



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Office for Equal Opportunities



**RESPONSES OF
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
TO THE**

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

March 2009

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

In Slovenia, the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Consideration of our Initial, Second, Third and Fourth Report have been major legal and policy frameworks for designing, implementing and assessing the effects of measures and strategies to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and for formulating and delivering policies to empower women and promote *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality.

Over the past five years considerable progress has been made with regard to the development and implementation of gender equality legislation and policies, as well as monitoring of their implementation and evaluation of the results achieved.

I. Overview of achievements in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

1. The following are the major overall achievements generated through the approaches and policies used to accelerate and effectively implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, other commitments made and obligations undertaken by Slovenia as a State Party to all major human rights treaties, in particular to the CEDAW Convention.

1.1. National gender equality policy

The *Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*, adopted in 2002, mandated the Government to prepare the national programme to promote gender equality and upon its adoption by the Parliament to determine activities required for its implementation in the biennial periodical action plans. Furthermore, the Act also introduced systematic monitoring of the implementation of the national programme by mandating the Government to regularly submit two-year report on the measures and activities carried out under the national programme over the past biennial period to the National Assembly.

The coordination mechanism, which consists of the government Office for equal opportunities, coordinators for equal opportunities for women and men appointed in all ministries, and coordinators for equal opportunities for women and men appointed by the self-governing local communities, has been strengthened through various activities carried out by the Office for equal opportunities.

In 2005 the *2005 – 2013 National programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* was adopted by the National Assembly. The national programme is a strategic document, which sets clear objectives in all relevant policy areas and with regard to critical aspects of life of women and men in our society and defines actions and measures, as well as key policy-makers responsible for the implementation of the measures referred to in the programme.

In 2006 the Government adopted **the first periodic action plan for a period 2006-2007**. It set the priority tasks, activities and timeframe to achieve the objectives of the national programme and it detailed the ways and means which the relevant ministries and government offices shall use for achieving expected results. The financial resources needed to carry out the tasks and activities were also defined. The **report on the implementation of the National Programme for the period 2006-2007** was approved by the Government and considered by the National Assembly in 2008. The report confirmed that the activities carried out have contributed to progress towards *de facto* gender equality, in particular with regard to employment of women, gender pay gap, role of men in family life and women in political decision-making. Improvement has also been observed in institutional capacity for using gender mainstreaming in government departments at national and local level, and in enhanced cooperation and coordination of work towards gender equality among actors at national and local levels.

The **second periodic plan for the next biannual period (2008-2009)** was formulated with due consideration of the results achieved and insights developed through the assessment of the progress and shortcomings of the previous plan and of the objectives and goals of the national programme.

In addition to gender equality action plans, **specific action plans**, such as the three action plans for the fight against trafficking in human beings, which have been adopted by the Government since 2005, contributed to the achievement of the overall gender equality objectives, namely through a significant increase in law enforcement and victim assistance efforts.

1.2. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

In 2004, Slovenia ratified the **Optional Protocol to the Convention**, and in 2006, the amendment of the article 20 of the Convention was adopted.

In order to formalize the practice and to unify the process of timely government reporting under the human rights treaties and to ensure implementation of actions and measures recommended by the respective treaty bodies upon consideration of national reports, the Government adopted the *Guidelines for the preparation of national reports and implementation of similar activities with regard to international human rights treaties* to which Slovenia is a party. The Guidelines made the participation of NGOs in the preparation of the reports, the dissemination of reports and translation and dissemination of concluding observations a standard to be applied in our national reporting process. They also require the preparation of proposal for decisions conducive to timely and efficient implementation of recommendations contained in the concluding observations and submission of the proposed decisions to the Government for approval.

The **fourth periodic report on the implementation of the obligations under the Convention** was considered in October 2008. The Convention itself and the previous concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women were duly taken into account in the formulation of the government gender equality action plans, through which the *National programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* has been carried out. Several actions have also been taken to initiate activities and

develop measures which are needed to implement the last recommendations of the CEDAW committee.

1.3. Main legislative achievements

As reported in the Slovenian national report in the context of the global Beijing + 10 review the specific gender equality law, the *Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act*, was adopted in 2002, and the general antidiscrimination law, the *Implementation of the Principle of Equal Treatment Act*, was adopted in 2004. They complement each other and together provide a legal basis for recognizing and prohibiting intersecting forms of discrimination linked with other characteristics that intersect women (such as nationality, race or ethnicity, religious or other beliefs, disability, age, sexual orientation or other factors) and their compounded negative effects on the women concerned. Ban on discrimination on the grounds of sex, which apply both, to public and private sector, and obligations to ensure equality of women and men in various fields of society are also provided for in the relevant sectorial legislation, such as employment relations act, legislation regulating education and elections.

In June 2004, the National Assembly adopted the *Constitutional Act amending Article 43 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia* by which it added to the provision on the universal and equal right to vote a new paragraph conferring the power to the legislator to determine in a law measures for encouraging the equal opportunities of women and men in standing for election to state authorities and local community authorities.

As reported in the context of the Beijing + 10 review, even before the said amendment to the Constitution, an amendment to the *Election of Slovenian Members to the European Parliament Act* was adopted, introducing the requirement for at least 40-percent representation of either sex in any list of candidates.

To comply with the constitutional obligations, so called quotas targeting the gender composition of the electoral lists of political parties or voters were introduced in the *Local Elections Act* (in July 2005) and in the following year also in the *National Assembly Elections Act*.

Implementation of the *Principle of Equal Treatment Act* contributed to progress in including the principle of prohibition of discrimination in relevant legislation (e.g. *Religious Freedom Act*, *Roma Community Act*, *Act Amending Employment Relationship Act* and *Insurance Act*).

The process of adoption of **special measures** to enhance the realisation of *de facto* gender equality as provided for in the *Equal Opportunities for Women and men Act* seemed not to be favourable to such initiatives to be taken by authorities, employers, educational institutions, political parties, civil society organisations or other entities, even where they might have been identified as a potential tool for tackling persistent gender inequalities. Therefore, in 2007, when the *Principle of Equal Treatment Act* was amended, the provisions on procedures required for the adoption of special measures, laid down in the *Equal Opportunities for Women and men Act*, were revoked and new regulations introduced, which might be more conducive to using special measures for enhancing the realisation of *de facto* gender equality. While entities entitled to use special measures must specify the purpose and grounds for

adopting special measures, they are no longer required to prepare an action plan and submit it to the Office for Equal Opportunities for approval.

One of the most important legislative achievements is certainly the adoption of the *Domestic Violence Prevention Act* in February 2008.

Furthermore, with the entering into force of the **new Penal Code** (1 November 2008) family violence is defined as the separate criminal offence for which an offender may be sentenced with imprisonment of up to five years.

Increased efforts were also employed to strengthen the national responses to trafficking in human beings, including through the introduction of criminal offence of trafficking and exploitation through prostitution in the Penal Code in 2004. In December 2005, the *Witness Protection Act* was adopted, regulating the conditions and proceedings for the protection of witnesses and other persons, threatened by reason of their cooperation in the criminal procedure. By entering into force, it also provides an effective and appropriate witness protection of women victims of trafficking in human beings and other threatened persons, provided the conditions for the protection of threatened persons as defined under the Act are met.

In 2005 the *Registration of a Same Sex Partnership Act* was adopted. Although it does not regulate relations and rights of the same-sex partners to an equal extent as provided for by the Marriage and Family Relations Act in respect to heterosexual partners, it has paved the way for better protection of several rights of women leaving the same-sex partnerships.

2. Main gender equality policy-making achievements and challenges

With the adoption of the *2005 – 2013 National programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* gender equality policy gained a new momentum - the increased understanding and adequate acknowledgment that the achievement of substantive gender equality and the empowerment of women is a joint and common effort of society as a whole, and that all branches of the State (executive, legislative and judicial branches) and all levels of government should assume their respective responsibilities for implementation of the gender equality policy.

The more systematic evaluation of the situation, formulation and adoption of comprehensive range of legal and programmatic measures and variety of actions carried out, as well as building on them continuously, in light of their effectiveness and new or emerging issues, resulted in the following:

- Better use of the gender equality strategy in which specific gender equality actions are more systematically complemented with mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policy areas, supported by continuous capacity building for more systematic work towards gender equality at different levels of government and administration and more effective use of gender mainstreaming (mainly through development of guidelines on methods, instruments and tools for gender analysis/gender impact assessment and training on gender equality and the use of these methods, instruments and tools);
- The use of special measures to overcome the effects of structural and historic inequalities between women and men and to accelerate the achievement of substantive gender equality, in particular in political life;

- Increased awareness and knowledge of prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex or any other personal ground and of availability of independent equality body (Advocate of the Equality Principle) with competence to receive and analyse complaints from individuals and groups on alleged violations of the equal treatment and equality principle and to advise individual women and men and employers in need of adequate information on gender equality and other relevant legal norms;
- Increased allocation of financial and human resources and enhanced capacities of the gender equality government body, i. e. Office for Equal Opportunities;
- Improved collection and analysis of relevant sex-disaggregated statistics and other data, that enable effectiveness of measures to be monitored over time, that facilitate continuing evaluation, and allow for revision of existing measures and identification of any new ones that may be appropriate and necessary in the particular circumstances, as well as increased support for relevant studies and research projects;
- Enhanced development and implementations of initiatives and actions to encourage equal sharing of family tasks and responsibilities between women and men, including through actions focusing specifically to working fathers to avail themselves of paternity leave and parental leave (which is equally accessible to both parents) and actions focusing on employers to introduce and develop family-friendly management practices at work;
- More comprehensive responses to all forms and manifestations of gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings, including through better protection of victims, provision of assistance and support to victims and a wide range of information and awareness-raising activities, training and education of the relevant actors, as well as establishment of better cooperation and coordination channels between all relevant actors, including NGOs, which have an invaluable role in ending violence against women and girls.

Progress achieved in the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly which were among national priority areas is reported under Part Two of this report.

Part two: Progress in implementation of the selected critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly

1. Education and training of women

Act on equal opportunities for women and men introduced an obligation for the ministries responsible for education and labour as well as other bodies and persons with competencies in the field of education and vocational training to ensure equal treatment for women and men, especially with the preparation, adoption and implementation of public programmes of education or vocational training, to the attestation of schoolbooks and teaching aids and to the introduction of organisational innovations and the modification of pedagogical and andragogical methods. The act lays down also a general obligation to integrate education on matters of gender equality into the system of education and vocational training.

In June 2004, the National Assembly adopted the *Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia until 2010*. One of the aims of the Resolution is to provide access to information and counselling on learning possibilities and to integrate gender equality principle into all relevant activities carried out in order to reach the main aims. Special attention to equal opportunities of women and men, girls and boys in education is also devoted in the 2004 document on the development strategy in Slovenia.

The *2005 – 2013 National programme for equal opportunities for women and men* sets the following two objectives for the elimination of gender inequalities and overcoming stereotypical gender social roles in education:

- Reducing inequalities and overcoming gender stereotypes by systematic use of gender mainstreaming in the development, implementation and monitoring of the curricula, teaching and learning materials and in the programmes of initial training, re-training and in-service training programmes;
- Reducing gender based segregation in educational programmes and studies at the secondary education and higher education levels and in different school and out-of-school activities.

On average, women and girls have overall higher educational attainment than men. In Slovenia, the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years, which in 2007 attained at least upper secondary school, was the highest in the European Union (94.3 %). Furthermore, women represent as much as 64 % of tertiary graduates, and 57.5% of those who obtained the master degree, while their share among doctors of science is almost 46 per cent, thus representing an increase of 5 percentage points since 2004.

However, data show that the choice of study fields continues to be greatly segmented with a low presence of women in traditionally male dominated fields. Similarly as reported in the Slovenian national report in the context of the global Beijing + 10 review, women continue to predominate in teacher training and education science study programmes (85 %), in health and welfare (83 %), arts and humanities (74 %), social, business and administration sciences and law (67 %). However, their presence continues to be low in science, mathematics and computing (39 %) and in particular in technical studies, engineering and construction (25 %).

The choice of study fields is an important factor of the persistent gender segregation in occupation and in economic sectors.

Stereotyped views of roles of women and men and their impact on educational choices were addressed through projects implemented under the first periodic plan for the implementation of the *National programme for equal opportunities for women and men*. They consisted of in-service training of teachers and other relevant professionals in education, including through projects on strengthening their competencies for the promotion of gender equality.

To promote equal opportunities of women and men with regard to science the *Commission for the Promotion of Women in Science* was established as an expert body under the administrative structures of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The Commission main aims are to promote women's participation in science, research and decision-making with regard to science on equal footing with men and to raise public awareness on the importance of engagement of women in science and thus their participation in national development.

In the period 2006-2007 the programme on encouraging women to enter scientific fields through a promotion of a female scientist as a profession in sectors crucial for economic development was prepared and started to be implemented.

In 2006 the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology launched the beginning of the UNESCO- L'Oreal scholarship for women in science, which aims to promote women, who are in the final stage of preparation of their PhD thesis in the field of natural sciences.

2. Women and health

In Slovenia, there has been a long tradition of active health care for the entire population, which is above all evident from preventive programmes, drawn up and implemented for various groups of the population. It is common for all preventive healthcare activities that they are equally accessible to all Slovenian citizens, given they are fully financed from compulsory health insurance.

Reproductive health care in the Republic of Slovenia is organized at various levels: primary, secondary and tertiary level. Women are seen by gynaecology specialists already on the level of primary healthcare activities. At community health care centre, an operating team, which consists of a gynaecologist, senior midwife and medical nurse or health care technician, provides a full range of reproductive health services for women. Accessibility of women to gynaecologists at the primary level improved also their access to contraceptives in all age groups.

According to the most recent research on sexual behaviour of Slovenian upper secondary school pupils the use of oral contraceptives has been increasing, while the incidence of unprotected sexual intercourse dropped significantly. Abortions among young girls have been in decrease as well. Important contribution to the efforts of state institutions has been made by NGOs, who have been playing important role in providing quality information about forming healthy viewpoints with regard to interpersonal relations and promoting informed and responsible decision-making on sexuality of young population.

In 2003 the preventive programme to improve early detection of cervical cancer, named *National Cervical Screening Programme ZORA* became operational. Preliminary data on the prevalence of cervical cancer for years 2006 and 2007 indicate that the number of women with confirmed cervical cancer is decreasing.

Mammography screening for breast cancer has been carried out for some years throughout Slovenia. In 2007 a new centralized system for the implementation of the *Preventive programme for breast cancer screening* has been approved by the Ministry of Health.

Special activities designed to improve health of Roma women have also been implemented, mostly in one of the regions where the highest number of Roma live. One of important measures aimed to benefit the Roma community in Slovenia is adoption of the *Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2016*. One of its objectives is improving the social position and guaranteeing social inclusion of children and youth from Roma community in the wider society, including through appropriate health care.

3. Violence against women

To address more sufficiently all forms of violence against women various measures and actions have been taken in the reported period. In 2006 the new *Protection of Public Order Act* came into force. In the new act any violent and reckless action against family members is classified as a misdemeanour. In 2007 5,188 such misdemeanours were reported. In the same year, the police also dealt with 2,851 criminal offences committed against 1,974 women.

As indicated in the part one, in the **new Penal Code** entered into force in November 2008, family violence is defined as the separate criminal offence for which an offender may be sentenced with imprisonment of up to five years. Such sentence apply to anyone in a family environment or long-term cohabitant arrangement who mistreats another, performs battery or inflicts pain upon another, or subjects another to humiliation, attempts to drive another away from their common home under threat of direct attack on life or limb, stalks another or forces another to work or not work, or attempts any other violent restriction of another's equal rights, effectively pushing another into a subordinate position.

The adoption of the *Domestic Violence Prevention Act* is an evidence of intensified efforts of the Slovenian Government to end all forms and manifestations of gender-based violence, including domestic violence. The *Domestic Violence Prevention Act* is the first act in Slovenia to clearly define the different forms of domestic violence. The Act defines domestic violence as use of any physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence, or omission of due care for a family member referred to in the provisions of the act, regardless of age or sex. The act also defines the role, responsibilities, network and involvement of different state bodies and NGOs in addressing domestic violence, and lists measures required to protect victims of domestic violence. The Act also introduced the duty to report cases of violence and obliged all relevant state authorities to keep records on domestic violence. The act prescribes that regional social services centres shall keep databases on domestic violence and violence against women and children. It foresees regular professional training of all those who are in the course of their work involved in any kind of interventions with victims of domestic violence. Measures to ensure the victim's safety form an important part of the Act, as well. Prohibitions which courts may impose under the Act resemble a restraining order under the

Police Act, which a police officer may impose *ex officio*. Victims are also enabled to propose to the court an adequate prohibition, either because the restraining order has not yet been imposed by the police, or because the imposed restraining order by the police has already expired. Existing regulations of the *Code of Obligations* allow victims of domestic violence to request compensation of property or non-property damages.

The police and other organizations trained 40 facilitators to introduce knowledge required for identification, prevention and investigation of domestic violence. In 2006 they began holding training courses for all police officers at police departments. By the end of 2007, all police officers had completed the introductory programme. The emphasis of the programmes is on understanding the issues of domestic violence, recognition of the problem and adequate provision of support and assistance to victims of violence.

The amendments to laws and adoption of the *Domestic Violence Prevention Act* were generated *inter alia* through the enhanced cooperation and dialogue between government, legislative powers, other state actors and civil society, namely NGOs working in this area and supported by information and awareness raising activities, which have contributed to the development of shared understanding.

In recent years the following activities, financed in whole or partly by the ministries and/or the Office for Equal Opportunities, were carried out:

- a campaign poster of the Council of Europe's campaign against violence against women, including domestic violence, was published in our national language;
- the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs co-financed programmes involving safe houses, victims of violence shelters and maternity shelters, and other prevention of violence programmes, through which more than 300 beds are provided (the Resolution on the National Security Programme 2006-2010 foresees an expansion of the network in all regions to around 350 beds for victims of violence);
- several projects relating to violence against women were co-funded by the Office for Equal Opportunities, including those tackling violence against physically disabled women, advocacy, awareness-raising, work with the media and info line for victims);
- a round table aimed to put in place a strategy of unified, harmonised and coordinated work of institutions, when they are involved in any kind of intervention with victims of violence or perpetrators;
- information and awareness-raising materials of various types and nature were published and disseminated with a focus to specific targeted groups or a society as a whole.

This year the first national research programme on violence against women will be carried as a joint project of the Office for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A research "Analysis of the system of prevention, processing and the type and extent of violence in the private sphere and partnership relations" is designed to provide a thorough analysis of the system of the efficiency of the operations or organisations involved in the field of violence in the private sphere, provide a proposal for improving the system of operation of these organisations, generate data on frequency of violence in the private sphere and an analysis of the needs of victims of such violence.

As mandated under the *Domestic Violence Prevention Act* the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs prepared draft ***Resolution on National Programme on Prevention of Domestic***

Violence 2009-2014. NGOs and other relevant civil society actors have been invited to provide their comments. The draft Resolution is currently in the government procedure for consideration and approval and will be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration and adoption shortly.

4. Women and the economy

Equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market and in economic life, economic independence and the opportunity to exercise power in economic decision-making structures are vital to the achievement of gender equality. Although in Slovenia there is traditionally a high participation of women in the labour market and Slovenian women and men believe that economic independence is one of the most important values, there are still considerable differences between women and men in this respect.

4.1 Employment and unemployment of women

Over the past few years, female employment has increased regularly, although at a rate that was lower than for men. The female employment rate is higher than the average employment rate of women in the EU, and it stands at 62.6 %. It rose by 7 percentage points between 2004 and 2008. Among both, women and men, the employment rate is highest in the age group from 25 – 49 years. The employment rate of women in the age group 55 to 64 years of age is still relatively low (22.2 % in 2007).

Both, women and men predominantly work full-time (only 11.3% of women work part time). Women approximately spend the same average hours at work per week. Parenthood does not have a strong impact in the labour market, neither for women nor for men. Slovenia is the only EU member state where the employment rate of women (aged 25 to 49 years) with children under age of 12 is higher than the rate of women without children.

This high and full-time employment of women has been supported also by comprehensive parental leave arrangements and provision of affordable and quality care services and facilities.

Women work more often than men on fixed-term contracts. Like elsewhere, in Slovenia the share of fixed-term employed persons is particularly high among young persons. Among employees aged from 15 to 24 years, the share of women employed on fixed-term contracts is 76.8%, compared to 62.5 % men.

One of the consequences of women being concentrated in less valued jobs and positions than men is gender pay gap. Although the gender pay gap is among the lowest in Europe (the EU average is 17.4 %) and has been steadily narrowing over the past years, in 2007 women still earned 8.3% less than men.

Women's high level of education is not directly reflected in the position they hold in the labour market. Women are mainly working in female dominated sectors and professions and remain in lower job categories with less access to senior positions. According to European Commission Database on Women and men in decision making (collected between May and October 2008) only 20 % of women were members of the highest decision making bodies of

the 15 largest publicly quoted companies. Horizontal and vertical segregation has remained almost unchanged over the last few years.

Over the past few years the average registered unemployment rates for women and men have been decreasing. However, due to recent unfavourable economic situation the number of registered unemployed persons started to grow. In December 2008 the registered unemployment rate was 7.0 % (for men it was 6.1 % and for women 8.1 %) and was still 4.3 p.p. lower than in 2004.

The unemployment structure of women with regard to age groups also changed in comparison with 2002 or 2004. While in 2002 and 2004 the highest registered unemployment was observed among women in the 25 – 30 age group, in 2007 the highest levels of unemployment were among women in the 50 to 59 and 40 to 49 age groups. Furthermore, unemployment structure according to education level also changed. In 2004 the highest level of unemployment was registered among women with post-secondary or university education, while in 2007 the highest unemployment was recorded among women with vocational and secondary educational attainments.

In order to reduce unemployment among women, strategic documents, such as the *Active Employment Policy Measures Programme* and the *Human Resources Development Programme*, were adopted. Majority of women included in employment measures were involved in programmes under the Vocational orientation and employment assistance (71.1 % in 2007). Women accounted for 63.2 % of all unemployed persons involved in training and educational programmes for the unemployed. The percentage of women among those involved in programmes to promote self-employment, new hiring of long-term unemployed persons receiving social assistance, and new hiring of elderly persons also increased.

Activities aimed at rising the level of employment of long-term unemployed women and raising the level of self-employment of women and entrepreneurship among women were also carried out.

In 2006 the women's entrepreneurship programme was carried out by the Ministry of the Economy in cooperation with the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments. 1,600 participated in the programme.

In order to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation, in 2006 and 2007 the Ministry of Education and Sport co-financed a project called "Systemic opportunities for the development of career orientations in gymnasiums". The project objective was to research the various factors that impact career choices and the selection of courses of study by gymnasium students, and to design a model of systemic organisation of effective career orientations in scientific and technical academic disciplines. Many other activities were carried out in order to eradicate differences between women's and men's careers and to reduce gender-based segregation, including the upgrading of curricula and the modernization of the approach to teaching scientific subjects and activities promoting scientific and technical careers.

4.2. Reconciliation of professional and family/private life

Unequal sharing of responsibilities for the rearing of children and caring for family and household work remains one of the most persistent obstacles for women entering and remaining in the labour market. The existing policy instruments, such as the above mentioned parental leave arrangements, provision of affordable (subsidised) and quality childcare, care

for the elderly and continuous actions addressing the role of men and employers in achieving better balance between work and family and private life, have not proved to be enough. The key role men are required to play in this process of sharing of a burden of unpaid work with women has been at a centre of our national concerns.

Over the last few years various policies and initiatives addressing the role of men and employers in achieving better balance between work and family and private life were developed and implemented. Activities in support of active fatherhood and the eradication of stereotyped gender role included research and analysis of the so called phenomenon of “new fatherhood”, awareness-raising and providing information by using various communication strategies.

The research “Prospects of new fatherhood in Slovenia: the influence of paternity leave on active fatherhood” served as a basis for developing the awareness-raising campaign. The research proved that parents’ abilities to reconcile their professional and family or private life are limited also due to unfavourable employers’ attitudes towards needs for sharing paid and unpaid work.

As a response to cultural attitudes and values, which inhibit the equal sharing of responsibilities, the Office for Equal Opportunities developed and implemented an awareness raising campaign, focused on men, actual and future fathers and their partners, as well as on employers.

In 2005, a TV spot “Daddy, be active!” was broadcasted on the National TV during certain sport events and before the main evening news. As a follow up to this action five thematic radio shows and a radio spot were prepared and broadcasted on 13 radio stations, regionally distributed all over Slovenia. Next step was the educational documentary film on active fatherhood, which was presented on the National TV several times. Furthermore, an activity was developed with the aim to include fathers themselves in its implementation. In 2006, sport and socialising events were organised under so called “Daddies Run” project. Nearly 700 fathers run with their children in 6 cities in Slovenia. The next was a so called Fathers-on-Paternity-Leave-Counter, with which the Office for Equal Opportunities was tracking for one year how many fathers, employed at the 14 ministries, were on paternity and parental leave throughout 2006.

The activities carried out contributed to higher awareness among men about the importance of active fatherhood, which is confirmed by an increased number of men taking paternity leave (73.8 % in 2006).

4.3. Sexual harassment at work

In 2007 the Office for Equal Opportunities in cooperation with 13 trade unions carried out a research project entitled “Sexual and other harassment at work”. The results of the research indicated that nearly every third woman is a victim of verbal sexual harassment, and every sixth a victim of physical and non-verbal sexual harassment. The research also revealed that nearly half of the women experiencing sexual harassment do not tell anyone about their experience.

Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia mandated to verify the Employment Relationships Act provision on the protection of the dignity of employees at work and prohibition of sexual harassment reported on very low number of offences established.

To respond to such a weak enforcement of employers' obligation to guarantee a working environment free of sexual harassment in 2007 the Act Amending the Employment Relationships Act introduced new elements for protection against sexual harassment at work. The new provision of the amended Act precisely defines sexual and other harassment as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct or behaviour of a sexual nature, which has the effect or purpose of violating the dignity of a person, in particular where this creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The Act bounds employers to provide such a working environment in which none of the employees is subjected to sexual or other harassment or workplace bullying and to take appropriate steps to protect workers in this regard. Employers are materially liable to employees if they fail to provide protection against sexual and other harassment or workplace bullying.

The Office for Equal Opportunities has developed a tool for employers to monitor the frequency of harassment and to adequately respond when it occurs. Guidelines for victims of harassment, witnesses and employers are available on the Office's website. They encourage employers to adopt statements of policy against sexual harassment and to appoint counsellors to whom employees can turn when needed.

In 2007 four cases of sexual harassment at work were dealt with at labour courts.

5. Women in power and decision-making

So far the balanced participation of women and men in decision making has only been achieved with regard to the representation of women and men elected as members of the European Parliament in 2004. As reported in the context of the Beijing + 10 review 43 per cent of MEPs from Slovenia are women. In the previous report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of its follow up process it was indicated that 2004 amendments to the Constitution imposed a positive obligation on legislator for introducing special measures for increasing the participation of women as candidates for all elections.

To comply with the constitutional obligation by which measures for the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in standing as candidates in elections to state bodies and bodies of local communities shall be introduced into the electoral legislation, so called quotas targeting the gender composition of the electoral lists of political parties or voters were introduced in the *Local Elections Act* (in July 2005) and in the following year also in the *National Assembly Elections Act*.

The *Local Elections Act* provides that a political party or voters who run in their constituency more than one candidate for election to a municipal council must draw up their candidate lists in such a way as to ensure that either sex accounts for at least 40 percent of all candidates listed and that the candidates in the first half of the list alternate by sex. Municipal electoral commissions shall reject any list not complying with the above provisions. The acts provides that in the transitional period prior to 2014, when 40-percent representation of women and men respectively becomes compulsory, it is required that at least 20-percent share of women and men respectively are listed in the candidate lists for the first local election to be held in

2006, whereas for the election in 2010 the requirement is for 30-percent share of women and men respectively. During this transitional period, a partial derogation is permitted as regards the principle of candidates alternating by sex in the upper half of the list to the effect that it is sufficient that they are arranged so that at least each third candidate is of the other sex. In 2006 local elections the share of women on candidate list increased by 11.6 percentage points (from previous 21.2 to 32.8 p.p.). On most candidate lists the representation of women exceeded 30 per cent, which happened in elections held in past only in very limited exceptional cases. The increased share of female candidates also contributed to an increase of elected female municipality councillors from 13.1 % in 2002 to 21.5% in 2006. However, the percentage of female mayors decreased for 3 per cent.

The *Act amending National Assembly Elections Act* was adopted in 2005. The provision regulating the representation of women and men on the candidate lists requires that on the list containing at least four candidates either sex must be represented by at least 35 % of the actual total number of candidates on the list. In case of lists containing only three candidates, at least one representative of either sex must be included. The Act further requires that the elections committee refuse candidate lists which do not comply with the Act. Like the act on local elections, the new Act on parliamentary elections contains a transitional provision stating that the first elections into the National Assembly to be carried out after the enactment of the new law may have lower gender quotas, namely a minimum of 25 % representation of sexes.

The introduction of quotas fell short with the 2008 National Assembly elections. While the share of women standing for elections was 35 %, representing an increase of 11 % in comparison to the previous elections, only 12 women were elected (13,3 %) and the increase of 1 % in comparison to the elections in 2004 does not really deviate from the trend of participation of women in legislative power since 1992.

A number of obstacles make it difficult for women to enter political and public decision-making. Factors linked to the organisation of social life, including traditional division of work between women and men, leave little space for the participation of women. Our past and ongoing activities aimed to promote better balancing between work and private/family life, including through more active role of fathers in caring for children and the role of employers in this endeavours have had already some positive impact. This is without doubt reflected in increasing trend of the participation of women in leadership positions in other areas, namely in public institutions and economic domain. After the last elections, there are 5 female ministers in the Government (28 per cent), including a minister of interior and a minister of defence.

One of the important stimulating factors is the role of the state as an employer and as a political representative of the people. Decisions taken by the Slovenian government are setting examples for other employers in the society. In 2004 the Government adopted the *Decree regulating the criteria for implementation of the principle of balanced participation of women and men*. The Decree established a procedure for ensuring balanced representation of women and men in the composition of working bodies established by the Government and in appointing and nominating Government representatives in public institutions, agencies and funds.. Following the definition of gender balanced representation in the *Equal opportunities for women and men Act* the Decree provides that at least 40 per cent representation of women and men respectively must be ensured. In certain specified circumstances the Decree allows, on objectively justified grounds, exemptions to this principle. Such exemption is permitted in cases where membership to certain government body stems from a particular function or when

persons of particular sex which meet the required professional and other criteria are not available.

Through implementation of the Decree the representation of women in government working bodies has been increasing. In 2008 the average representation of women in such bodies (taskforces, working bodies and government councils) was 41 % in comparison to 36 % in 2004. In public institutions the average share of women among representatives of the government also exceeded the gender balance threshold, as women's representation stood at 49 %. However, the goal of reaching at least 40 per cent representation of women and men has still not been reached in agencies and funds, as there were only 31 % women representing the government in agencies, and 37 % in funds. Derogations from the minimum of 40 % gender quota in the composition of government bodies and in entities governed by public law are most often used in favour of the representation of men particularly in the field of finances, economy, transport, security and defence, whereas their application in the field of labour, family, social affairs and education is mainly used in favour of women. Such practices maintain the predominantly male and female sectors, therefore the Office for Equal Opportunities continues to encourage, by way of constant monitoring and calling on obligation to respect regulations adopted, progress in achieving gender-balanced composition of government bodies and entities governed by public law.

Efforts, which Slovenia has been employing to interfere with the persistent practice in the political decision-making, which remains a male dominated area, have not modified the relationship between women and men and the division of their powers. Over the last 10 years a number of supportive measures and programmes aimed at stimulating a gender balance in political life and public decision-making and civil society and NGOs political actions did not increase women's access to representative bodies.

The share of women elected to the National Assembly, which is the supreme legislative body in Slovenia and comprises 90 deputies elected through general, direct and secret election for a four-year mandate, never exceeded 13.3 %, representation of women in executive power varied from their complete exclusion to three women ministers, which in percentage terms gave them a maximum of 18.7 % of ministerial positions. Slovenia never had a female president or a prime minister. Women are even more underrepresented at local levels. After last local elections in 2002, only 11 municipalities out of 193 are headed by women mayors (5.6 %) and only 13 % of women were elected to municipal councils. In comparison to the results of the previous local elections the share of women mayors and the share of women municipal councillors increased for 2.2 %.

One of the permanent activities of the Office for Equal Opportunities is continuous monitoring of the position of women at all levels of public decision-making, particularly assessment and evaluation of results of elections. In addition to the regular assessment of the participation of women and men in decision-making bodies, both elected and appointed, the Office continues to encourage adequate responses of the political parties and other persons, holding political leadership positions and to leave up with commitments made and the principles enshrined in the gender equality legislation. The Office also maintains, and when necessary due to the nature and aims, strengthens different forms of dialogue with a diversity of social actors, such as women's and human rights organisations, social partners, academic and research institutions and the media.

Part Three: Institutional Development

Information on the institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality is provided in Part One.

Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them

While recognizing that progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women has been achieved in many areas, in particular through legislative achievements, many obstacles and shortcomings to approaching gender equality through policies that transform existing gender division of labour, of power and of responsibilities, still exist or are generated by new social realities. The social and cultural transformation required to achieve substantive gender equality is wide and deep and it cannot be realized by short-term measures.

Although the law is basic to gender equality, it has not always function as the most effective instrument for changing attitudes or behaviour. Gender equality legislation does not yet work successfully, therefore its enforcement and improving access to justice is one of challenges for the future work towards gender equality. This shall include activities to ensure that women and men, as individuals and groups, are adequately informed about their rights under the gender equality legal provisions and are able to effectively promote and claim those rights.

Persistent gender gaps call for continuous elimination of barriers to women's full participation in the labour market and decision making in political, public and economic/financial decision making. Combating well-rooted and newly emerging gender stereotypes, which shape women's and men's roles in society and induce the gender imbalance in paid and unpaid work is also important. These efforts shall consist of concerted measures for improving sharing of private and family responsibilities between women and men, which will continue to target men and employers.

The area of education is a central location for raising awareness among young people and for encouraging boys and girls, women and men to recognise how gender equality can meet their needs for respect and self-realisation and respond to their sense of social justice. Furthermore, education has been of increasing importance for adapting to wide-reaching economic and social change. While in average girls and women in Slovenia now have a higher level of educational attainment than boys and men, subtle patterns of gender inequalities are still present. Educational fields which are gateways to pay, prestige and job advancement are strongly masculine, thus being one of the reasons for the fact that women's higher level of formal education does not pay off to the same degree on the job market. Activities addressing gender segregation in education are therefore of key importance.

Awareness of violence against women as a significant social problem and decisive impediment to the achievement of gender equality has made considerable progress over the past year and it is now recognised also in legislation adopted in Slovenia. Enforcement of legislation and effective judicial procedures and full implementation of the national programme to eliminate domestic violence, which is planned to be adopted shortly, are among priorities in this area.

One of the aspects of gender equality, where progress did not meet the expectations, is equal participation of women and men in political decision making. Special measures introduced into legislation need to be reviewed with regard to their potential for positive change and other complementary and supportive measures are required in order to tackle the significant under representation of women in elected offices.

And last but not least, no policies developed and implemented in any of the substantive areas should affect the promotion of economic independence of women.

Actions to address the above listed main challenges are in general terms described in the Resolution on the National programme for equal opportunities for women and men for the period 2005 – 2013 (the English translation of the national programme is available on the website of the Office for Equal Opportunities: <http://www.uem.gov.si>) They will be developed within the future biennial periodic plans with due consideration of the assessment of results achieved with already existing activities. Many activities, working methods and strategies already used in our national work towards gender equality still need to be put to continued, consistent use. Some of them have been much talked about but yet not fully employed to the extent of potential they carry.