

## Summary

The 2000 National Human Development Report for the Slovak Republic predominantly deals with two issues. First, are the opportunities for human development in Slovakia equal for both women and men? Second, what is the dimension of poverty in Slovakia?

The status of women and men in Slovakia reflects the historical arrangement of gender relationships whose usual stereotype is man as the bread winner for the family, and woman as the mother in the household. Men and women in Slovakia have equal human rights guaranteed. The system of education offers equal opportunities to both men and women. The greatest gender differences manifest themselves in the labor market and in their representation in social and political life. Women in Slovakia prevail in less paid sectors of the economy and earn, on the average, three quarters of what men do. The participation of women on the decision-making areas of the economy and politics is low compared to their proportion in the society. Women also have a significant share of the unpaid household work, and thus become financially dependent on men. Prerequisites for equality of opportunities in society are to make family relationships democratic, raising the tolerance vis-a-vis other forms of lifestyles, and education of the young generation in the spirit of gender equality. The gender dimension in Slovakia is the focus of the second section of the Report.

The term poverty is not defined in the Slovak legislation, though the phenomenon of poverty is present in a variety of forms. About 11 percent of the population lives in material distress that is the mirror of the Slovak poverty. Poverty mostly strikes the long-term unemployed whose exclusion from the labor market often arises from a low level of education. The groups that are at the highest risk of poverty include the elderly, children, incomplete families and families with several children. Due to lower average income and pensions, women are more likely to suffer from poverty than men. The typical features of poverty, including low level of education, high unemployment rates, dependence on social assistance on the part of the state, are most markedly shown in Slovakia in the Roma population whose large part live in misery. The resolution to the problem of poverty requires that stress be laid on the elimination of reasons that result in the emergence and spreading of poverty, as well as a functioning social net for the groups of population threatened by poverty. The most effective prevention of poverty is education that expands the potential of finding a way in the labor market, and – as a rule – represents a prerequisite for higher income. Measures supporting growth of employment and the targeted nature of the social system also positively affect the reduction of the poverty dimension in Slovakia. An analysis of poverty and social exclusion is contained in the third section of this publication.

In its first section, the Report analyzes developments in key areas of Slovakia's life during the preceding year. It points out that political stability and democratic mechanisms in the functioning of political groupings are prerequisites for a long-term improvement in the quality of life. Slovakia gained an improved political image and was invited to join OECD. With the growing strains among the governmental parties, the dynamics of economic reforms has slowed down. The system of education lacks links with the labor market, and the education sector – despite its strategic importance - has to struggle with a prevailing financial and conceptual crisis. Major features of demographic development include the continuing aging of the population and the growing proportions of women in older age categories. A marked reduction in abortion rates is a positive trend. The life expectancy has had small increases for both women and men, with an 8-year difference in life expectancy that favors women.

Section four of the National Report deals with various aspects of measuring human development. Quality of life is obtained from a combination of measurable and abstract values of life that have innumerable forms. The calculations of a human development index and of indices assessing gender equality are based on the most recent available statistical data. The inclusion of new progressive indicators to the calculation of human development characteristics would substantially improve the value of these quality of life parameters.

The final section contains recommendations for improving the conditions of human development in Slovakia, highlighting the strengthening of an equitable society and dealing with poverty. The statistical annex contains time series and up-to-date data from areas that influence the nature of human development in the Slovak Republic.