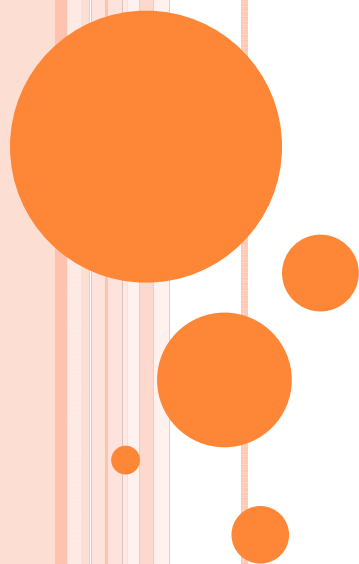


# **SOCIAL INCLUSION IN SLOVAKIA: RECENT DEVELOPMENT, ACTUAL STATE AND FUTURE CHALLENGES**



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# AGENDA

- Recent development in social policy
- Unemployment and the Government's measures
- Roma as an issue
- Challenges



## DEVELOPMENT TILL 2002

- Economic transformation led to the need for a thorough structural change of social policy in Slovakia:
  - The country struggled with alarmingly high registered unemployment (almost 19% as of end of 2000)
  - Significant regional disparities
  - The policies pursued by the government in tackling the existing social problems required a lot of state budget funds



# CHANGES IN 2002

- In 2002, the government began to pursue a new strategy:
  - Reducing unemployment
  - Increasing the social security system's effectiveness
  - Crucial goal: to motivate people in productive age to active labour and simultaneously create a social security system that in the case of absence of own income or material need would provide all citizens with resources to cover their adequate material needs based on the solidarity principle



# STRATEGY TO SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

- The government approved Strategy to Support Employment Growth through Reforming the Social Security System and the Labour Market
- Unfortunately, there was inadequate attention to two extremely important factors affecting Slovak citizens' social situation:
  - Regional disparities in the population's social and economic situation
  - Ethnic dimension of social dependence



# GOALS FROM THE STRATEGY

- The identified goals were achieved gradually; however, the most radical changes came after January 1, 2004 – the reform focused on the three most important areas:
  - Social assistance and the family policy
  - Pension security system and the labour market policy
  - Introducing a new strategy of increasing employment



# NATIONAL ACTION PLAN OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Other extremely important policy document was National Action Plan of Social Inclusion for 2004–2006 (NAPSI), since it was the first document in which Slovakia subscribed to joint objectives of the EU in the field of poverty and social exclusion
- Elaboration of NAPSI was an inevitable condition to Slovakia's EU accession – in many ways it elaborates on basic intentions of the Strategy but it is much more detailed as it defines key problems and outlines their solutions



# SOCIAL INSURANCE COMPANY

- On April 1, 2002, it took over the agenda related to employer's insurance liability for damages caused by occupational injuries and occupational diseases
- On January 1, 2004,<sup>15</sup> it also became responsible for the entire social insurance agenda, i.e. administration of sickness insurance, pension insurance (both old-age and disability), casualty insurance, guarantee insurance and unemployment insurance
- Since January 1, 2005, the Company has also been responsible for administering the pension system





# GOVERNMENT'S MEASURES I

- Since 2004, several important measures have been implemented by the Government:
  - Substitution of (part) travel costs related to opening interview or job competition
  - Information and counseling services
  - Professional counseling services (individual action plan for job-seekers)
  - Training and education of job seekers
  - Training and education of job seekers of employer
  - Contribution to gainful activity of self-employed handicapped citizens



# GOVERNMENT'S MEASURES II

- Contribution for employing disabled jobseeker
- Graduates' practical training
- Activation contribution
- Relocation contribution (moving to work, abolished effective January 1, 2006)
- Projects and programs
- Contribution for establishing of protected workshop or workplace and for their maintaining
- Contribution to gainful activity of self-employed handicapped citizens
- Contribution to employing assistants
- Contribution for maintaining of protected workshop



# ROMA IN SLOVAKIA

- Although official data indicate that the Roma minority constitutes only 2% of the Slovak population, the reality is very different - for instance the London-based Minority Rights Group NGO estimated the total number of the Roma in Slovakia to be 480,000 to 520,000, or 9 to 10% of the entire Slovak population (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995)
- Manifestations of discrimination against Roma include limited or lack of access to education, health services and other basic services; bias in the labour market; inadequate housing, social bias and exclusion



## DEFINITION AS AN ISSUE

- The term Roma settlement (rómska osada), as defined by Jakoubek and Hirt (2008, p. 723), describes relatively autonomous social formations located in Slovak countryside inhabited primarily by the Roma population
- The advantage of this term is based on its practicality and general use – any attempts to introduce new terminology either by the Slovak Government (e.g., dwelling formations on low socio-cultural level) or scientific circles (e.g., cumulated/ Roma/settlements, by S. Kužel) ended up as a failure and were not accepted neither by the general public nor the specialists.



## VIEWS FROM OUTSIDE THE BOX

- The 2009 Human Rights Report by the U.S. Department of State notes that widespread discrimination against Roma is found in employment, education, health services, housing and loan practices (many of their settlements lack a formal infrastructure, access to drinking water and proper sewage systems)
- Roma children are disproportionately enrolled in “special” schools for children with mental disabilities, despite diagnostic scores that are often within the average range of intellectual capacity – although child prostitution is prohibited, it remains a problem in Roma settlements living under the worst conditions



## INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

- Slovakia's failure to move forward on sensitive social issues has exacerbated social exclusion
- The Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions, which is situated in Geneva, gave its '2007 Housing Violator Awards' to Burma, China and Slovakia
- The Centre criticised Slovakia for persistently discriminating against its Roma population, which frequently faces segregation and forced eviction by local authorities



# DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION

- The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 is an unprecedented political commitment by European governments in cooperation with the World Bank and the Open Society Foundation to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma
- Slovakia, like the other countries, has developed a national Decade Action Plan that specifies the goals and indicators in the priority areas



# GOVERNMENT'S ACTIVITIES

- There is discontinuation in the work of the Government's commissioners (new government = new approach/vision)
- Lack of willingness to solve this problem through intersectorial cooperation
- Rather partial measures than complex policy





# CHALLENGES I

- Labour market policies are not sufficiently effective with respect to some categories of jobless, particularly those suffering from multiple disadvantages
- Designed measures of employment and labour market policies should be applied in mutual combination with each other as well as with other forms of assistance



## CHALLENGES II

- The 'unemployment trap' constitutes a fundamental problem for tackling long-term unemployment
- The highest share of long-term unemployed is in marginalized localities where the price of labour is low



## CHALLENGES III

- Lack of complex and long-term policy aimed at Roma minority – necessity to elaborate such policy (diversification is needed)
- Broad political willingness to solve the situation
- Projects not because of fund opportunities but because of real needs



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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