

Conclusions and Recommendations

Slovakia is a country where people have the opportunity to live a meaningful life. In spite of existing problems and restrictions, a majority of the population has sufficient opportunities for self-development. In general, the health status of the Slovak is considered to be good. People have unrestricted educational opportunities. The standard of living in Slovakia is adequate considering the condition of the economy and its potential. Principles of democracy and freedom are being developed, basic human rights are being respected, and opportunities for the realization of life goals are open to every individual. Slovakia's current development offers expanded opportunities, but not all the barriers that deter human development have been removed. There is room for improvement in many areas of society. For developmental strategy makers, the challenge is to address the problems of the *people*, improve the environment, and create a situation favorable for human development. On the other hand, people are challenged with the task of self-activation. Their responsibility is to develop personal goals that meet their needs, and to utilize the opportunities presented.

This year's National Report views human development through the optics of gender equality. The concept of human development is based on the equality of opportunities of all people, regardless of gender, age, nationality or race. The status of women and men in the family and the society has its roots in both biological differences and in the historical patterns of gender relationships. The stereotyped perception of man as the "breadwinner and protector of the family" and of woman as the "mother and woman in the household" is rooted in history and is not unique to Slovakia. It is a result of the traditional perception of the roles of man and woman that extends beyond all geographical and cultural borders.

In Slovakia, gender disparities most markedly manifest themselves in the lower participation of women in decision-making in politics and in the economy. Lack of participation in these areas is closely related to the higher proportions of women that experience poverty. In the view of a comparable qualification and education level of women, their representation in executive and legislative power bodies is low. For many years, the proportions of women in the cabinet and parliament have been ranging below 15 percent. The weaker status of women in the labor market manifests itself by lower average income due to lower positions and poorly paid occupations. On average, women earn three quarters of what men earn; and, their proportions in leading and managing positions is about 30 percent. It is interesting to note that these figures parallel the averages for countries with a higher level of human development.

What can be done in favor of gender equality?

1. *Education and training in the spirit of gender equality.* It will require gender education to enlighten people's perspective and enable Slovakia to overcome gender stereotypes. The key role in this respect is played not only by the family and the state, but also by teaching institutions and the media. The latter has had a powerful impact and influence upon the formation of, or change in behaviors. Eliminating gender-related prejudices, respecting the opposite gender, and respecting human rights are all hallmarks of a fair society. Gender equality must become a natural component of human existence. Gender equality education should be introduced during the formative years when it has the highest probability of being accepted.
2. *Fair division of paid and unpaid work.* Paid employment and unpaid work at home both have economical value and represent a precondition for a family's survival. Women usually do unpaid work that fosters economic dependence on men. Estimates of the value of unpaid work would support the need for awareness of its importance. If women did not perform the unpaid work, it would have to be completed in a different manner, such as through public or private services. Efforts should result in a more equitable division of labor and a revision of the social system that only accounts for paid work. Representative surveys on the utilization

- of time would contribute toward a better understanding of the distribution of paid and unpaid work by gender.
3. *Support of a fair society, not only along the gender axis.* Several societal norms and structures, though not explicitly, disfavor certain groups of population, such as women, children, the handicapped, homosexuals, etc. Elimination of any form of discrimination (both hidden and open) against these groups will strengthen the principles of justice and equality of opportunities.
 4. *Analysis of reasons for gender pay inequality and feminization of poverty.* Factors underlying the different levels of remuneration for the work of men and women have not been sufficiently examined and analyzed. A better understanding of this problem will help to reveal the actual extent of wage-related discrimination against women. Activities, such as the monitoring of the "pay equity" day, may be used to bring attention to this disparity of remuneration.¹ Women's lower income and lower old-age pensions increase the probability of their having a higher risk of poverty and associated problems. The feminization of poverty needs to be addressed, and the system of social and pension security reassessed to prevent women from being "disfavored".
 5. *Analysis of affirmative action (so called positive discrimination).* The most frequent method of increasing women's participation is to introduce quota systems, i.e., to set the percentages of women expected to participate in a given area. In many countries, similar approaches are being used to address the problem of women's insufficient participation in political representation, in decision-making, employment, etc. Such measures can bring in positive results, but also can create new sources of problems. The introduction of such measures should therefore be preceded by a detailed analysis of experiences of countries that have chosen similar steps, as well as by a careful simulation of potential impacts.
 6. *Support of various forms of employment.* It is of particular importance for women to have the opportunity to apply for flexible forms of employment. Part-time work and/or other forms of flexible jobs, such as working from home, enable an easier combination of women's responsibilities as both a mother and as an employee. Growing numbers of women attempt to cope by engaging in independent business activities. Surveys indicate that they face many barriers and have less business experience than men. NGOs and teaching institutions may assist in the organization of women's training activities in areas such as management, legislation, loan schemes, marketing methods, etc.
 7. *Support of education.* Better education generally means more opportunities for human development. If there is an equality of opportunity in access to education and information, all investments into this area provide for a higher quality of life and have a positive effect on the gender dimension.
 8. *Elimination of violence against women.* Violence committed against women is not just characterized as having a physical nature. It also includes all forms of violent action against women that causes them sexual or mental harm, forces them to act against their own will, or restricts their freedom. Domestic violence and prostitution represent a special set of problems. Violence against women introduces fears, uncertainty, and a loss of self-confidence into their lives and dramatically alters the conditions of their lives. Fighting this underestimated and frequently hidden ailment requires that it be identified and that preventive education be used to increase community awareness. Prevention must start with the revision of existing civil and penal law that is unsatisfactory and benevolent toward the offender. Of similar importance is the cooperation of responsible bodies of the Police, investigators, courts, and international networks for fighting trade in women and girls. There must be an effective system available for victims to exercise their rights via the courts. Legal services could be facilitated by consulting services or centers for victims. Correct sex education at schools is also of equal importance.

¹ The pay equity day can be calculated as follows: The number of working days expressing the percentage difference between average wages of men and women is subtracted from the total number of working days in a year. For 2000, the pay equity day was March 30.

9. *Acceptance of the right for a choice of lifestyle.* Society has prejudices against life styles deemed different from the "habitual" (traditional) life styles. For example, unmarried and childless women, incomplete families, men working in "female" jobs and vice versa, etc. face a negative image. Preconditions for a fair society includes an individual's right to chose his/her lifestyle, to make decisions concerning his/her family status or remaining unmarried/single, to exercise choice in regard to reproduction, and to choose jobs, interests and related activities. All of these choices (except for those threatening human development) are a precondition for a fair society.

For many years, Slovakia has been ranked among the most developed countries in terms of human development. In recent years, even a slight improvement in Slovakia's status could be observed. However, there is a discrepancy between the positive assessment by international institutions and the public's assessment of the situation. Traditionally, people in Slovakia perceive society's situation, as well as that in their households, from a dysthymic perspective. This is particularly evident in financial matters. A negative assessment prevails regardless of whether the actual situation worsens or improves. In addition to "habitual" pessimism, there is also a variety of societal phenomena that constrain human development and contribute to the negative feelings. Poverty, whose forms and consequences are dealt with this year's national report, is one of such phenomena.

Poverty refers to a condition where resources of an individual are so restricted that the individual is excluded from a minimally accepted standard of life. The term poverty does not yet exist in the Slovakia's official dictionary, but it is referred to by the synonymous term "material distress". In 1999, 10.8 percent of Slovakia's population was reported to be in material distress. That was the highest recorded number of "the poor" since 1993. Currently, the most significant indicators of poverty are exclusion from the labor market and low level of education. The population group at the highest risk is the unemployed (in particular the long-term unemployed) who made up as much as 91 percent of all social assistance benefits recipients in material distress during 1999. Other groups traditionally at risk of poverty includes the elderly, children, incomplete families, and families with multiple children. Women, due to their lower average income, are more prone to be at risk of poverty. All the aforementioned characteristics, particularly a low level of education and exclusion from the labor market, affect the Roma population. A significant portion of the Roma population suffers from poverty or even misery. In the most backward Roma colonies, the *culture of poverty* arises. If people live in poverty over long periods of time, social exclusion and marginalization occur. Poverty can be identified from the outside based on statistical figures, but there is also a subjective feeling of this condition, or the threat of poverty, that is a serious hindrance to human development.

Poverty is present all over the world, even in the most developed countries. Fighting poverty is a global challenge that has no panacea that would help to eliminate it. The comprehensive nature of the problem requires the effort of the whole society. Fighting poverty involves more than simply dealing with the existing or visible poverty. Society needs to eliminate the reasons that cause the emergence and spreading of poverty. Consequently, the tools that may be used to deal with poverty may, with a certain simplification, be divided into two groups:

1. Those dealing with the reasons of poverty.
2. Those that are used to help the poor.

In Slovakia, the following measures may be included in the first group, the reasons of poverty:

1. *Dealing with the unemployment.* Although there are no official statistics concerning the poor, it is obvious that the unemployed are highly represented among the poor or poverty threatened population segments. During recent years, unemployment has become a weakness of the Slovak economy and has been viewed by the public as society's most pressing problem. The main barrier to the development of small and medium enterprises (that represent the engine of the economy and create most job opportunities) has been a

weak business environment. An motivating business environment can be created by measures that promote transparent rules, such as equality of opportunities, simplified conditions for establishing and operating companies, enforcement of law, and amendments to tax and levy-related obligations. Another motivator would arise from measures that would increase availability of credits. Making the bankruptcy law more efficient may help strengthen the business environment and reduce high unemployment rates. Financial resources available from the privatization of natural monopolies and banking institutions can temporarily help boost employment (e.g., in the form of public works). Increase in employment is also connected with a higher mobility, functioning infrastructure and housing market. Inflow of foreign capital may create new job opportunities, but also eliminate non-competitive operations. Supporting mechanisms favorable for housing development and encouraging foreign investor participation may have a positive impact on solving unemployment and poverty problems.

2. *Support of education.* Education is perhaps the most efficient tool to achieve a higher quality of life. Educated persons have more opportunities to make their way in the labor market and to receive more remuneration for their work. Measures that improve access to education and information have a positive effect on prevention of poverty. Investments in education produce huge rates of return that are often underestimated. Budgetary priorities will have to be reassessed; and, possibilities of multi-source financing and management of school facilities will have to be analyzed. The measures must account for demographic development as well as for worldwide education trends. If the financial demands are not successfully overcome, the biggest challenge facing the educational system will be to provide for the growth of the educational level without reducing the quality of the system, despite limited funds. Rationalization of the network of primary and secondary schools will be important. Slovakia's system of education not only suffers from a shortage of funds, but also from gaps in the conceptual legislative and methodological areas, such as finalization on the founder's function of teaching institutions, replacement of outdated teaching aids, a stronger link between facilities for apprentices and business sector and associations, a more flexible system of linkage and recognition of various forms of tertiary studies, and extension of possibilities for additional and life-long education. The missing link between education and the labor market explains why many school graduates are not finding jobs or must find jobs outside their qualified fields. A system will have to be initiated for enabling schools to respond more flexibly to the changing needs of the labor market (changes in curricula, contents and forms of training, assessment, etc.).
3. *Improved accessibility of information sources and new media (Internet).* While this requirement is closely connected with the preceding proposal, it deserves special attention because of the growing importance of media information in everyday life. Society has changed from an industrial to an information society. This change causes a shift in the "nature" of poverty, which is nowadays linked to insufficient levels of education and information, resulting in a difficult position in the labor market. Information media, such as the Internet, is expected to play a key role in the realization of individual and societal needs. Introducing the Internet into backwards regions of some countries has helped to reduce poverty of the local population (e.g., in the backwards Eskimo colonies in Canada). The Internet may replace textbooks in schools, facilitate contacts with various authorities, facilitate job seeking (exchange of job opportunities), create job opportunities, and markedly reduce the costs of communication and traveling. Despite the decreasing cost and the growing accessibility of information technologies, access to the Internet for a majority of the population is limited to workplaces and public institutions (schools, libraries, e-cafes), being used mostly by the young and the middle-aged population. Support to widening public access to the Internet and other information technologies should be a priority (in classrooms, public and academic libraries, as well as for use by official authorities in municipal and city councils, labor offices, social departments, tax authorities, etc.). EU supports such programs and the non-governmental sector plays a key role in this respect. A competitive environment in information and computer technologies and in telecommunications will help to reduce consumers' costs.

4. *Support to the family.* Generally, it holds that favorable interpersonal relations help prevent poverty and other negative societal phenomena. If the family is based on a strong foundation, it is substantially less "prone" to poverty when compared to families with disturbed relationships. Domestic and international statistical reports suggest that incomplete families with children, as well as individuals from disturbed environments, are most frequently at risk of poverty. These are also the people that make up high percentages of the homeless. While children are most affected by poverty, little attention is paid to their situation. A deeper socio-economic analysis is needed for a better understanding of the causes of such problems. A series of measures may help toward the support of sound family relationships, such as a system of specifically allocated family allowances, parenting classes, sex education, reform of the benefits system, housing support, etc. The financial and mental "stability" of parents helps to protect children from poverty. Although the dual-spouse family is the most significant way of life in Slovakia, the degree of tolerance vis-à-vis different family arrangements and alternate forms of coexistence should be increased.
5. *Elimination of discrimination.* An individual has equal opportunities for development only in a society that respects human rights and is non-discriminatory. It is important that the equality (fairness) of the system act on both poles, i.e., that the rules of the social system enable individuals living in poverty to escape this condition and vice versa, that they motivate other people to eliminate behaviors that lead to poverty. It is necessary to prevent practices that condemn individuals to remain poor based on external features.
6. *Roma minority issues.* It is evident that all the factors determining poverty in Slovakia culminate most markedly in the Roma minority. The status of a significant portion of the Roma population bears all the typical features of "Slovak" poverty, including high unemployment rates, long-term unemployment, opportunities only in the secondary labor market, a dependence on social support, insufficient education, and some forms of discrimination. Poverty features that are commonly found in third world countries complicate the situation, including unsatisfactory conditions of housing, insufficient hygiene, poor health conditions, low life expectancy, illiteracy, etc. A number of prejudices and lack of knowledge throughout society has resulted in stigmatizing the "Roma issue". This viewpoint has prevented the resolution of the uneasy Roma situation. From the perspective of the Roma community, the life of the Roma is both diversified and different from the life of the majority population and there is no uniform strategy that can be efficiently adopted. Solutions to Roma issues would require targeted approaches, a thorough knowledge of the actual conditions, and a definition of the different groups of Roma population and their problems (e.g., by the level of poverty and territorial distribution). Based on such analysis, decisions can be made on specific steps. One alternative may be to focus on group two measures (helping the poor) for the most backward Roma localities, and to pursue elimination of reasons for poverty in more developed and prospective areas. In the first case, the point is to provide a relief from the existing poverty rather than to preserve the existing status (a parallel to assistance in third world countries). With respect to the most backwards colonies, measures will have to be taken to provide support for the most basic needs of life – more dignified and safer housing, food assistance, basic health care, and prevention of epidemics. In the case of more developed areas with a higher degree of development, coping with the bad social situation can be oriented toward specific measures, in particular in the field of education and training (e.g., re-introduction of the zero grades of primary schools that have proven useful, support to gifted children), employment (active labor market policy, works of public benefit, etc.), social area (motivating schemes of the social system), support of the start-up of business activities, etc. Another measure that has proven to be effective in the more backwards regions of other countries is the use of small loans and savings deposits in so-called rural banks that are administered by the local population. The core idea is to set up mechanisms that will enable the Roma to get out of the culture of poverty by their own initiative with (temporary) support on the part of the society, and will motivate them to remain out of poverty. From the viewpoint of "breaking through" the culture of poverty, emphasis needs to be placed on programs for the young generation. This will require an open-minded approach on the part of the older generation.

If the measures to assist the Roma are to be a success, both the Roma and the majority population have to accept them. It will be important to involve the Roma themselves in the decision making process and in the implementation of the measures. It has to be recognized that dealing with the complex situation of the Roma goes beyond the scope of Slovakia alone and support from a whole community of countries will be necessary.

The following recommendations can be included in the group of measures to relieve or to support the existing poverty:

7. *Targeted and motivating system of social assistance.* The stress put on a motivating system of assistance can be looked at in two different ways. The first way looks at people who are realistically dependent on the social assistance of state (such as the handicapped, the elderly), and ensure they have dignified (appropriate) conditions of life and a feeling that they represent an important part of the society. The second way looks at recipients of social assistance benefits to ensure they have motivation to actively deal with their bad situation (e.g., the unemployed). This second approach seeks to establish a good control of who receives social assistance, particularly in unemployment assistance, and to provide for an improvement in the targeted nature of the social system. Poverty in Slovakia will have to be defined and identified, including a poverty line (e.g., as defined by the Council of Europe), before the social system can address this problem. The principal pillars of the social network (life and subsistence minimum, minimum wages, pensions) must be based on a realistic potential of the economy. At the same time, it should prevent them from becoming a tool of populism of political groupings. A functioning system of child allowances, housing allowances, and soft loan schemes for low-income households, all belong in this group of measures.
8. *Community programs for children and young people from poor and poverty-threatened families.* Support programs for children and young people from a socially disadvantaged environment are an important form of assistance. Despite a shortage of public resources, the local population, business entities, schools etc. need to enhance their involvement in the organization of out-of-school activities for children (teams, camps, artistic or sports groups, etc.). A tax incentive is one method of gaining their involvement. Specialized assistance is possible with reduced prices at school canteens, travel grants, free-of-charge medical checks, cheaper textbooks, support of gifted children through scholarships, and student loans. An important role is played by the non-governmental sector, not only to direct financial assistance, but also to identify and support new strategies for reducing children's poverty.
9. *Social rescue nets for groups most suffering from poverty.* The target of this group of measures are abandoned children, elderly and infirm individuals, lonely persons and persons with handicaps, refugees, and the homeless. For these marginalized groups, the governmental (state) sector working with the private (non-governmental) sector has to set up a rescue net that would provide at least a minimum level of conditions needed for a dignified life and development. Most measures are charitable in nature, and should be oriented toward the building and providing for the operation of a network of homes for children, orphanages, homes for the elderly, dormitories, and advisory centers. Despite some features of poverty, similar to those observed in developing countries, poor people in Slovakia do not die of starvation or live without a shelter over their heads. Homeless people may represent an exception to this, since their typical way of life bears signs of struggle for mere survival. Church unions and charity foundations play an irreplaceable role in mitigating the misery of the homeless by providing them with warm meals, clothing, and emergency shelters. They also encourage and support activities that involve the homeless in building their own dwellings.
10. *"Mobile" social care.* Poverty is more likely to spread in geographically remote localities that are otherwise segregated from the social infrastructure. In Slovakia, such areas include mainly the backward Roma colonies, where an improvement in the conditions of life might be brought about by mobile social assistance in the field of health care, housing, and

employment. Preventive medical checks, vaccination, dental examinations, safety control of electrical and other networks, hygienic inspections, checks of water supplies, and information on job opportunities would alleviate problems indigenous to the locality.

11. *Assistance from foreign and international institutions.* Assistance from foreign foundations, non-for-profit organizations, and international banking institutions (such as the World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) plays an increasing role in dealing with the problems of poverty in Slovakia. European Union support programs financed under structural funds are expected, in the view of the current situation, to be primarily oriented toward regions showing below-average economic parameters. The efficiency of foreign assistance will be evaluated by the success rate of mobilizing local resources to deal with the region's own problems.

We believe that all measures supporting a gender-related equal society and advocating the elimination of poverty will positively affect human development in Slovakia.

Impact of the National Report

The Center for Economic Development coordinated the drafting and the publishing of National Human Development Reports for the Slovak Republic in 1998 and 1999. Independent authors from both the non-governmental and academic sectors prepared these reports. The 1998 National Report analyzed the most pressing social problems in Slovakia and addressed recommendations to eliminate barriers to human development. The publication met with a positive response among professionals as well as the lay public at home and abroad. Professor Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel Prize winner for economy and one of the pioneers of the human development concept, conveyed his regards to this Report as a special honor. The 1999 National Report described how significant social and political changes had affected the quality of life of Slovakia's people. The findings presented in the Report were dealt with extensively by the media and were quoted by top state officials. Both publications instigated a broad-based discussion on developmental problems of the country and supported positive changes.

In contrast to other developmental concepts, the strategy of human development advocates the overall development of a society that will enable people to live longer, healthier, and have fulfilling lives. The National Report (NHDR) supports this objective by analyzing the areas of life that have a crucial impact on the creation and widening of peoples' opportunities. The purpose of the Report is designed to address the potential for an improvement of the status quo. Thus, the analysis of sectors such as economy, education, labor market, health, and social situation or politics focuses mostly on existing shortcomings and problems. The scope of the publication does not allow to cover all aspects of human development or to subject them to a detailed analysis. Therefore, every year UNDP, in cooperation with the team of authors, defines the key topics of the report. These topics are then developed into a detailed analysis and recommendations formulated to address the enactment of specific measures.

Work on the NHDR has also contributed to an expanded scope of statistical surveys. The staff of the Social Statistics Department of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic stated that the essence of statistical surveys was shifted partly toward parameters on the quality of life. This was attributed to a cooperative effort with UNDP. Two problem areas that still need to be addressed are collecting data along the gender axis, and monitoring regional data.

The human development concept has only a short existence in Slovakia. The following steps are expected to contribute to its expansion and to the strengthening of its impact:

- *Incorporation of human development issues into the school curricula.* Training course can be developed at universities, which offer economical or socio-political study programs, in cooperation with UNDP.

- *Organization of brainstorming and workshops.* Meetings of UNDP representatives with the NHDR author team and with experts from various fields would enrich the discussion on Slovakia's developmental strategy, and would give added weight to the recommendations.
- *Drafting of partial reports.* This would use the optics of human development to focus on specific areas, such as crime, labor market, human rights, etc. Such specialized studies would provide a deeper analysis of the issue in question, explore various conceptual approaches, and foster qualified suggestions for solutions. Investigative conclusions could be summarized in the National Report, thus making it a more powerful tool to defend and advance changes for the benefit of human development.
- *Improved monitoring of human development parameters.* A wider range of statistical data and figures is a prerequisite for a high quality analysis of human development. In working with UNDP and the national authorities in the field of statistics, the set of parameters and the possibilities of their coverage will have to be defined.
- *Presentation of the human development issues in the media.* The National Report is an appropriate tool to advance human development concepts in the media. Presentation in regional media could help to increase its efficiency. Also, using the Internet could provide broader coverage of the issues contained in the National Report as well as in other UNDP publications.
- *Public opinion polls on quality of life.* Representative polls may help provide a better understanding of the human development dimension in Slovakia. Periodic surveys could focus on key topics of the NHDRs, thus improving the value of the analysis included in the National Report.
- *Expansion of the NHDR distribution into regions.* The National Report is intended for a broad spectrum of readers. However, its limited circulation does not allow it to be distributed to all regional centers (e.g., to libraries, academic institutions). It would help to broaden the Report's distribution area and increase the audience by publishing articles in the regional press. The distribution of the Report via Internet would help to disseminate the findings to regional municipalities, local councils, libraries, and educational institutions.

Human Development Balance Sheet (1995-2000)

Progress	Setbacks
Demographic Profile	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of reported abortions dropped from 48 (per 100 livebirths) in 1995 to 35 in 1999. Life expectancy at birth grew from 72.4 to 73.0 years during 1995-1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The total fertility rate decreased from 1.52 in 1995 to 1.31 in 1999. The aging index (ratio of post-productive to pre-productive population) grew from 78.8 in 1995 to 90.5 in the year 1999.
Health	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public expenditures on health increased from 11.4% in 1995 to 14.5% of total public expenditure in 1999. New-born mortality decreased from 8 cases per 1000 livebirths in 1995 to 5 cases in 1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AIDS cases have doubled from 0.2 in 1995 to 0.4 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 1999. The number of registered individuals with drug addiction increased from 1,239 in 1995 to 2,199 in 1998.
Education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tertiary full-time enrolment ratio increased from 15.8% in 1995 to 18.8% in 1999. The number of upper secondary graduates (as % of total population in corresponding age) grew from 51.3% in 1995 to 61.6% in 1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total expenditures on education decreased from 5.1% in 1995 to approximately 4.5% of GDP in 1999. Wages in the education sector declined from 86.2% (as a share on the average wage in the economy) in 1995 to 81.8% in 1998.
Economic Indicators	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign trade deficit (as a share on GDP) decreased from 12.2% in 1996 to 5.5% in 1999. Share of private sector in GDP increased from 64.9% in 1995 to 84.3% in 1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Real GDP growth has slowed from 6.7% in 1995 to 1.9% in 1999. Gross foreign debt has doubled from USD 5.8 billion in 1995 to approximately USD 11.9 billion in 1998.
Employment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In July 2000, the project on public works was introduced in cities and municipalities to reduce long-term unemployment (as of August 31,2000, the overall number of unemployed dropped by almost 50,000). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered unemployment rate increased from 12.9% in 1995 to 18.2% in 1999. The unemployment rate of the youth (15-24 age group) increased from 24.8% in 1995 to 32.1% in 1999.
Poverty, Income	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average working time consumption necessary for the satisfaction of selected needs decreased from 208 hours in 1996 to 186 hours in 1998. Real financial income per capita in households increased by 14% during 1995-1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of individuals in material distress grew in the period 1995-1999 from 7.6% to 10.8% of total population. In 1995, the income per capita in the richest 10% of households was 3.6 times higher than it was in the poorest 10% of households, while in 1999 the ratio increased to 4.5.
Politics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In July 2000, Slovakia was invited to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to become its 30th member. In May 2000, the Act on Free Access to Information was adopted by the Slovak parliament. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of employees in the central state administration increased from 5,692 in 1995 to 8,022 in 1999. The Corruption Perception Index (CPI, data for past three years) has worsened from 3.9 in 1998 to 3.7 in 1999.
Crime and Safety	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of registered criminal offences decreased from 21 crimes in 1995 to approximately 17 crimes per 1,000 inhabitants in 1999. Percentage of clarified criminal acts increased from 42.9% to 50.1% during 1995-1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The growing trend of violent crime was reflected in a growth from 10,994 violent crimes in 1995 to 13,531 crimes in 1999. Domestic violence against women grew by 35% during 1995-1997.
Gender Equality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tertiary enrollment ratio for both males and females is increasing, while being slightly higher in females. Participation of women in communal politics increased from 15.2% in 1998 to 17.4% in 1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation of women in the Slovak government decreased from 14.8% in 1995 to 10% at present. In 1995, women earned 78% of men's wages, and even 75% in 1999.

