

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY FOR THE YEARS 2009–2013

Introduction

Gender equality is of fundamental importance for a democratic and socially just society. Gender equality has a human rights dimension that makes it essential for the self-realisation of every individual. Achieving gender equality and full use of human potential without the restrictions of gender roles is the key to social and economic prosperity at the international, European, national and regional levels. The performance of any occupation, position or function should depend primarily on the performer's personal abilities, experience, conditions and education regardless of gender, gender prejudices and gender stereotypes.

The application of the principle of gender equality is giving a new dynamic to the 21st century. Gender inequality is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that must be dealt with through a complex range of political measures. An essential requirement is adequate institutional structures at every level.

Current social processes intended to strengthen gender equality have established the need for a new type of strategic material. The National Strategy for Gender Equality for the years 2009–2013 (hereinafter referred to as “the strategy”) is a document providing the most general definition of the equality of women and men as a cross-sectional, horizontal and universal social and political priority. The strategy belongs to a class of materials that was previously lacking with regard to the general understanding of gender equality, material that could serve as a foundation for decision-making at all levels. The strategy does not formulate specific measures, but the basic targets and goals for the achievement of gender equality. It develops the concepts, definitions and conditions that will be used in the elaboration of specific procedures at the level of action plans. In this sense, the strategy is not an action plan. The strategy neither formulates nor describes specific planned steps, measures or responsibilities.

The strategy is the result of the undertakings given by the government of the Slovak Republic in its Manifesto for 2006–2010 to support equal rights for women and men in its policies as an important factor in the development of democracy and the implementation of human rights in accordance with the Lisbon strategy and international treaties.

The Slovak Republic's approach to gender equality is based on UN instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), Article 1 of which defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was

published in the *Zbierka zákonov* (the official journal for statutes) under no. 62/1987 Zb.¹ The Slovak Republic became a state party to the convention by succession on 1 January 1993.

Its legal strength was amplified by the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 6 October 1999. The Optional Protocol came into force in the Slovak Republic on 17 February 2001 when it was published by the official reporter under no. 343/2001². This allowed individuals to submit complaints relating to cases of discrimination against women. In accordance with Article 7 (5) of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, the Optional Protocol has priority over Slovak law.

Pursuant to the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women after the consideration of the Combined Second, Third and Fourth Periodic Reports of the Slovak Republic on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on 14 July 2008 in New York, the Slovak Republic must submit a report on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations in 2014.

The equality of women and men is one of the basic principles of the law of the European Union and therefore also of the Slovak Republic. It is embedded in specific articles of the Treaty establishing the European Community³ (Amsterdam text). Article 2 states that the one of the tasks of the Community is to promote equality between men and women. Article 3 (2) states that in all its activities the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women. Pursuant to article 13, the Community may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex. Article 137 refers to equality between men and women with regard to the labour market and treatment at work. The principle of equal treatment for men and women in employment issues is also addressed in Article 141. The Treaty of Amsterdam strengthened the competences of the Community with regard to the equality of men and women and set the objective of eliminating inequalities from all areas of civil life and promoting equality between men and women.

A wide range of legislation has been passed on the equal treatment of women and men, especially in the labour market. Legislation has addressed issues such as access to employment, working conditions, termination of employment, the protection of dignity in employment, the prohibition of sexual harassment, the status of men and women in the social security system and so on.

Internationally, a twin-track approach has been adopted for the elimination of inequality and the promotion of gender equality in the above area. One track involves specific policies designed to correct situations caused by inequality between men and women. The other track is gender mainstreaming.

¹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, officially published under no. 62/1987 Zb.

² Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, officially published under no. 341/2001 Z. z.

³ The Treaty establishing the European Community

Gender mainstreaming represents an integrated, legally binding EU approach to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is a legally binding requirements based on article 29 of Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast). An integrated approach to gender equality places gender equality at the centre of all activities from the definition of policies, research, the defence of rights and dialogue, legislation, allocation of resources and the implementation and monitoring of the schedule of programmes and proposals. The two approaches are complementary. There are intended to achieve the same goal: gender equality.

This strategy presents the public interest and the political will to implement gender mainstreaming in public policy at all levels and at all stages of implementation. Placing gender issues at the centre of policy will require changes in the way policy is made and implemented, a new organisational culture and cooperation between participants at all levels. Without relevant support from society, a policy of gender equality would lead only to the creation of a dysfunctional bureaucratic mechanism. Unequal treatment not only contravenes one of the fundamental principles of the European Union but also functions as a limiting factor in economic growth, prosperity and sustainable economic, social and environmental development. The objective of the strategy is to incorporate the question of a policy's significance for men and women into the implementation of the policy at all levels and degrees of management.

The current tasks relating to the issue of gender equality are defined in the Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010⁴, in which the European Commission outlines six priority areas for action on gender equality to 2010: equal economic independence for women and men; reconciliation of private and professional life; equal representation in decision-making; eradication of all forms of gender-based violence; elimination of gender stereotypes; promotion of gender equality in external and development policies.

Basic concepts – theoretical discourse

The following terms are used in this material with the meanings defined below:

Policies for the equality of women and men

are defined as procedures resulting from strategies, action plans and the functioning of institutional mechanisms that are intended to have a real impact on specific policies in economic life, family and personal life, public and political life.

Equal opportunities of women and men

is defined as a part of the concept of equality which means that men and women should have the same starting conditions for participation in the economic, political and social aspects of life in society. Equal opportunities do not mean identical conditions for men and women

⁴ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – *Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men* – COM (2006) 92

because age, sex, disability, education, family obligations and other factors require different conditions to ensure equal opportunities and the exploitation of opportunities.⁵

Gender

this is defined as a socially constructed category that emerges in the context of a certain social, cultural and economic structure. It is communicated and reproduced through a process of social learning. This process assigns a different status to women and men in social and power relations that is not the result of biological or physiological and anatomical differences. Gender is a social construction with associated ascribed or expected social roles and behaviour and also stereotypes, assessments and self-assessments and ideas about what is and is not appropriate and suitable for men and women.⁶

Gender equality

This is defined as fair treatment for women and men, which can mean equal treatment but also treatment that is different but equal in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. All human beings have the right to freely develop their abilities and choose opportunities without being limited by gender roles. The different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are recognised, valued, taken into consideration and supported equally.⁷ Implementation of the principle of equal treatment includes not only formally equal treatment but also different treatment which contributes to the final objective of the implementation of the principle of equal treatment. An equivalent concept is **equality between women and men**, defined as a socio-political context in which policies have a real impact on work, family and personal life, public and political life and research, education, schools and health care. The right to equality of women and men is one of the fundamental legal postulates, one of the key subjective rights and therefore also a fundamental value of democracy. The implementation of such a right requires not only its formal enshrinement in law (in the sense of a need to implement equality *de jure*) but also its effective implementation in all areas of the life of society (i.e. so that *de facto* equality is also achieved). new procedures must be adopted and structural changes must be made to achieve equality between women and men.

Prejudice

This term is derived from the Latin *praejudicium* – pre-judgement. It is defined as a positive or negative bias that is based on a false or excessive generalisation. A negative prejudice may be a bias against a group as a whole or against individuals belonging to a given group.⁸ A prejudice is the result of repeated experience.

Stereotype

This term is derived from the Latin *stereotypia* – repeating the same, a generalisation whose basis in fact cannot be identified. A stereotype is unsupported by facts. The function of a

⁵ <http://glosar.aspekt.sk/default.aspx?smi=1&ami=1&vid=67>

⁶ <http://slovník.aspekt.sk/default.aspx?smi=1&ami=1&vid=173>

⁷ <http://slovník.aspekt.sk/default.aspx?smi=1&ami=1&vid=175>

⁸ ALLPORT, G. W.: O povaze předsudků (The Nature of Prejudice). Prague: Prostor 2004, p. 41.

stereotype is to justify and defend a particular behaviour or attitude. A stereotype is a fixed idea and a tool for a form of classification and selection.⁹ A stereotype is negative if it helps to classify and select only negative connotations and then defend the negative selection or bias. For this reason a stereotype is not a prejudice but an instrument for rationalising allegedly fixed values, ideas and actions.

Gender stereotype

This is defined as an idea about allegedly typical male and female characteristics and allegedly typical roles and the positions of men and women in society.

Gender stereotyping

defined as a tool used to defend ideas of typical male and female characteristics and roles and the positions of men and women in society. The term “gender stereotyping” is more accurate than “gender stereotype” because it captures the procedural character of stereotypes.¹⁰

Traditional Roles Division

This concept relates to expectations of behaviour and the acceptance of behaviour and activities relating to social position that has developed over time in a particular culture, e.g. the traditional image that persists in Slovak society that women take care of the household and children and men provide for it financially. “As a result of a biologising tendency, the division of labour between the sexes is seen as something natural: the different social roles of men and women and also their different social status are allegedly naturally determined, mainly due to the greater physical strength of the man and the ability of women to give birth – the ability to have children is the biological factor that is most frequently used to explain and justify the social status of women (e.g. in the sphere of paid work)”¹¹.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming was defined by a group of experts from the Council of Europe (1998) in a manner that addressed the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the problem as follows: “Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels.”¹² For the purposes of this Strategy gender mainstreaming is defined as an approach that allows the incorporation of the equality of women and men into the preparation, implementation and monitoring processes for all policies at all levels. It is one of the approaches by which the dimension of male and female equality can become an integral part of specific policies in economic life, family life and personal life, public and political life and in research, education, education, health care and so on. It is an approach to the equality

⁹ ALLPORT, G. W.: O povaze predsudků (The Nature of Prejudice). Prague: Prostor 2004, p. 216.

¹⁰ “...the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practises which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women” In: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, no. 62/1987 Zb., Article 5

¹¹ Farkašová E., Kiczková Z., Szapuová M.: Rodovo - diferencovaný pohľad na človeka/spoločnosť. Rozlíšenie pohlavia a rodu (A gender differentiated view of the person and society. Distinguishing between Sex and Gender), Bratislava 2006, p.1

¹² <http://glosar.aspekt.sk>

of women and men that presupposes the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the equality of women and men in the political, economic and social spheres. Gender mainstreaming is a tool by means of which every public activity automatically includes by design a requirement to create and preserve equality of women and men in order to achieve the full implementation of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is a legally binding requirement under secondary European Union legislation.

Explanation of the proposed strategy

This strategy has been prepared not only in order to comply with the Slovak Republic's undertakings resulting from international treaties and its membership of the European Union, but above all in order to address persistent gender inequalities and eliminate gender discrimination.

The implementation of the principle of gender equality is one of the basic pillars of antidiscrimination policy. Current implementation of the principle of gender inequality is not at present satisfactory. The function of the strategy is not only to eliminate direct discrimination but also to support the creation of optimal conditions for the achievement of gender equality in accordance with the definition of gender equality laid down by the Council of Europe: "Equality of women and men means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both women and men in all spheres of public and private life."¹³

There is not at present any systematic approach to the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The integration of gender mainstreaming in public policy so as to influence action plans will require in particular:

- diagnosis and identification of existing inequalities, the specific situations and different needs of women and men in every area through differentiated analyses, statistics, studies, evaluation and audits of existing legislation.
- information for actors, promotion of activity and partnerships that increase knowledge of issues relating to the equality of women and men and help actors to coordinate their activity more effectively; gender-sensitive language should be used (by the public authorities, elected representatives, social partners, third sector representatives, in particular non-governmental organisations), gender-sensitive policies should be designed, and the development of all activities should take gender into consideration.
- specific activities for the implementation of gender equality as a component of specific policies, programmes and action plans supported by quantified indicators for the achievement of set objectives. The aim is to identify areas where there is potential for the development of gender equality at all levels of public policy. It is then necessary to implement it through contractual measures such as the signing of framework agreements incorporating an annual review of performance or the setting of quantified development objectives etc.
- the systematic evaluation of policy based on measurable indicators.

¹³ Council of Europe, Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, Strasbourg, 1998

Bearing in mind the continuous changes of new phases, opportunities, challenges and problems in addressing gender equality in the Slovak Republic, Slovak government policy on the implementation of gender mainstreaming should focus as far as possible on progress in the following areas:

- the gender pay gap;
- segregation of women and men in sectors, industries and professions;
- different participation of women and men in decision-making;
- reconciliation of personal, family and working life;
- gender discrimination in the labour market;
- inadequate reconciliation of career and the performance of parental duties and family responsibilities in relation to other family members;
- problems resulting from the provision of social security;
- violence against women;
- inadequate institutional provision for gender equality at the local and regional level;
- multiple discrimination against women and men;
- migration and asylum;
- health, including sexual and reproductive health and services that promote healthy lifestyles;
- gender stereotyping;
- gender discrimination in family and civil law.

The most largest problems that are identified require improvements in legislation on gender equality and in particular the creation of a long-term financial mechanism for the implementation of proposed gender equality action plans. This strategy identifies directions for the development of gender equality in the Slovak Republic and shows the importance of developing new frameworks and cultural models for integrating gender equality into the life of society without gender prejudices or gender-limited roles. A further aim of the strategy is to highlight the principles of gender equality and its implementation at the level of society and the individual as a structural characteristic of organisations, institutions and society as a whole.

In order to achieve the objectives of the strategy it will be important to ensure coordination with the Horizontal Priority Equal Opportunities for the programming period 2007–2013. Assessment of the impact of a project on the achievement of the Horizontal Priority Equal Opportunities is compulsory for all applicants for funding from structural funds and the Cohesion Fund.

The real outcome of the implementation of the Strategy is the elimination of discrimination and an increase in gender equality, freedom, dignity and personal integrity, reduced poverty and marginalisation of women, which will have a direct impact that increases the quality of life in society. This fact is considered to be the final criterion for the successful implementation of the Strategy in the Slovak Republic.

Principles

The strategy is based on the following principles or “bare facts” (*nuda facti notitia*):

- Implementing gender equality, ensuring the dignity of women and men and eliminating discrimination against women and men vital for the development of democratic society.
- Achieving gender equality is a priority for economic and social cohesion processes.
- Gender stereotyping has a negative effect not only on women but also on men.
- The unequal distribution of resources and the resulting gender inequality is unacceptable.
- the implementation of gender equality requires reciprocity and the balancing of rights and obligations for women and men.
- Support for gender equality without financial, technical and material resources and gender budgeting cannot be effective.
- Gender discrimination is unacceptable.
- The implementation of gender equality shall not set women and men against each other.
- An integrated approach to gender equality on the horizontal and vertical axes is in the interest of both men and women and is an essential condition for the implementation of gender equality.

Objectives

A) Basic objective

The basic objective of the strategy is to create an environment, effective mechanisms, tools and methods for the implementation of gender equality in all areas of the life of society.

The following means may be used to achieve the basic objective:

- the adoption of legislative and non-legislative measures to achieve progress in the area of gender equality,
- institutional measures to implement international, European and national policy on gender equality, their coordination in all areas of interest;
- creation of a system of analytical, monitoring and control mechanisms to systematically determine the effectiveness and efficiency of adopted measures and means of increasing their effectiveness through action plans in the proposed area of activity;
- promotion of information and awareness of gender equality issues amongst the lay and specialist public,
- elimination of gender stereotyping and the achievement of fair relations between men and women,

- the participation of all interested subjects including civil society in all processes relating to the adoption, implementation and monitoring of tools and procedures created to promote gender equality.

B) Operational objectives

The aim of the strategy is to inject¹⁴ the equality of men and women into the system of social relations through the following **operational goals** with the primary objective of disrupting the artificial causal framework of gender stereotyping and strengthening the personal integrity and dignity of women and men, the effectiveness, justice and attributive democracy of the social system through the following means:

1. Achieving equal status and participation of women and men in decision-making and power.
2. Identifying gender stereotyping (an artificial, stereotypical causal framework), weakening it and avoiding it and creating a non-stereotypical system of relations including culture and an awareness that respects the equality of women and men and an education system that fully embraces the equality of women and men.
3. Incorporating the equality of women and men as a structural element in the creation and operation of systems of relations and the formation of a democratic society.
4. Creating support mechanisms for the participation of women and men in economic and social development and for any distribution of financial, technical and material, spatial and temporal resources and services with the objective of gender equality.
5. Building and improving the quality of institutional mechanisms used to promote and implement equality of women and men at all levels of the state administration, self-governing authorities and other organisations and institutions (infrastructure, network, focal point).
6. Increasing the effectiveness and quality of the prevention system and eliminating discrimination and violence in their forms.
7. Identifying inequality between women and men through stronger research and statistics on the sexes.
8. Creating national control mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of equality between women and men.

¹⁴ Inject in the sense of implement or use

Tools and methods

For the implementation of the strategy it is important to put in place tools, methods and mechanisms that are capable of implementing the strategy's aims and objectives:

- more effective legislation as a tool for implementing strategy,
- stronger institutional mechanisms constituting the basic framework for implementation at all levels,
- the allocation of sufficient financial resources
- the creation of specific action plans as the basic method for the implementation of the strategy. The action plans will comprise steps (measures, recommendations, tasks) for achieving objectives deriving from the recommendations defined in the Strategy, a time schedule and mechanisms for measuring the success of individual steps and procedures,
- a twin-track approach for achieving gender equality:
 - a) using the method of gender mainstreaming horizontally in all areas and at all levels and
 - b) adopting temporary special measures.

Actors

In view of the cross-cutting nature of the issue, the actors in gender equality policy are defined as those who initiate, implement and benefit from gender equality policies: the state apparatus at all levels; local and regional self-governing authorities, non-governmental organisations; interest groups; political parties; research and specialist organisations and institutions including public institutions; independent subjects and experts in educational institutions.

The role of the state apparatus is to initiate, implement and monitor measures to eliminate gender inequality in their area of responsibility relating to executive and legislative power and to promote gender equality as the recognised public interest of the Slovak Republic. The state apparatus should also act as the coordinator for this policy insofar as the law permits. In particular, it shall ensure adequate financial, material and technical resources for the implementation of the agenda. In order to make progress in the given area through a specific policy, state bodies must initiate and coordinate dialogue between all interested parties in their area of responsibility.

The role of local and regional self-governing authorities as part of the public administration is to establish a regional gender equality policy, to coordinate policy at a local and regional level and ensure a gender-positive distribution of resources and funding at the municipal level (in municipal budgets) in accordance with the reform of public administration, fiscal decentralisation and the principle of non-discrimination.

The main role of the civic sector, non-governmental organisations, interest groups, researchers, experts and independent bodies is as equal partners whose activities have an impact on strategic public policies, who initiate gender equality policies and promote their

implementation through research, analysis, education, campaigns, monitoring and other specific measures in their sphere of activity.

Since most groups in society should be actors in gender equality it is important to ensure effective networking and coordination of activities which should complement each other in the various areas. This is not possible without permanent mutual communication. It is also important to identify a coordinator with broad competences and supra-ministerial authority.

Basic public policy documents relating to equality between women and men

International instruments

The Slovak Republic is bound by a number of international instruments that relate to equality between men and women. Amongst the most important are:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- The Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1954
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 – published under no. 120/1976 Zb.
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 – published under no. 120/1976 Zb.
- The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979 – published under no. 62/1987 Zb.
- The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, officially published under no. 341/2001 Z.z.
- ILO Convention no. 100 of 1951 concerning equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value (no. 450/1990 Zb. and point 35 of Notice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 110/1997 Z.z.),
- ILO Convention No. 111 of 1958 concerning discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (no. 465/1990 Zb. and point 37 of Notice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 110/1997 Z.z.) ,
- ILO Convention no. 156 concerning equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women workers: workers with family responsibilities of 1981 (Notice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 110/1997 Z.z.)
- The Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995
- The UN Millennium Development Goals, 2000
- The Final Report of the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, 2005
- the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of 18 July 2008

Primary EU legislation:

- Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957

Secondary EU legislation on equality between women and men including in particular:

- Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security,
- Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding,
- Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC
- Council Directive 97/80/EC of 15 December 1997 on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex,
- Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin
- Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation,
- Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services
- Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)

No a less important role is played by the decisions of the European Court Justice interpreting European Community law and developing legal concepts in European Community law into a coherent legal system.

With regard to equal treatment based on sex, the Court of Justice has mainly defined direct and indirect discrimination so as to achieve effective implementation of legislation on equal treatment and to clarify that men are also entitled to protection against discrimination based on sex.

The basic strategy of the European Union on equality between women and men is defined in the following documents:

- The Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006–2010,
- The Programme of Action for the mainstreaming of gender equality in Community Development Cooperation

Council of Europe

- The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1950 and its additional protocols, in particular additional protocols no. 7, 11 and 12
- The European Social Charter, 1961, the Revised European Social Charter 1996 and its additional protocol 1988

- Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence of 2002
- Recommendation Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education
- Recommendation 148(2004)1 on gender mainstreaming at the local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions
- Recommendation Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms
- Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to members states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making

National legislation and strategy documents

Legislation

- Act No. 460/1992 Zb. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic
- Act No. 311/2001 Z.z. The Labour Code, as amended
- Act No. 365/2004 Z.z. on equal treatment in certain areas and protection against discrimination and the amendment of certain acts (The Anti-discrimination Act), as amended
- Act No. 5/2004 Z.z. on employment services and the amendment of certain acts, as amended
- Act No. 312/2001 Z.z. on state service and the amendment of certain acts, as amended
- Act No. 552/2003 Z.z. on the performance of work in the public interest, as amended
- Act No. 553/2003 Z.z. on the remuneration of certain employees performing work in the public interest and the amendment of certain acts as amended
- Act No. 308/1993 Z.z. on the establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, as amended
- Act No. 125/2006 Z.z. on labour inspection and the amendment of Act No. 82/2005 Z.z. on illegal labour and illegal employment and the amendment of certain acts
- Act No. 448/2008 Z.z. on social services and the amendment of Act No. 455/1991 Zb. on trades (the Trades Licensing Act), as amended

The following legislative instruments are relevant the aims of the strategy:

- Act No. 308/2000 Z.z. on broadcasting and retransmission and the amendment of Act No. 195/2000 on telecommunications, as amended
- Act No. 343/2007 Z.z. on conditions for the registration, public distribution and storage of audiovisual works, multimedia works and sound recordings of artistic performances and the amendment of certain acts (the audiovisual act)
- Decree No. 589/2007 of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic establishing the particulars of a unified system for the labelling of audiovisual works, sound recordings of artistic performances, multimedia works, programmes or other elements of a programming service and the method for its implementation
- Act No. 147/2001 Z.z. on advertising and the amendment of certain acts, as amended

The basic documents for the national strategy on equal opportunities, gender equality and the elimination of discrimination are:

- The National Action Plan for Women
- Conceptual Material on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
- The National Strategy for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Committed against Women and in Families
- The National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women 2005–2008
- The National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006–2008
- Measures for the reconciliation of personal, family and working life, 2006

Initial situation in the defined areas

The purpose of the strategy is to react appropriately in accordance with the above legislation and strategy documents to trends affecting society as whole in order to ensure the implementation of gender equality not only *de jure* but also *de facto*. At present in the Slovak Republic, comprehensive strategic support, increased attention and a stronger participation by key subjects is required in the following areas:

- economic and social areas and health care
- families and state policy on families,
- the area of political and public life, participation and representation,
- the area of research, education, schools, the media and culture.

A cross-cutting and important principle of the strategy is to adopt measures that will prevent the creation of gender prejudices and stereotypes and gradually eliminate existing prejudices and stereotypes in the given areas.

The strategy considers it important to confront gender prejudices in all the defined areas within the proposed scope of the recommendations. A gender prejudice is based on a few selective, over-generalised empirical facts. Many prejudices are also expressions of agreement with the dominant form of group behaviour or thinking. Gender prejudices promote or exclude certain forms of behaviour or thinking. A gender prejudice is often drawn on to assign characteristics to individuals or groups in advance without considering the specific abilities, strengths or talents of individuals.

The strategy requires the creation of conditions for an individual approach to the exercise of specific abilities, strengths and talents, which can be implemented as gender-neutral employment; equal remuneration for equal work; balanced representation of women and men in decision-making; reconciliation of personal and working life; gender equality at a local and regional level; specific services promoting health; specific activities for the prevention of violence against women; specific measures for the integration of immigrants, asylees and migrants. Education and the media are very important areas in which generalisations about the

collective characteristics of women and men should not be made, but which should present examples based on a fair assessment of individual abilities, strengths and talents. It is much more important to focus on specific cases of segregation, discrimination and intolerance in all areas than to highlight prejudices.

Challenging and eliminating gender stereotypes, which are nearly always independent of empirical facts and derive from a specific culture, which determines the method for perceiving the world and understanding one's surroundings is the foundation for interventions in the strategy. Gender stereotypes are a schematic form of perception based not on a person's direct experience but on a tradition that has been received, justified, maintained and rationalised. Gender stereotypes are often transmitted from individual to individual by families, school, media or other authorities.

Gender stereotypes function as support for ideas about allegedly typical male and female characteristics and roles and the positions of men and women in society; they are one of the causes of structural gender inequality in our society. The recommendations in the strategy are intended to cast doubt on gender stereotypes that are acquired from the environment, often through the influence of the media or as a reflection of opinions in society and which persist because people do not receive "feedback" on their false beliefs and are unable to change their generalising perspective. Efforts to combat gender stereotypes arouse strong emotions. It is seen as an attack on "universal" social values and codes of conduct. Anything outside a given framework of gender stereotypes is overlooked and ignored.

In all the set areas (economics, work, social affairs and health care; families; political and public life, participation and representation; research, education, schools, media and culture) the strategy includes a critical sensitivity to the creation of stereotypical judgements about women and men, especially in print and broadcast media with large audiences, advertising and education.

Economic and social areas and health care

In this area a number of lines of activity can be identified corresponding to tasks for the implementation of the Lisbon objectives, amongst others. The following problems require multidimensional solutions, which will be formulated in specific action plans:

- the labour market in terms of employment, conditions of employment and working conditions, unemployment and employment services,
- discrimination and gender stereotyping,
- horizontal and vertical gender segregation,
- the gender pay gap,
- women's entrepreneurship and self-employment,
- social protection, social insurance, social services and the fight against poverty,
- specific health risks affecting women and men and the availability of gender-specific services in health-care including the protection of sexual and reproductive health,
- social responsibility and family-friendly and gender-positive measures on the part of employer organisations,

- use of resources from the structural funds and the Cohesion Fund to support gender equality.

The strategy is based on the use of extensive supporting analyses by a number of authors.¹⁵ In recent years the Slovak Republic has made progress in nearly all areas of social and economic life. There has been a large increase in employment for three consecutive years at the same time as a relatively large fall in unemployment. The total number of workers in the Slovak Republic was on average 2 357 300 persons in 2007, of whom 86.7% were employees, 9.7% were sole proprietors without employees, 3.1% were sole proprietors with employees and the remainder, 0.5% were members of the household of sole proprietors and unspecified persons. The level of economic activity of the population aged 15–64 was 68.2% in 2007 (75.8% for men and 60.7% for women). Current trends and the effects of the financial crisis are expected to result in a lower than planned growth rate. Despite the above, the Slovak Republic has not succeeded in satisfying the Lisbon criteria. One of the key targets of the Lisbon strategy is to increase the overall employment persons aged 15–64 years to 70% and the employment of women to 60% by 2010.

In 2007 there were on average 291 900 persons who were unemployed, which was the lowest level of unemployment since 1996. The total was 61 500 lower than in the previous year. The year-on-year reduction in the absolute number of unemployed persons was greater for men (20.1%) than for women, where the total fell by 14.7%. The unemployment rate for men reached 9.8%, which was 2.4 percentage points lower, and the unemployment rate for women was 2.2 percentage points lower at 12.5%. Compared to the previous year the difference between the unemployment rates for men and women was 0.2 percentage points higher (in 2006, the unemployment rate for men was 2.5 percentage points lower and in 2007 the gap increased to 2.7 percentage points).

In the area of the economy, work, social affairs and health care, it is necessary to strengthen mechanisms to eliminate horizontal and vertical segregation in sectors, industries and occupations; to adopt measures to reduce the pay gap between women and men, which for Slovakia is one of the largest in the EU; to support the reconciliation of personal, family and work duties for women and men and also family-friendly and gender-equality-friendly infrastructure and services.

It is also necessary to bear in mind that women are at an increased risk of poverty, especially older women and women who are divorced and live alone. The proportion at risk of poverty in Slovakia reached 20% in 2006 and the proportion of women living in households where nobody worked was 9.6%. These were often single mothers with children. The risk of poverty rises rapidly in the case of women of pension age.

It is also necessary to increase support for business through new financial products and a reduction in administrative burdens. For gender equality it is particularly important for gender equality to promote resources such as networking, coaching, mentoring and the like.

¹⁵ In view of their length, the supporting analyses have not been included in appendices to the Strategy and can be found on the website www.employment.gov.sk/obcan/antidiskriminacia/, www.gender.gov.sk

The social protection system shall be used reduce the risk of poverty and overcome obstructions to flexicurity.

The modernisation of services in health care should be focussed on improving the accessibility, quality and responsiveness to the new and specific needs of women and men with regard to health risks, including risks in sexual and reproductive health. The problems of gender inequality in health have not yet been part of the public interest. All these themes require increased efficiency in the use of domestic public expenditure and European funds.

The solution of these problems through gender mainstreaming should contribute to an increase in the quality of life and the modernisation of services in economic and social areas and in health care.

Families and state policy on families

In the area of families, it is possible to identify the following issues that require appropriate, multidimensional solutions to achieve the so-called Barcelona targets:

- the need for more flexible law on some aspects of personal and property relations that arise or are implemented in relation to families,
- unequal participation in family obligations as a result of gender stereotyping,
- low recognition of unpaid work for the family,
- the lack of adequate support services for families,
- violence against women and children.

Analysis of issues relating to families and the demographic changes and other social processes occurring in Slovak society at present indicate that opinions and attitudes to family and personal life are shaped not only by traditional attitudes but increasingly by support for bringing up children in accordance with the recognition of the value of all family members, strengthening of the new role of fathers in families and a broader concept of what families are.

In the 1990s there began to be problems resulting from major changes in demographic trends, in particular the transition to a new model of reproductive behaviour in the Slovak population. The main characteristics of the new model is a lower rate of marriage and a dramatic decline in births and fertility caused by a rapid increase in those who defer starting a family until they are older. There is continuing increase in divorces and differences in the death rate for women and men and a significant decline in abortions and there is aging of the population.

The socio-economic changes since 1989 have led to a change in the reproductive behaviour of the population and the birth rate has fallen as in other post-communist countries. In contrast to the Czech Republic, for example, the increase in the average number of children per woman is low and has stagnated in recent years at a level of 1.25 children per woman. Countries where social and family policies are designed to support the equality of women and men such as Finland, Sweden and France have had high birth rates in recent years, while countries that promote the traditional division of gender roles are confronted with low birth rates and increasing childlessness (e.g. Germany, Spain and Italy). Many countries where a large proportion of women work, such the Scandinavian countries, France, and the Netherlands, also have the highest rates of fertility and births. Furthermore, as certain studies show, there is a clear correlation between the birth rate and the participation of women in

work. In France, for example, 80% of women aged 25 to 49 are in work and the total birth rate is 1.92%. This question is especially important for Slovakia because the birth rate has fallen from 2.1 in 1990 to 1.25 in 2007.

Despite a number of positive changes to the law, violence against women remains a significant problem in society. According to research at least every fifth woman has experience of violence from a partner or another family member. There is a general lack of information on the international undertakings of the Slovak Republic with regard to the human rights of women and violence against women and it has not yet been possible to assign sufficient funding to build the human and institutional resources for facilities and organisations, in particular non-governmental organisations, necessary to provide adequate primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of violence against women and relevant support services. There is a lack of specific legislation on the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence. There is also no education system to support professionals working in the area of gender-based violence and no system for working with the media on issues of zero tolerance for violence against women. At the institutional level, it is necessary to establish a Coordination and Methodology Centre for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and to prepare a system for assistance based on intervention centres and intervention teams.

The strategy includes the formulation of suitable motivational instruments and promotes participation in care for children and other family members in the private sector. In this way it reinforces and values the importance and significance of unpaid work related to care for children and other family members and other sorts of unpaid work within the home and also reinforces non-stereotypical roles of fathers in families. Calculating unpaid work as a share of GDP is a measure that could benefit to the Slovak Republic in this area and which women's NGOs have been calling for for decades.

Gender mainstreaming can be used to modernise state family policy and the strategy may provide a response to current demographic challenges and the need for intergenerational solidarity.

The area of political and public life, participation and representation

In the area of political and public life, the following problems can be identified, for which solutions shall be developed in the form of specific action plans:

- low enforceability of rights in the event of a violation of human rights or fundamental freedoms,
- unbalanced representation of women and men in political and public life and at all levels of decision-making,
- gender stereotyping in political and public life, participation and representation,
- low participation of women at all levels of management and decision-making,
- inadequate support for active citizenship in the law and other structural mechanisms and from the side of the state authorities,
- low awareness and sharing of experience of proven procedures,
- inadequate use of mentoring and coaching,

- low support for the extension of available services relating to political and public life, representation and participation,
- inadequate gender mainstreaming in the formation of public policies and public budgets.

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making and management processes is seen as an indicator of the quality of democracy. An increase in the number of women in management and decision-making does not automatically solve problems of gender equality in the area of participation and representation. Alongside increasing numbers of women it is necessary to mainstream gender-sensitive issues, especially in areas where political interventions take place.

The right of women and men to equality is a fundamental right in a democratic society, which can lead to the neglect of the skills, knowledge, experience and creativity of women. Women continue to be under-represented at all levels of decision-making and management processes in the Slovak Republic. After the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2006 the proportion of women in parliament was 16%. After the replacement of some members of parliament the proportion increased to 19.3%. In the 2005 elections, no woman was elected head of a self-governing regional authority and the overall proportion of female members of the regional councils was 14.3%. The Slovak Republic has a large share of women on municipal councils. In the local council elections in December 2006 women took 20.7% of the total of 2 905 posts of mayors of municipalities, municipal districts and towns.

The strategy highlights the following problems: inadequate use of gender mainstreaming in social management systems; inadequate consideration of the different effects of proposed legislation on women and men, and inadequate application of aspects of gender equality and respect for requirements to remove gender-based discrimination from existing legislation, conceptual materials and strategic materials; the need for public actors and the population to be more sensitive to the equality of women and men.

There is no institutional mechanism, strategy or programme focussed on the implementation of gender equality in public administration and regional and local government. There are no instruments for increasing the participation of women in political and decision-making processes at all levels of public life. Gender equality is not seen as a part of political and social responsibility.

The area of research, education, schools, the media and culture.

In the area of research, education, schools, the media and culture, the following problems can be identified, which will require greater attention in action plans:

- the absence of coordinated, regular monitoring and evaluation of the level of implementation of gender equality,
- inadequate sex-based data for effective monitoring and data,
- inadequate continuity in research in the area of gender equality and anti-discrimination,

- the elimination of gender stereotyping in education, the media and culture,
- failures to promote the equality of women and men in education,
- inadequate participation of men in the educational professions,
- gender stereotyped views of women and men in the media, advertising and marketing and the dissemination of prevailing gender stereotypes in social discourse,
- inadequate access to new technologies.

Despite the progress that has been made in the collection of statistical data, there is no comprehensive provision for them to be classified in depth according to sex and especially not to analyse data obtained in gender terms. There is a lack of review publications in which findings are regularly presented and analysed. There is no institution dealing with this issue at a national level capable of providing information to the broad professional and lay communities with an interest in this area.

Education requires a much greater focus on issues relating to the equality of women and men through intensive gender mainstreaming. This means, amongst other things, ensuring gender-sensitivity in teaching and all education policies and processes. It is essential at the same time to investigate the causes and social effects of the feminisation of education, schools and the teaching profession and eliminate potential inequalities. A particularly important objective in this area is the elimination of gender stereotypes and gender segregation in education, which is one of the main barriers to progress in the given area.

In the years 2000–2007 there was a decline in the number of workers with elementary education, especially amongst women. There was also a decline in the number of skilled workers, which was greater amongst men than women. In 2007, the largest proportion of working women had completed secondary education and passed the *maturita* exam (45.9%). This level of education was significantly more frequent amongst women than amongst men (34%). There were also more university educated women than men in the labour market (16.9% compared to 14.6%).

There continues to be a lack of systematic education on gender equality. Gender equality issues (gender studies) must be incorporated into continuing institutional and sectoral education.

Gender prejudices and gender stereotyping persist in the media, marketing and advertising as fixed, simplified or even caricatured beliefs about the allegedly suitable and appropriate behaviour of men and women and their suitable and appropriate characteristics and other mental and social qualities. The media, marketing and advertising affect the perception of the equality of women and men and play a part that cannot be overlooked in producing gender inequality and constructing gender stereotypes as social norms. Gender sensitive media and marketing products and processes have an important role in overcoming gender stereotypes and gender inequality. Increasing the gender awareness of the media, marketing and advertising is another challenge for starting gender mainstreaming processes.

Implementation – guidance on intervention
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Implementation of gender equality in the life of society involves the achievement of the basic and operational objectives. **The basic objective of the strategy is to create an environment, effective mechanisms, tools and methods for the implementation of gender equality in all areas of the life of society.** The basic aim of the strategy is to implement international, European and national policy on gender equality through institutional arrangements and provide for national coordination and monitoring of these arrangements; to achieve progress on gender equality through recommendations for legislation and support measures; to increase awareness of gender equality issues in the specialist and lay communities and to achieve balanced gender relations by breaking down gender stereotyping; to involve actors, including civil society, in the process of adopting, implementing, controlling and monitoring instruments and procedures for promoting gender equality through the creation of a system of analytical, monitoring and control mechanisms and for systematically determining effectiveness and efficiency and through the proposed action plans.

The fundamental aim of the strategy will be achieved through the proposed specific operational objectives, which will inject the equality of women and men into the system of social relations in the areas defined by the strategy. The strategy emphasises above all the breaking down of the artificial causal framework of gender stereotyping. This cannot be achieved without the strengthening of the personal integrity and dignity of women and men. The basic requirement for achieving gender equality is an efficient, fair and democratic social system.

Interventions pursuant to the operational objectives shall be applied as appropriate to provide comprehensive strategic support in the previously identified areas that require priority attention:

- economic and social areas and health care
- families and state policy on families,
- the area of political and public life, participation and representation,
- the area of research, education, schools, the media and culture.

Operational objectives

Operational objective 1

Achieving equal status and participation of women and men in decision-making and power

Recommendations

- 1.1. Creation of conditions, including legislation, for the balanced representation of women and men in posts with decision-making powers at all levels of management.
- 1.2. Promoting the creation of an optimal environment for the balanced participation of women and men in political decision-making as a way of increasing the dynamism of political life and conditions for political stability.

- 1.3. Challenging the traditional understanding of the public and private spheres to eliminate barriers to participation by women and men.
- 1.4. A gender-positive transformation of the education process, the media and traditional role models in relation to decision-making and power.

Operational objective 2

Identifying gender stereotyping (artificial, stereotypical causal frameworks), weakening it and preventing it and creating a non-stereotypical system of relations including culture and an awareness that respects the equality of women and men and an education system that fully embraces the equality of women and men.

Recommendations

- 2.1. Creation of conditions for the identification of gender stereotyping in economic and social areas, health care, families, public and political life, participation and representation, research, education, schools, the media and culture and other areas, and to weaken its effects through gender-positive procedures and approaches.
- 2.2. Support for a gender-positive system incorporating gender issues into education in schools and educational facilities at all levels of education.
- 2.3. Organisation of a public education campaign on gender equality issues.
- 2.4. Increasing the representation of women in science and motivating girls and women to participate in science.
- 2.5. Educating people to incorporate gender issues into the performance of their responsibilities.
- 2.6. Initiating accreditation for subjects and programmes specialising in gender equality (gender studies) including the staff to supervise such subjects and programmes and certified experts.
- 2.7. Preparation of conditions for broader use of mentoring and coaching.

Operational objective 3

Incorporating the equality of women and men as a structural element in the creation and operation of systems of relations and the formation of a democratic society

Recommendations

Implementing legislation to implement the equality of women and men at all levels of social life as a means for eliminating structural discrimination.

- 3.2. Creation of favourable conditions for gender integrated organisations.
- 3.3. Support for a policy of diversity in enterprises and organisation and the promotion of organisations that have successfully integrated the gender dimension into their activities.

- 3.4. Increased attention for the elimination of institutional discrimination in organisations and institutions.
- 3.5. Promotion of a social discussion of democratic society formed on the basis of equality between women and men with support from the media.

Operational objective 4

Creating support mechanisms for the participation of women and men in economic and social development and for any distribution of financial, technical and material, spatial and temporal resources and services with the objective of gender equality

Recommendations

- 4.1. Increased scope, quality and effectiveness in legislative and institutional mechanisms for the elimination of horizontal and vertical segregation and the gender pay gap.
- 4.2. Adequate financing for gender equality and gender budgeting.
- 4.3. The creation of new instruments for fighting gender-based discrimination and strengthening gender-positive media, advertising and marketing activities and products.
- 4.4. Support for the economic independence of women and their business activities.
- 4.5. Support for flexible forms of employment and improved quality in services.
- 4.6. Strengthening and systematic implementation of the gender dimension and the representation of women in social dialogue on both the employers' and the unions' sides.
- 4.7. Development of special support programmes for the most vulnerable groups of women: women of pension age living alone, single mothers with dependent children, women approaching retirement, Roma women, rural women and women with disabilities etc.
- 4.8. Creation of instruments obliging employers to implement family-friendly and gender-positive measures (enterprise level plans or strategies for gender equality).
- 4.9. Creation of conditions that make it easier to return to work after extended leave, in particular maternity or parental leave or another form of leave granted for family or personal reasons (acquiring, maintaining or developing skills, strengthening continuity and contact with the workplace, mentoring etc.).
- 4.10. Rewards for examples of good employer policies – a new level of the public contest in the implementation of European standards for gender certification.
- 4.11. An increase in the number of available child care facilities, which enable both parents to balance employment and family life and the creation of effective instruments supporting the participation of people with parental responsibilities in the labour market.
- 4.12. Effective use of funds from the structural funds to support gender equality in the labour market and the consistent implementation of the horizontal priority equal opportunities in all implemented projects.

Operational objective 5

Building and improving the quality of institutional mechanisms used to promote and implement equality of women and men at all levels of the state administration, self-governing authorities and other organisations and institutions (infrastructure, network, focal point).

Recommendations

- 5.1. Incorporation of the gender equality agenda into the competence act, the act on self-governing regional authorities and the act on municipalities.
- 5.2. An increase in the scope and quality of legislative and institutional mechanisms for gender equality at a national regional level.
- 5.3. Creation of conditions for the establishment of a system for enforcing gender equality and its national coordination.
- 5.4. Intensification of interactive information flows and the development of communication strategies for the use of existing legislation and constituted institutional mechanisms.
- 5.5. Incorporation of gender equality issues into economic, social and cultural development programming documents of self-governing regional authorities.

Operational objective 6

Increasing the effectiveness and quality of the prevention system and eliminating discrimination and violence in their forms.

Recommendations

- 6.1. Promotion of effective specific legislation for the elimination of gender-based violence and zero tolerance for such violence.
- 6.2. Establishment of a centre at a national level and implementation of central monitoring of the quality of all assistance to women who have experienced violence.
- 6.3. Construction of a national functional and accessible system of integrated intervention and crisis assistance for the victims of violence.
- 6.4. Implementation of gender mainstreaming in the provision of all support services and access to them.
- 6.5. Implementing procedures for the prevention and elimination of violence in the workplace as part of the problem of violence.

- 6.6. Creation of a comprehensive information and training system for working with the media and a communication strategy including ethical codices on the prevention and elimination of violence against women.

Operational objective 7

Identifying inequality between women and men through stronger research and statistics on the sexes.

Recommendations

- 7.1. Creation of a national centre to collect and evaluate research and statistical indicators on gender equality.
- 7.2. More effective preparation of gender analyses in all the areas defined by the Strategy.
- 7.3. Identification and implementation of gender classifications in all relevant statistical data.
- 7.4. Initiating orders for research and surveys of specific issues relating to gender equality in the area of responsibility of each department.
- 7.5. Support for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on women and men on the labour market as a basic requirement for solutions to problems in this area.
- 7.6. Regular publication of reports and data relating to gender equality.
- 7.7. Consistent monitoring of performance indicators for gender equality based on international and European standards and the regular publication of the acquired data in the media.

Operational objective 8

Creating national control mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of equality between women and men.

Recommendations

- 8.1. Creation of a comprehensive system of national monitoring mechanisms and the specification of penalty mechanisms in relation to gender equality.
- 8.2. deliberation on regular monitoring reports on gender equality in the government and the legislature.
- 8.3. Creation of a system to revise measures adopted in order to implement gender equality in the identified areas based on the conclusions of monitoring.
- 8.4. improvement of the control mechanism through the establishment of specific structures with adequate decision-making powers and penalty mechanisms.
- 8.5. Construction of networks for cooperation between interested actors in control and penalty mechanisms.
- 8.6. Preparation of methodological procedures for implementing effective monitoring, control and evaluation of gender equality.

8.7. Ensuring the participation of civil society in the implementation of gender equality through monitoring, control and evaluation in the given area including the provision of legal aid and representation in court in accordance with applicable law.

The operational objectives will be implemented primarily through the action plans of ministries and other organisations and institutions to provide specific and adequate implementation across the identified areas: economic and social areas and health care; families; political and public life, participation and representation; research, education, schools, the media and culture.

Financial coverage

The implementation of the objectives of the strategy in practice require the creation of a long-term financial mechanism made up of resources from the state budget, the budgets of the self-governing regional and local authorities and European Union funds.

Funding in each budgetary chapter will be used within the approved budget for public administration for the years 2009–2011 and following.

The strategy will be supported by the financial participation of the private sector and interest groups in specific activities requiring greater financing.

The Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion shall incorporate resources to support equality between women and men: demand-oriented projects, national and pilot projects to be implemented within the scope of competences laid down by law.

The Horizontal Priority Equal Opportunities will be supported and its implementation will be monitored in all operational programmes in the programming period 2007–2013.

Conclusion

The Strategy identifies problems, objectives and challenges relating to the achievement of gender equality in Slovak society and all its structures. Its ambition is to ensure that gender equality is integrated into the life of society as a whole. The objective of the strategy is not only to make amendments to legislation but also to support measures of a non-legislative nature that increase the legal awareness of citizens and the use of such measures in practice.

An important aspect of the strategy is to provide for the establishment and adequate financing of an autonomous and independent national institution to support the implementation, monitoring, control, evaluation of gender equality and coordinated and continuous research in this area.

Another aspect is the creation of a network of local and regional institutions with a practical influence over educational, legal, social and psychological counselling and other services.

Another important task is to ensure intensive participation by subjects from the academic, research and expert communities in the formation of public policy and to ensure coordination and networking.

The strategy will increase the public visibility of gender equality through professionally supervised and accredited programmes focussing on specific target groups.

The strategy emphasises the special position of the media in contemporary society and their use in the elimination of gender inequality, gender stereotyping and the creation of favourable conditions for the implementation of deliberative democracy.

Further to the above, we again emphasise that the strategy does not replace the national action plan, which will form the basis for sectoral action plans specifying roles, responsibilities, financial coverage and specific measurable indicators. They will be used to evaluate performance of the set objectives. The proposed operational objectives will be achieved through action plans that will be developed subsequently for each identified area within the responsibility of ministries, self-governing regional authorities and other interested parties.

The Strategy can only succeed if it has broad political and public support. It is therefore important to continuously communicate the objectives and instruments of the strategy in order to obtain the support of the broad expert community and the media who are able to influence public attitudes. The recent economic successes of the Slovak Republic, despite the recent complexities, create the best possible circumstances for solving significant problems that have not previously received adequate attention and support.