



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/1/Add.81
19 December 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL
AND CULTURAL RIGHTS
Twenty-ninth session
11-29 November 2002

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT**

**Concluding observations of the Committee on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

SLOVAKIA

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Slovakia on the implementation of the Covenant (E/1990/5/Add.49) at its 30th, 31st and 32nd meetings, held on 12 and 13 November 2002 (see E/C.12/2002/SR.30-32), and adopted, at its 56th meeting, held on 29 November 2002, the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the initial report of the State party, which was prepared generally in conformity with the Committee's guidelines.

3. The Committee notes with appreciation the comprehensive written and oral replies given by the State party, as well as the open and candid constructive dialogue with the delegation, which included a number of government officials with expertise on the subjects relevant to the provisions of the Covenant. The Committee also welcomes the willingness of the delegation to provide further information in writing concerning the questions that could not be answered during the dialogue.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the amendment to article 7, paragraph 5, of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, pursuant to which the Covenant takes precedence over the domestic law and may be invoked before the courts.
5. The Committee commends the State party for establishing the institution of an Ombudsman in 2001 and for electing the first Ombudsman in March 2002.
6. The Committee notes with appreciation the emergence of Slovakia as a donor country for development assistance.
7. The Committee welcomes the establishment in 1996 of the Coordination Committee on Women's Issues and the Equal Opportunity Department in 1999.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Covenant

8. The Committee notes that the State party has encountered difficulties in implementing the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Covenant arising from the process of transition to a market-oriented economy.

D. Principal subjects of concern

9. The Committee is deeply concerned about discrimination against Roma people in the fields of employment, housing, health care and education. Although the State party acknowledges this fact, the legislative and administrative measures undertaken by the State party to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Roma are still insufficient to address the problem. The Committee is also concerned about the absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law.
10. While the Committee appreciates the efforts of the State party in seeking to ensure equal rights for men and women, it notes with concern the inadequate representation of women in the decision-making bodies of the State party and the persistence of patriarchal attitudes in Slovak society.
11. The Committee is alarmed about the high rate of unemployment and, in particular, the large disparities in employment between the different regions of the country, as well as between urban and rural areas. The Committee is also concerned that unemployment among Roma people is steadily increasing and, in some cases, has risen above 80 per cent.
12. The Committee is especially concerned that the minimum wage is not sufficient to provide a decent standard of living for workers and their families.
13. The Committee is concerned that there remains a large disparity between the wages of men and women, and that, according to the Slovak Statistical Office, women's wages in general are 25 per cent lower than those of men.
14. The Committee notes with concern that the legislative measures in place concerning the right to strike are too restrictive, given that no strikes have actually been staged.

15. The Committee notes with concern that, despite the State party's adoption of legislative measures on domestic violence, the problem persists and is widespread.
16. The Committee is concerned about the persistent problem of trafficking in women, as well as the sexual exploitation of women and children in the State party.
17. The Committee is deeply concerned about the high rate of tobacco smoking as well as the high level of alcohol consumption among adults.
18. The Committee is alarmed about the low rate of primary school enrolment and the high drop out rates at secondary schools among Roma children.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

19. The Committee recommends that the State party formulate and implement a comprehensive national plan of action for the promotion and protection of human rights, as recommended in paragraph 71 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in 1993. The Committee requests the State party to include a copy of its national plan of action and information on its implementation in its second periodic report.
20. The Committee recommends that the State party take into account its obligations under the Covenant in the formulation of its social welfare, housing, health and education policies.
21. The Committee also recommends to the State party that human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, be reflected in its official development assistance policy.
22. The Committee urges the State party to take concrete measures, including the adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, in accordance with article 2, paragraph 2, of the Covenant, to combat and eliminate discrimination against minority groups, in particular against Roma people.
23. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its second periodic report, detailed information on any government policies, programmes and measures adopted to contribute to the effective implementation of the legislation on equality between men and women, including the representation of women at the various levels of Government and public administration.
24. The Committee calls upon the State party to take effective measures, including increasing the resources allocated to reducing the unemployment rate, in particular among women, Roma people and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups, especially in rural areas.
25. The Committee urges the State party to ensure that the minimum wage enables all workers to secure a decent standard of living for themselves and their families.
26. The Committee urges the State party to effectively implement measures recently adopted to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, as provided for in the Covenant, and to reduce the wage gap between men and women.

27. The Committee recommends that the State party revise its legislation on the right to strike, in line with article 8 of the Covenant and the relevant Conventions of the International Labour Organization.
28. The Committee requests the State party to provide detailed information on the National Programme in Poverty Combating and Social Exclusion and on the Slovak Social Protection National Programme. The Committee urges the State party to fully integrate human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, in its poverty-reduction strategies. In this regard, it draws the attention of the State party to the Committee's Statement on Poverty, adopted by the Committee on 4 May 2001.
29. The Committee calls upon the State party to enforce its legislation on domestic violence and to take appropriate preventive measures in order to give the required assistance to victims of domestic violence.
30. The Committee urges the State party to adopt effective measures, including through regional cooperation, to combat trafficking in women and to adopt preventive programmes to combat the sexual exploitation of women, adolescents and children.
31. The Committee calls upon the State party to adopt effective measures, including public awareness campaigns, to reduce tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption.
32. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its second periodic report, information about the mentally ill, including the number of those hospitalized, the facilities available to them and the legal safeguards for the protection against abuse and neglect of patients.
33. The Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to increase the school attendance of Roma children, especially at the primary level, and to address the problem of dropouts among secondary school pupils. The Committee also recommends that the State party collect and develop data, disaggregated by gender and ethnic origin, as stated in the Committee's General Comment No. 13, paragraph 7, for inclusion in its next periodic report.
34. The Committee encourages the State party to provide human rights education in schools at all levels and to raise awareness about human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, among State officials and the judiciary.
35. The Committee requests the State party to disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society and, in particular, among State officials and the judiciary and to inform the Committee, in its next periodic report, of all steps taken to implement them. It also encourages the State party to consult with non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the preparation of the report.
36. The Committee requests the State party to submit its second periodic report by 30 June 2007.