framework of individual state administration authorities and institutions. .

► The manifesto of the Government from 2006 can be considered as the progress due to the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action – for the first time, gender equality is emphasized in this document as one of the main priorities of the Government of the SR (see Part I of the Questionnaire, letter c)

► **The national campaign “Let’s Stop the Domestic Violence against Women”**, implemented within the lines and calls of the pan-European campaign of the European Council constitutes a very significant point that must be mentioned within the framework of the successful activities of the SR.

The national campaign took place from November 2007 to March 2008 and a large number of media and information activities targeted on the individual target groups were carried out.

The campaign was initiated and managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and family of the SR and owing to its European dimension, it cooperated with the European Council Information Office, the representatives of several churches in Slovakia, non-governmental organizations associated under the initiative entitled *Piata žena* (The Fifth Woman), which became known by the organizing of the first media campaign designated for removing the taboo of the theme of domestic violence in Slovakia. The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior, which cooperated in selected activities implemented within the framework of this campaign, also joined the fulfilment of the campaign activities.

The following activities took place in course of the campaign:

1) *Press conference on the occasion of the launching of the campaign on November 22, 2007.* In her speech, Viera Tomanová, the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, said that the Slovak Republic as a member state of the European Union undertook to respect, protect and adhere to the human rights of all its inhabitants. That is why she considers violence against women as a problem of the whole society and she takes it as seriously as any other criminal activity. The investigation and punishment of all forms of domestic violence are not the obligations of state institutions – it is also the duty of state institutions to join in the education, prevention and effective and coordinated assistance to the victims of violence. Representatives of 23 print and audio-visual media participated at this press conference. The press conference also launched the use of the new website www.zastavmenasilie.sk and the broadcasting of the television and radio spot that were broadcast during the campaign in the cooperating media.

2) *The moderated discussion: “Let’s Get Men Involved in Combating Domestic Violence”* took place on November 22, 2007 at the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, The EC Information Office in Bratislava, the National Council of the SR and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR with the participation of the deputies of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the representatives of ministries, non-governmental organizations and academic circles. Viera Tomanová, László Nagy, Chair of the NC SR Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and the Status of Women, Róbert Dobrovodský from the Women’s Alliance and Gülsün Bilgehan, a foreign guest and the Chair of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Committee for the Equality of Opportunities of Men and Women and Sinikka Hurskainen, Chair of the Finnish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe presented speeches. The aim of this discussion was to introduce the current situation in the field of violence against women in Slovakia and to talk about the tasks of the deputies in combating domestic violence.

3) *the opening of the exhibition “The Silenced Witnesses”* on the premises of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR. In addition to the exhibited national posters and the posters of the Council of Europe in Slovak, the exhibition also featured dummies – figures of women representing women who were beaten to death, “the silenced witnesses” – accompanied by descriptions of their difficult life stories. The dummies were leased free of charge by Fenestra, the interest association of women and the Women’s Alliance of Slovakia. The observations and opinions of the students from Prešov University on the theme of violence against women constituted a part of this event.

4) The opening of the campaign featured the launch of the *newly created internet site* www.zastavmenasilie.sk, where more than 32,000 user visits were recorded from the time of its launching to March 2008. The above mentioned website is continuously updated and

supplemented by activities, available information, contacts, and surveys and “barometers” of the general public’s opinions on the serious questions in the field of violence against women. In addition to general and expert information on the campaign and issues of violence, the website also contains a database of crises help-lines, clinics and possibilities for providing services and accommodations for abused women, children and victims of domestic violence.

5) Within the framework of the preparation of the campaign, a *competition for the designs of the national posters for the campaign* was called in June 2007 by the Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities of the MoLSAF SR. More than 30 designs of several authors from throughout Slovakia were submitted. These posters were exhibited within the framework of the exhibition “Let’s Stop Domestic Violence against Women” on the premises of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR and which was installed as an accompanying activity of the press conference on the occasion of the launching of the national campaign in Slovakia. Two of these competition works are also presented within the framework of the exhibition of national posters of all member states of the European Council in Strasbourg in the Hall of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

6) The posters of the Council of Europe with the call “*It starts with screams and must never end in silence*” were presented in the form of outdoor advertisement media in February 2008 in the Slovak on 150 billboards located throughout Slovakia. At the same time, the posters were presented in the form of city-lights in Kaufland shops across Slovakia and smaller posters on buses and trams in regional towns and other selected towns in Slovakia.

7) Within the framework of the media coverage of the campaign, 168 broadcasts of the radio *spots* of the campaign were aired on Slovak Radio and other spots were included in the broadcasting of other national and regional radio stations. 3 televisions contractually joined the national campaign, which broadcast 62 television information spots. The film of director Nina Kusturica with the title *The Solutions* was also aired. The experts discussed the issues of violence against women within the framework of several programmes and provided relevant information. The information on these media activities were continuously supplemented and publicized within the framework of the campaign at the campaign website www.zastavmenasilie.sk.

8) *Information fliers and booklets for various target groups and cooperating professions* were prepared within the framework of the campaign. The authors of the booklets and fliers are experts from non-governmental organizations, which have experience with the issues of violence against women.

9) *The National Round of the 10th Year of the Human Rights Olympiad* within the framework of a separate theme regarding the issues of the prevention and intolerance of domestic violence against women was evaluated in March 2008.

b)

The National Action Plan for Women (see also Part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter a) is the main programme document of the Government of the SR for the improvement of the status of women in the Slovak Republic for the past 10 years. It was approved through Slovak Republic Government Resolution No. 650/1997. The IV World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) and its final materials: the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action constituted the incentive for its design.

The equality of women and men in all areas of life constitute the priority of the National Action Plan for Women in the SR. The document defines the strategic steps and goals which should be implemented by the Government with the active participation of non-governmental organizations. This refers to about 8 areas and each area contains further elaborated measures for their resolution. The following priorities were established:

- to implement in practice the legal status of women in the family, work and society that is anchored in the legal system
- to create space for the personal choice of development, life strategies in the family, work and society
- to create conditions for the elimination of economic disadvantages that could lead to the material need of women
- to form public opinion towards respect for the equality of women and men (in the school education system and through the mass media)
- to create conditions for the protection and empowerment of women's health
- to create conditions for the elimination of violence against women
- to create conditions for the development of the personality and employment of women with smaller developmental opportunities
- to support the activities of organizations oriented on the support and development of women on the national and international levels.

The fulfilment of the National Action Plan for Women in the SR was annually evaluated. The fact that the ministries had to deal with women's issues, fulfil the assigned tasks and at the same time monitor the fulfilment of the established priorities was a positive outcome of the above mentioned document.

B.

c)

The lack of the political will for solutions of the issues of gender equality by the previous governments constituted one of the main obstacles in promoting the issues related to gender equality in Slovakia.

We include the following examples of barriers in the field of gender equality from the following critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action:

The Participation of Women and Men in Decision-making

Despite the fact that suitable anti-discrimination legislation exists in the Slovak Republic, it does not determine the obligation for the proportional representation of men and women in proposing candidates for the list of candidates for elections as a certain form of temporary supportive measure. In order to solve this situation, in 2001, the Ministry of Interior of the SR and the MoLSAF SR elaborated the Bill which contained the provision that "every third candidate should be of the opposite gender". No success was achieved in putting this Bill through. A similar attempt took place in 2003, again unsuccessfully. The political representation did not respect the fact that the majority of the Slovak general public was convinced of the disadvantaging of women in politics and that is why it was opened to the practical measures for increasing the representation of women in politics. The representation of women in parliament was considered as insufficient by 58% of the citizens and the representation of women in government was considered as insufficient by 59%. (*Ženy a muži v politike/Women and Men in Politics*, 9/2003, the International Centre for the Study of the Family). The introduction of quotas as special temporary measures is presently unreal in Slovakia. However, in the future the activities for achieving equal representation of women in public authorities and in the decision-making functions in the SR remains at the centre of interest of the institutional mechanisms for the equality of opportunities and for non-governmental organizations active in the field of the support of women and equality of opportunities for women and men.

Gender Segregation in Education and in the Labour Market

In Slovakia we can designate the issues of gender segregation in education which arises in gender segregation in the labour market as the call within the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform. In the field of education and further education and re-qualification, relatively strong gender stereotypes persist in Slovakia. The education level of women in Slovakia is approximately the same as that of men (also in tertiary education) however it is gender segregated; women prevail in the humanities. In their documents, the competent institutions plan to intensify the introduction of measures that would increase the interest of women in those professions which are so far considered as masculine and which would eliminate the disproportions in these areas. However, the results to date are not sufficiently obvious. One of the main barriers preventing the fulfilment of the established goal is the continuing stereotypical perception of the role of men and women in society. Despite the fact that boys and girls are educated commonly, the delivered upbringing contents are not the same.

Gender segregation in the field of education is transferred to the labour market. Women have the highest representation in the following groups of occupations:

- lower administrative workers (clerks);
- operation workers in services and trade;
- technical, healthcare, pedagogical workers and workers in related sectors.

Men have the highest representation in the groups of occupations:

- trade and qualified workers in related sectors;
- machine and equipment operators;
- legislators, senior executives and managers.

Gender Wage Differences

The ratio of women and men in the labour market is relatively even (in 2007 women constituted 44% of the overall number of employed, 52% of unemployed) but the gender segregation is especially manifested in the level of wages. Despite the presence of suitable legislation, equality in the remuneration of women and men has not been achieved in Slovakia. The wage differences between men and women in the Slovak Republic persist and are even growing:

Gender Wage Difference (gross wage per hour, the wage of men is considered as the base)

	1 st quarter of 2006	1 st quarter of 2007	1 st quarter of 2008
Wage difference (average)	24.2 %	23.9 %	27.6 %

Source: TREXIMA

Only several sectors exist in which women have higher wages than men. They include the design industry, hairdressing and journalism. Middle aged women are the lowest earners. Women with tertiary education in Slovakia earn only 65% of the salary of their male colleagues. Due to the lower wages of women, their pensions are also lower than the pensions of men.

Violence against Women

One of the problems of the implementation of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2005 – 2008 was its approval without special financial coverage. The institutions bound by the fulfilment fulfilled the tasks of the plan within the framework of their own ministerial budgets. This form of financial coverage did not create the conditions for the consistent fulfilment of all tasks of the plan. Due to the world economic crisis, it is impossible to require special financial coverage for implementing the proposed tasks even in the continuing Action Plan for the Period 2009 –

2012 and even if they which will be implemented through the non-governmental organizations. And so the financing of individual tasks continues to depend especially on the budgets of the responsible ministries and other subjects. However, the fact that new activities will also be financed through financial allocations from the European Social Fund, with a planned budget of approximately SKK 82 million, is a benefit in this respect.

C.

In the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action we present the following best practice examples regarding gender equality:

Participation of Women in Decision-making

Non-governmental organizations carried out the largest number of activities in increasing of number of women in decision-making positions in the SR (for example, the MATRA project in the period of 2001 – 2004 “The Support of the Participation of Women in Public and Political Life of the SR”). The platforms were created within the framework of the projects, especially before the elections in 2002 for the purpose of creating alliances of political parties in the interest of the idea of establishing their own internal rules for increasing the number of women on the lists of candidates of the political parties and training women interested in working in political parties.

Elimination of Gender Stereotypes in Education

In the interest of the gradual elimination of gender stereotypes in the field of education, there is a plan to intensify the introduction of measures that would increase the interest of women in new technologies and educate women in those professions which are so far considered as masculine. This would eliminate gender segregation in education and subsequently segregation in employment. That is why attention to the education of teachers in the field of gender policies has been launched and will be intensified. The subject “gender studies” has been established at several universities.

Labour Market

As mentioned above, the effort to eliminate gender stereotypes in education in Slovakia aims at the elimination of the feminization and masculinizing of some sectors of the labour market. In addition to such horizontal segregation of the labour market, the Ministry of Labour, Social affairs and Family also deals with vertical gender segregation. Although we can not use quotas to change the dominance and hierarchy image and to eliminate social barriers, which deprive women of access to top level management in politics and the economy, we use several other strategies, such as mentoring and coaching, the creation of networks, the reconciliation of family and work life and the introduction of the social responsibility of enterprises.

Education programmes for employment services workers in the field of equality of opportunities and the elimination of discrimination phenomena and gender stereotypes and labour market monitoring programmes designed to apply the principle of the equality of opportunities with special regard to access to employment and professional education and employment training began within the framework of the European Social Fund in order to achieve progress in the elimination of gender segregation in the labour market and overcome existing barriers. The implementing of various projects financed and implemented by pertinent institutes and organizations, such as the *Individualized Employment Services Programme*, which is a part of the *National Employment Action Plan* also contribute to the resolution of the above mentioned problems. Re-qualification courses, additional training, motivation courses, counselling-psychological courses to remove psychological barriers in

searching and finding jobs and many other activities are carried out by various subjects within the framework of practical activities in creating the conditions which facilitate labour market entry for women.

The Government of the SR adopted the *Employment Policy Concept for the Period 2002 – 2003* and its goals were elaborated in the National Employment Plan and National Employment Action Plan for the Period 2002 – 2003. Both national plans were elaborated in compliance with the “*Employment Policies Guidelines*” adopted by the Council of the European Union where four basic pillars were established in the field of employment policy. One of these pillars (IV) is directly aimed at the strengthening of the policies of the equality of opportunities in the field of access to employment. In this pillar, many measures are elaborated, the goal of which is to help women find jobs in the labour market. *The National Employment Action Plan for the Period 2004 – 2006* continues the work of the Action Plan. Its individual chapters were also arranged according to the employment policy guidelines, established and defined by the Council of the European Union; it pays attention to the issues of equality of opportunities and gender equality in the entire profile of all its sections.

In the field of employment, § 14 Section 2 of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and on Alterations and Amendments to Some Acts as amended, regulates the right to access to employment, pursuant to which citizens are entitled to access to employment without any limitations in compliance with the principle of equal treatment in the labour relations and similar legal relations established in the Anti-discrimination Act. In compliance with this principle, discrimination due to marital status or family status, skin colour, language, political or other beliefs, trade union activities, national or social origin, disability, age, property, ancestry or other status are banned.

Reconciliation of Family, Working and Personal Life

The Government of the Slovak Republic pays increased attention to the issues of the reconciliation of working, personal and family life and included these issues among its priorities. In 2006, it approved the strategic document the *Measures for the Reconciliation of Family and Working Life*. The target group of these measures is especially comprised of employed persons with family obligations and responsibility for children under care and dependent members of their closest family. Family obligations limit their possibilities for further education, access to employment, participation in or return to the labour market and professional and career growth; they frequently constitute a barrier to remaining employed. .

In its manifesto, the Government undertook to promote measures to improve the conditions for the life and work of employees and to support the extension of services in the field of preschool and out-of-school facilities, centres for parents and the operations of wide-spectrum multifunctional daily community centres.

The supportive network for employed parents is constituted by the network of out-of-school facilities (school clubs, houses for social services for children, care service stations, children’s clubs, day care sanatoriums for physically and mentally disabled, etc.). The creation of various types of care services is also ensured through self-education or within the framework of the development of business activities in the field of care for children and other dependant members of the family.

Sections of the Labour Code are oriented on the protection of employees who are responsible for their families. An employer may not serve an employee with a termination notice when the employee is pregnant or on maternity leave or parental leave, or in case of an employee who is a single parent of a child less than three years of age. The employer may terminate only employment with this group of employees when the employment organization or its section is dissolved or transferred. Furthermore, an employer may not immediately terminate the employment of a pregnant employee, an employee on maternity leave or

parental leave, a single parent with a child younger three years of age or an employee who takes personal care of a close person with a serious disability. However, an employer may terminate employment by agreement if such employee is lawfully sentenced for a wilful crime or has seriously violated work discipline; except for employees on maternity leave or parental leave (§166 Section 1 of the Labour Code).

In reference to the issues of the adapting of the working time of the employee in relation to the need for care for the family member due to age or health status, the Labour Code enables the possibility of agreeing on working hours for a limited working time. The limited working time need not be distributed to all working days. The employee in limited time employment may not be disadvantaged or limited in comparison to employees employed for an established working time. If a pregnant woman or a woman or man with a child under the age of 15 in permanent care requests limited working time or a different suitable modification of the determined weekly working time, the employer is obliged to fulfil this request, as long as no serious operation reasons would prevent it. This provision also pertains the employee who takes personal cares of a close person, who is predominantly or fully immobile and who does not receive care in a social services facility or institutional care in a healthcare facility. Limited work is not unambiguously positive; women in Slovakia prefer flexible working time to limited working time.

The amendment to the Labour Code contributed to the improved legislative ensuring of the reconciliation of working, personal and family life. The amendment entered into effect on September 1, 2007. It strengthened the flexibility of labour relations and enabled the introduction of tele-work - the performance of work in employment with the use of information technologies, performed outside the operation premises of the employer during the time organized by the employee him/herself. It enables women and men to reconcile their working, personal and family life and provides them with greater autonomy in fulfilling their tasks. The Labour Code also enables part time employment and agreements on flexible working time and other possibilities. The amendment to the Labour Code increased the protection of part-time employees and the chaining of employment and it increased the protection of employees from unreasonable dismissal.

Another measures that enables the reconciliation of the working and family life, to create possibilities for the origin of more flexible services for the care for a child in his/her domestic environment or outside of it and to positively influence the possibilities for the choice of the parent in ensuring the care for a child in his/her early age was implemented through the adoption of Act No. 244/2005 Coll. that changes and amends Act No. 280/2002 Coll. on Parental Allowance as amended, and on the alterations and Amendments to Some Acts, which entered into effect on July 1, 2005. This new legislation broadened the circle of possibilities for ensuring the qualified care for children up to three years of age or up to six years of age and at the same time, preparation for and participation in the labour market was facilitated for parents. It means that due to the above mentioned amendment, working parents who ensure the care for their child by another person and parents who themselves have the child in their personal care may also be beneficiaries of a parental allowance,.

The competition, "*The Employer Who Welcomes the Family*" is an example of best practice. Its aim is to acknowledge and motivate employers to create working conditions which take into consideration the family obligations of their employees. To date, the competition was organized into three categories: family policy, equality of opportunities for women and men and the most trailblazing measure for the family. The employers who enter describe the measures which they have implemented in the field of the work and working time flexibility, measures for the personal development of their employees, measures within the framework of services for families to assist in the care of children or family members, assistance in ensuring the operation of the household, financial allowances to families of

employees and the support of leisure time and recreational activities of the employees. Within the equality of opportunities category, the gender structure of employees, including employees in decision-making positions, was monitored. Great emphasis was laid on the gender non-discriminating remuneration, hiring, gender sensible support of professional and career growth and the qualification of women and men. Presently, the title of the competition was changed to *“The Employer Who Welcomes the Family and Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities”*. The abovementioned categories were cancelled and the range of the competition was extended. Several employers enter this competition every year.

Reduction of Wage Differences between Men and Women

The unsuccessful resolution of the situation in the remuneration of women was also due to the absence of effective control mechanisms. In this respect, the fact that Act No. 125/2006 Coll. on Labour Inspection and the new Labour Code to which § 119 Section 3 on Equality in the Remuneration of Women and Men was incorporated to extend the supervision of the labour inspectorate to the area of the equality of women and men in terms of remuneration can be seen as progress. Within the framework of § 119 a), the requirement of the Committee of Experts to supplement the duty to guarantee equal wage conditions for men and women also in the performance of the work of equal value (comparable work) was incorporated to the Slovak legislation. (see part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter c))

In the interest of decreasing gender wage differences, the number of executive labour inspectors who will also supervise adherence to equality in the remuneration of women and men was strengthened within the framework of reorganizing the activities of the National Labour Inspectorate system.

Violence against Women

To date, no separate Act exists in Slovakia, which would solve the issue violence against women. The issues of violence against women are dealt with by several Acts, such as *the Criminal Act, the Rules of Criminal Procedure, the Act on Administrative Infractions, the Rules of Civil Procedures, the Civil Code, the Act on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Criminal Acts and the Act on Social Services*. (see Part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter c)).

A more systematic approach to dealing with the issues of violence against women was launched in 2004 by the adoption of the *National Strategy for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women and in Families* and in 2005 by the adoption of the continuing National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period of 2005 – 2008, and continues in the presently prepared follow-up document, *the National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the Period 2009 – 2012* (see part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter a/). These documents constitute the necessary framework for the launching and further continuation of the developing of effective procedures in the field of preventing and eliminating violence against women.

The present legislation in the field of violence has recorded significant progress in relation to the protection of victims of violence. In August 2008, the *Act on the Police Department* was amended. It contains provisions that enable police officers to directly banish a perpetrator of violence from his/her common household for two days without a court decision. The *Act on Social Assistance* was also replaced by *the Act on Social Services*, thus enabling the building of a network of special facilities for women facing violence including specialized services (see Part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter c/). However, despite this, we must add that, predominantly due to financial reasons also designated not only to victims of violence but other citizens dependent on various forms of social services, most of the facilities which provide certain forms of assistance do not comply with all of the required norms and standards of a specialized facility for victims of violence.

Area of Health

Based on the Constitution of the SR, the citizens of the SR, regardless of gender, have the same rights to healthcare services of a preventative and therapeutic character. But it still remains an issue in some districts to win the interest of some groups of women for preventative check-ups; in several cases this issue is dealt with in cooperation with NGOs within the framework of their projects.

Pursuant to Act No. 577/2004 *Coll. on the Scope of Healthcare Paid Based on Public Healthcare Insurance and on Payments for Services Related to the Provision of Healthcare as amended*, gynaecological preventative check-ups are fully covered by public healthcare insurance; namely one preventative check-up of the insured person from the age of 18 or from her first pregnancy once a year with a physician with a specialization in the area of gynaecology and obstetrics. In the event of need, women are included in the dispensary and invited for another examination.

The above mentioned Act also regulates healthcare for pregnant women, women in labour and during puerperium. Based on the public healthcare insurance, preventative check-ups are fully covered, namely two preventative check-ups of the pregnant insured person by a dentist and one preventative check-up once a month and one preventative check-up six weeks after labour by a physician with the specialization area of gynaecology and obstetrics.

Within the framework of prenatal care, every pregnant woman is monitored. Women who are drug addicts are actively searched for within the framework of prenatal care. Their cases are consulted on with the Centre for Drug Addiction Treatment and if necessary they are included in the treatment programme based on the physician's recommendations.

Healthcare workers working in primary healthcare and especially in institutes of public healthcare and specialized healthcare facilities for the treatment of drug addictions carry out education activities within the framework of implementing preventative programmes. In the area of primary prevention they carry out education among young people with a special content focus on the risks of drug abuse for girls in terms of their role as mothers. The special themes related to the issues of sexual life, reproductive health and the role of the mother are consulted within the framework of counselling and psychotherapy in the treatment of female patients suffering from drug or alcohol addiction.

Since 1988, the number of abortions and artificial terminations of pregnancies (interruptions) has had a decreasing tendency. In 2003, a total of 14,200 abortions were recorded. This was 1,200 less than in 2002, and in 2007 there were 13,400 abortions. While in 1993, when one interruption fell per one woman of fertile age (15-49 of age) occurred, in 2007, this number was 0.3. The average abortion age has risen. This trend is characterised by the shift of the highest number of abortions from the 25-29 age group to the 30-34 age group. Single women and women without children and married women with two children constitute the largest groups that terminate pregnancy by abortion.

Based on statistical data, the use of the modern contraceptive methods by women of fertile age (15 - 49 years old) has grown. In 1999 it was only 21.1% but by 2006 this share grew approximately to 25% (The goal is to reach 40%). In the course of the last 15 years, there has been fast growth in the number of users of the hormonal contraceptives. Every physician – gynaecologist should instruct his/her patient when starting health documentation on the methods of planned parenthood, including contraceptives, the selection of which is done individually according to age and based on the questionnaire, which will determine and select a suitable type of hormonal contraception. To ensure that contraception is available to all women from the age of 15 with the agreement of the parents, based on the recommendation of the gynaecologist (i.e., based on a medical prescription) it is paid for.

When comparing age categories, it has been proven that the reproductive behaviour of younger women is more responsible – they rely more on contraception than on abortion.

The Slovak Republic continues to rank among the countries with lowest incidence of the HIV and AIDS infections. From 1985 to December 31, 2007, a total of 224 cases of HIV infection among citizens of the SR were diagnosed, 180 of which were men and 44 were women. Of these cases, AIDS developed in 50 persons (41 men, 9 women).

Part Three: Institutional Development

a)

► **The Coordination Committee for Women's Issues** was established in 1996 as the consultative, coordination and initiative body of the Slovak Republic Government for issues related to the status and interests of women in all areas of life. Members include representatives of the Government, the Slovak Republic National Council, non-governmental women's organizations, trade unions, local self-government authorities, selected central state administration authorities, research institutes, churches and experts studying the issues of women, families, children and youth. The committee operated until the end of the term of office of the Government in 1998. In the new term of office, the committee was transformed to an inter-ministerial expert consultative body of the minister of labour, social affairs and family of the SR without any changes in the title and the chair - the minister of labour, social affairs and family of the SR. The Coordination Committee for Women's Issues in the SR had limited or minimal possibilities for decision-making and that is why the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR decided that the question of the status of the body ensuring the women's issues would be dealt with in another way and not by strengthening the Coordination Committee. The Coordination Committee for Women's Issues ceased its activities in 2002 and its agenda was taken over by the **Division for Equality of Opportunities** within the framework of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Thus the issues of gender equality should have been dealt with in the framework of the permanent structure of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with higher competences as a consultative body, such as the Coordination Committee for the Women's Issues was.

► In 1999, the Division of the Equality of Opportunities was established at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR (MoLSAF SR), the competences of which were extended in 2003 to the area of anti-discrimination. As of then, the division began to work under the title **the Division of the Equality of Opportunities and Anti-discrimination**. In 2005, this division changed its scope of activities within the framework of the transformation of the structure of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR pursuant to its new title **the Division of Gender and Family Policy**, which in 2006 was again changed to the **Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities**. The financing of the tasks is implemented within the framework of the ministry budget and is determined by the established budget. The Competences of the Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities derive from its status within the framework and organizational rules of the MoLSAF SR. The content of the scope of activities of this Division arise from the tasks of the MoLSAF SR mentioned in the Manifesto of the Government of the SR and the conceptual plans of the MoLSAF SR. This information is publicly available on the websites of the SR and the MoLSAF SR. (www.vlada.gov.sk a www.employment.gov.sk).

In cooperation with other divisions, the Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities fulfils the tasks of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR in the conceptual and legislative areas. It designs state policies in the field of gender equality and the equality of opportunities, processes strategic and conceptual materials related to gender equality and equality of opportunities, coordinates the treatment of the status of women and men and the implementation of the state policy of gender equality in the sector and profile competence and the nation-wide system of the equality of opportunities for women and men and evaluates and updates governmental documents in the field of gender equality and equality of opportunities for women and men. In the field of international cooperation it cooperates in implementing European Union law and international conventions in the field of the equality of opportunities; it coordinates international projects in the field of gender equality and equality of opportunities and fulfils tasks related to the membership of the Slovak Republic in the EU and other international organizations. In the field of the social-economic analyses, it analyzes the effects of individual measures in the social area and in the employment area from the gender aspect. The Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities occasionally cooperates with non-governmental organizations in the design and evaluation of the basic documents of the Slovak Republic Government related to gender equality. Non-governmental organizations participated largely in initiating and preparing legislative changes in the field of violence against women. The initiative cooperation in form of the working group was manifested in preparing the document *“The National Strategy for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women and in Families”*. Non-governmental organizations have the opportunity to send their reactions to every new Act, governmental document and other materials in writing or electronically based on the regulation for preparing and submitting materials for the session of the Slovak Republic Government and the Legislative Rules of the Government of the SR within the framework of the comment procedure.

The status of the Division was strengthened in 2007; it has an increased number of employees and is directly subordinated to the Minister.

Since January 1, 2007, **the Equality of Opportunities Supportive Centre** has operates at the Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities. Its main purpose is the coordination and implementation of the Horizontal Priority Equality of Opportunities, monitoring, and evaluation on the level of operation programmes, methodological guidance, counselling and consulting and the ensuring of publicity and informing regarding the use of structural assistance in relation to the Horizontal Priority Equality of Opportunities.

► Furthermore, **the Council of the Slovak Republic Government for Gender Equality**, established from January 1, 2008, operates on the level of the Slovak Republic Government. The Council is the consultative, coordination, counselling, expert and initiative body of the Slovak Republic Government for the issues of gender equality and the application of the principle of gender equality. The Council operates in compliance with the constitutional status and tasks of the Government. In its activities it is guided by the Constitution of the SR, generally binding legal regulations, Government resolutions, the Manifesto of the Government of the SR, the statute and its own resolutions and conclusions. The Council prepares measures aimed at ensuring the coordination of the activities of the ministries and other central state administration authorities in the field of gender equality and ensures the synergy effect of these activities in terms of subject matter and time. The Council prepares measures aimed at the coordination of the activities connected with the national implementation of international legal undertakings of the Slovak Republic arising from the membership of the SR in the UN, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the International Labour Organization. The Council makes proposals to the Slovak Republic

Government on the adoption of adequate measures on the national level with the goal of fulfilling tasks arising from international undertakings. The Council submits institutes incentives, proposals and recommendations in the field of gender equality to the Government, ministries, other central state administration authorities, self-governing regions, organizations.

The role of the secretariat of the Council is fulfilled by the Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities within the framework of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR.

The Council has two working committees:

The Executive Committee is the body of the Council which ensures the preparation of documents for the sessions of the Government and implements the conclusions of the Council in the individual sectors of the ministries and the organizations. It is composed of experts who are civil servants appointed by ministries and central state administration authorities, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities, the National Labour Inspectorate, and the Institute for the Research of Labour and Family. Each organization may appoint one member. The Executive Committee submits standpoints regarding generally binding legal regulations, reports, information and other materials taking into consideration the gender aspect and recommends measures regarding them to the Council. The Executive Committee prepares expert materials for the sessions of the Council, provides counselling services and fulfils other tasks delegated by the Council. The Executive Committee creates its own ad hoc working groups of specialists in certain expert areas, which are composed of experts from ministries, academic, research, professional and other institutes and organizations.

The Consultative Committee (see Part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter j)

► **The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights** as an independent legal entity, fulfils irreplaceable tasks in the field of the human rights and basic freedoms including the rights of children and adherence to the principle of equal treatment. The Anti-discrimination Act established the Centre as the only Slovak institution for equality, i.e., for assessing adherence to the principle of equal treatment pursuant to the Anti-discrimination Act. It deals with the issues of discrimination based on gender in employment relations especially from the aspect of gender equality.

► **The Commission for the Equality of Women and Men at the Confederation of Trade Unions**

This Commission was created within the framework of the Confederation of Trade Unions of the SR. The subject of its activities is the promotion of equality of opportunities between women and men. The Commission exerts efforts aimed at the overall improvement of the status of women and men in the practice of trade unions and the entire society. .

► **Public Protector of Rights / Ombudsman** the independent body authorized to protect citizens in the event that their basic rights and freedoms are infringed upon by illegal and erroneous legal procedures or the inactivity of the authorities of the general government. However the ombudsman does not only carry out activities in the field of the equality of opportunities for women and men, but in the entire complex of the basic human rights and freedoms.

For information regarding other institutional structures that deal with the issues of gender equality in the Slovak Republic, see Part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter f) (Parliamentary grounds: The Slovak Republic National Council Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and the Status of Women; the Commission for the Equality of

Opportunities; the Permanent Commission for Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities at the Slovak Republic National Council Committee for Social Affairs and Housing. *Government:* Deputy Prime Minister for the Knowledge-based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities)

b) In 2007, within the framework of the twining PHARE project “Strengthening the Administrative Capacities in the Area of Gender Mainstreaming in the SR” the focal points for gender equality and gender mainstreaming were created. The focal points operate at all of the ministries and in the individual regions of Slovakia. Their activities were strengthened by the establishment of the Council of the Government for Gender Equality and the representatives of the focal points at individual ministries are members of the Executive Committee of this Council. The support and status of these individual focal points by the the ministries are gradually being created and strengthened, however the effectiveness of their work is still not sufficient.

c) Government reports regarding the fulfilment of national action plans and conceptual documents serve as the monitoring mechanisms evaluating the efficiency of the documents dealing with the issues of gender equality. The issues of gender equality and the effectiveness of their implementing fall under the designated focal points within the framework of the individual ministries.

d) Own indicators prepared for the Slovak context were not elaborated; if necessary the indicators of the European Commission are used in certain areas. The first annual report on the status of gender equality in the SR (on the state as for 2008) will be prepared and submitted to the Government of the SR by March 31 for 2009.

f) On the level of Parliament, two bodies deal with the issues of gender equality: The Slovak Republic National Council Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and the Status of Women; and the Permanent Commission for Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities at the Slovak Republic National Council Committee for Social Affairs and Housing. In 2008, the above mentioned Committee monitored the issues of violence against women and the Government of the SR submitted the report on the fulfilment of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women for the plenary session of the National Council of the SR. The role of the Commission and the Council could be strengthened by increasing the knowledge potential of Parliament Deputies regarding the issues of gender equality.

The system of cooperation with non-governmental organizations was described in Part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter j). The activities of NGOs in relation to the implementing of the recommendations of the Committee for the Elimination of the Discrimination of Women, as they are incorporated in the Final Findings of the Committee for the Elimination of the Discrimination of Women following the discussion of the Second, Third and Fourth Periodical Reports to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, will be implemented in compliance with the system of cooperation, as mentioned above. There are no plans for the creation of other supportive or consultative mechanisms.

Part Four: Remaining challenges and actions to address them

As far as other calls in the area of gender equality in Slovakia are concerned, until the end of March 2009 there is the plan to submit the **National Gender Equality Strategy for the Period 2009 – 2013** to the Government of the SR.

The National Gender Equality Strategy defines on the most universal level the equality of women and men as a profile, horizontal and universal social and political priority. The Strategy constitutes the type of material, which until now was absent from the aspect of the universal grasp of the issues of gender equality and will constitute the basic starting point for decision-making on all levels. The Strategy does not formulate partial solutions but basic circles and plans for achieving the equality of women and men. It works with terms, definitions and prequalifications, which only on the level of the action plans will design the actual implementation measures.

The Strategy constitutes the fulfilment of the undertakings of the Slovak Republic Government, which in its Manifesto for the Period 2006 – 2010 undertook that in promoting its policy it would support the equality of women and men as a significant factor for the development of democracy and the implementation of human rights in fulfilment of the undertakings arising from the Lisbon Strategy and other international conventions (see the Manifesto of the Government, part 1 of the Questionnaire, letter c).

The Strategy is closely connected to the context of the international documents of the UN, the Council of Europe and the European Union, not to mention the Final Standpoint of the Committee for the Elimination of the Discrimination of Women following the discussion of the Second, Third and Fourth Periodical Reports to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the Committee for the Elimination of the Women's Discrimination.

The national legislative, strategic, analytical and presentation documents of public, policy in the field of applying the equality of women and men constituted the foundation for the elaboration of this document. For the purposes of the elaboration of the Strategy, space for the discussion was created regarding the current calls at the conference organized by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR in November 2008. This material was elaborated in cooperation with the Executive Committee and the Consultative Committee of the Slovak Republic Government Council for Gender Equality and constituted the subject of sessions of both committees (see Part 3 of the Questionnaire, letter a). Based on the abovementioned, we can state that male and female experts from all levels of the state administration, self-government, non-governmental organizations and the academic university institutes and organizations working in the field of gender equality were involved in the preparation of this draft.

The Strategy represents the public interest and political will to apply gender mainstreaming in public policies on all levels and in all phases of their implementation. The goal of the Strategy is to incorporate the gender aspect in the design and implementation of policies on all levels and stages of management.

The purpose of the Strategy will be to adequately react in the nation-wide processes for the upcoming 5 years with the goal of ensuring the implementation of the equality of women and men *de jure* and *de facto*. Under the current conditions of the Slovak Republic, the strategic and comprehensive support, increased attention and strengthening of the decisive subjects is required in the following priority areas:

- economic and social areas and the area of healthcare,
- the family and state family policy,
- public and political life, participation and representation,
- research, education, the school system, media and culture.