

## Summary

The submitted National Human Development Report represents the sixth edition of the National Report on Slovakia. Since 1995, the reports have attempted to provide an evaluation of the conditions thought to have key effects upon the quality of life in the country. The cross-sectoral character of the first three editions was gradually replaced by a monothematic focus on selected problems of human development in Slovakia. The reports of the past several years have focused on regional differences, gender equality, and poverty.

The present biannual edition of the Report deals with human health. There are several reasons for selecting this particular topic: health is one of the pillars of the human development concept, it is among crucial life values, and represents a prerequisite for leading a fulfilling life. The importance which people attribute to health is also evident from public opinion surveys; the health sector has been classified by respondents as one of the most burning societal problems. Pronounced growth in dissatisfaction with health care provided by the public health system suggests an intensification of problems in the system.

Health care, however, represents one of many factors that affect the health condition of the population. Although they need not be in direct connection with health care, preventive health measures are not sufficiently encouraged in the Slovak Republic. The health condition of Slovakia's population is not satisfactory; this is partly due to the lifestyles people lead.

The aim of the present Report is to define, based on analysis of major health determinants and their effects, measures that may be expected to contribute to an improved health condition of the population. The team of authors has attempted to present a balanced view of both preventive and therapeutic aspects of health care. The document does not present any specific suggestions for new therapeutic procedures or dietary approaches. The goal of the Report has been to point out the positive aspects and shortcomings identified in the various sectors of human development that affect health; furthermore, the aim was to formulate, based on knowledge thus obtained, a framework of measures leading to gradual improvement of health parameters. The authors of this document want to promote greater public awareness of health issues and factors by means of education and discussion, therefore, leading the public to contemplate the importance of preventive and therapeutic measures. Last but not least, the authors attempt to increase the awareness of individuals and the whole society of their responsibilities for improving public health.

*Chapter One* presents the rationale of the Report's focus. It summarizes the importance of health for human development and outlines the close links existing between health and other dimensions of development. In addition, the chapter presents a concise overview of the main findings of the preceding National Report.

The public considers health as a major life value; however, people tend to rely on the treatment of diseases rather than on preventive health measures by means of promoting healthy behavior. To a great extent, this approach reflects the development of the society over the past decades. The mutual interactions between health and human development are quite unambiguous; healthy individuals tend to have better chances to enjoy full-fledged lives than persons with poor health. Populations are usually healthier in societies with a higher degree of development.

The content of *Chapter Two* partially branches off from the main topics of the Report. The authors deal with the development of Slovakia's society between 2000 and 2002. The Chapter presents short overviews of past developments in politics, economic development, labor market, and education. Important economic and social measures from this period are evaluated from the viewpoint of their influence on the quality of life. The final sections include analyses that turn back to the main topics of the Report. Furthermore, the Chapter presents the traditional discussion about human development indices, with emphasis on public health.

During the past two years, domestic political developments were mainly influenced by the autumn 2002 parliamentary elections, in which the outcome created preconditions for the continuation of stable democratic development. Economic discussions were still dominated by issues of high unemployment rates and their negative impacts on the social situation of the population, by progress achieved in integration processes, which helped make the country more attractive to foreign investors. Concerning the quality of education, no major developments in the education sector were brought about; however, several promising legislative and institutional changes were launched. In the opinion of the professional public, the most appreciated economic and social measures in 2000-2002 include Slovakia's membership to the OECD, adoption of the amendment to the Bankruptcy and Settlement Act and adoption of the Free Access to Information Act. International assessments of human development conditions brought no pronounced changes for Slovakia. Being ranked by the Human Development Index, Slovakia has confirmed its position among countries at a high level of development.

*Chapter Three* is the heart of the document. Using morbidity and mortality parameters, the authors analyzed the health condition of the population. They compared the development and the trends with other countries. An analysis of selected health determinants is presented, with an emphasis on lifestyles and health care. The section dealing with the health care sector includes a detailed analysis on the current critical condition of the entire system. The Chapter elaborates on patient rights issues as clients of health services.

The main features of demographic development include the complete slow-down of natural population growth and the gradual aging of the population. Life expectancy has slightly increased; however, the health condition of mainly the male population remains pronouncedly behind that of most developed countries. The major reasons for this include, apart from historical context, negative trends in key health factors, such as increasing tobacco consumption, unhealthy dietary habits, worsened social situation (in particular concerning the poorly educated portions of the population with problems in the labor market), but also the crisis in the health sector. The Slovak health sector suffers from much needed reform which would address problems of health care accessibility, quality of services, financial sustainability of the system, and rampant corruption. In the current system, the patient seems to play no substantial role.

*Chapter Four* summarizes the main findings and presents a vision of the health "recovery". The Chapter points to the need of a comprehensive approach to health issues. The authors define the principal framework of health sector and non-health sector related measures that may present the potential of gradually improving health in Slovakia. The draft reform is based on the existing strategy in the preparation of which the authors of the present National Report were participating.

Non-health sector related measures include, above all, primary prevention. More targeted preventive measures need improved monitoring of health risk factors. Of similar importance is improved public access to health risks-related information. Preventive health measures are connected to behavioral changes. The priorities include fighting smoking habits and changing dietary habits. Health care reform should strengthen the relationship between what the citizens put into the system in the form of contributions and taxes and what they get out of it in the form of health services. As an important step in the reform movement, an optimal mix of solidarity and personal involvement must be found. Bringing the growing debt in the health sector to a halt will require systemic changes in health care financing and in organizational and institutional accountability. Reform will be oriented towards raising citizen's responsibility for one's own health, which will require a system of targeted assistance to vulnerable groups of the population.

Attached to the Report is the *Statistical Annex*, offering an overview of the basic indicators of human development in the Slovak Republic, ranking of selected economic and social measures taken within 2000-2002, as well as international comparisons of countries by the Human Development Index and Gender-related Development Index.