On the Way to Equality

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ON THE WAY TO EQUALITY

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Authoresses/ Authors:	Janka Debrecéniová, Oľga Gyárfášová, Andrea Chorváthová, Dušan Ondrušek, Šarlota Pufflerová, Martina Sekulová, Vladimír Talian
Editress:	Šarlota Pufflerová
Consultant:	Hana Lyons
Translation:	Tomáš Donoval
Proofreading:	Paul McCullough
Cover:	Táňa Zacharovská
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Introduction

Discrimination is often very deeply rooted in society. It affects various aspects of the life of entire groups, as well as individuals. Discrimination has its own structural background, framed by both historical development and power relations within society. It may happen that people who have been subject to discrimination in fact fail to realise its existence, or they cannot even recognise it. Sometimes they are unwilling to admit they have been discriminated against. Moreover, discriminated people often belong to the most vulnerable groups of the population who do not know how to fight back. They find it difficult to protest even when they are treated differently than the others. Filing a complaint or initiating judicial or other proceedings is an insurmountable obstacle for them.

The basic framework for the application of the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination is defined by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Article 12 of the Constitution stipulates that people are free and equal in their dignity and rights. Fundamental rights and freedoms are guaranteed to everyone regardless of sex, race, colour, language, belief and religion, political or other opinions, national or social background, nationality or ethnic origin, property, gender or any other status. No one shall be aggrieved, discriminated against or favoured on any of these grounds. In addition, Slovakia is a State Party to all international anti-discrimination conventions and treaties, i.e., it has undertaken to respect the principle of equal treatment for all people.

Slovakia is also obliged to eliminate discrimination and promote equality under its membership in the European Union. A number of EU regulations include commitments under which Slovakia, as an EU Member State, is required to adopt various measures in order to prevent discrimination. One such measure was the adoption of an Anti-discrimination Act in 2004 (Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and protection against discrimination and on amendments to certain acts, as amended). Having adopted this act, Slovakia transposed several EU directives that lay down a general framework for combating discrimination by putting into effect the principle of equal treatment of all persons regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The Anti-discrimination Act thus defines a general framework for the implementation of the principle of equal treatment and specifies the legal means of protection available if the principle is breached, as well as the grounds on which the violation of the equal treatment principle is prohibited. The regulation specifies the persons and entities that are required to comply with the principle of equal treatment and the areas in which the principle applies. Also, it defines derogations from the equal treatment principle and specifies details pertaining to the possibility of filing an action with a court in the event of non-compliance with the principle.

Some opinions have recently emerged in connection with the EU's anti-discrimination laws and policies and existing mechanisms of international law. They claim that states should not be content that their

legislation prohibits discrimination and that the means of legal protection are granted to individuals. An emphasis is placed on countries taking the initiative to adopt preventive measures in all areas of public life where discrimination and unequal treatment represent a serious obstacle for many people, either in utilising their full potential or exercising their rights.

Equality of people is an ideal to which all civilised and democratic countries of the world subscribe today, as well as all international organisations of civilised and democratic states. Their constitutions and laws contain provisions declaring that all people are equal in their dignity and rights, and prohibiting discrimination on such grounds as sex, colour, age, gender, sexual orientation, property, social background, disability, national or ethnic origin, religion or other status.

The equality requirement and prohibition of discrimination is laid down in several international documents. In addition to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, the prohibition of discrimination is also included in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, adopted by the United Nations. Discrimination is also prohibited under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, as well as under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms adopted by the Council of Europe in 1950. Equality before the law and the prohibition of discrimination is also contained in binding regulations of the European Union (EU) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights of 2000.

Even though the principle of equal treatment and the prohibition of discrimination are inherent to numerous national and international documents, not all people are equal in reality. We often encounter situations or behaviour which prevent many people from living their lives according to their own wishes, curtail their rights and keep them from fully utilising their potential in various aspects of life. In employment, for example, they may be prevented from performing certain occupations or jobs, or they earn less than their colleagues even if they do the same work. In education, for instance, they may be given less attention and care than the rest of their class or denied access to certain educational institutions; in access to services, they may be denied services in some shops or restaurants or even prohibited admission. But discrimination and the curtailment of rights occurs in other areas as well – for example in healthcare services, social security, political participation, or in relations with government and other public authorities. To put it simply, discrimination occurs anywhere in which there is someone who has some control over us, or where we are dependent on someone.

The aforementioned behaviour is usually driven by irrational reasons and prejudices that have nothing to do with the actual conditions for the enjoyment of certain rights. For the most part, they relate to personal characteristics or qualities that the affected individuals cannot alter, and which form an inherent part

of their identity. They infiltrate the most vulnerable spheres of one's private life and disrespect human dignity. They are manifestations of discrimination. A simplified definition of discrimination could read as follows: discrimination is any unreasonable disadvantaging or restricting of an individual or a group of individuals on grounds of their sex, race, colour, language, age, sexual orientation, belief, religion, political or other opinions, national or social background, national or ethnic origin, property status, gender or other status. The principle of equal treatment means that discrimination on any of the aforementioned grounds is prohibited.

Discrimination may take on multiple shapes. It can be a breach of law due to which individuals are denied their rights, for example, in education, housing, employment, access to services, healthcare or social security. But discrimination can also stem directly from the legislation if that legislation is in conflict with the principle of equal treatment. Slovak legislation still includes several discriminatory provisions.

The obligation to comply with the equal treatment principle under the Anti-discrimination Act does not apply to all aspects of our life. However, it applies to several domains in which we spend a considerable portion of our existence and where we encounter other people and institutions that are necessary for our life and on which we are often reliant. The field of employment encompasses all employment and job-related relationships. Education involves relations arising in connection with all levels of the education system; similarly, the area of healthcare services primarily involves relations arising in connection with the provision of healthcare services, as well as those pertaining to health insurance. Social security involves relations pertaining to the provision of social assistance, social security or the pension savings system. Access to publicly available goods and services provided by legal and natural persons includes visits to restaurants and hotels, library services, repair and maintenance, or transportation. It does not mean, however, that other areas are not affected by discrimination – e.g. relations between public authorities (such as the police, public administration) and private citizens. Although the Anti-discrimination Act cannot be directly applied in such cases, there are certain legal means available that one may use in order to protect against discrimination.

Sometimes we may also feel "discriminated against" inside the family or in our relations with neighbours. Even though our feelings may be the same, or resemble those that we experience when we are discriminated against at work or at school, it is not discrimination in the true (and legal) meaning of the word. However, these cases may also often involve unlawful actions and the law offers the means to stop or remedy such actions.

The April 2008 amendment to the Anti-discrimination Act is a crucial milestone in the process of combating discrimination in Slovakia. The amendment introduced new grounds on which discrimination is prohibited. For example, non-heterosexuals are protected not only in employment and some other relations, but also in access to goods and services and education. Similarly, goods and services providers

are also obliged to comply with the principle of equal treatment with respect to people with disabilities and persons who are often discriminated against on the grounds of their age.

In addition, the amendment improves protection against harassment and expressly bans sexual harassment; such a ban was not included in the previous legislation. Another important fact is the re-defining of certain grounds for discrimination, such as religion or disabilities, which are no longer limited to specific areas only, but apply to all areas covered by the Anti-discrimination Act.

The amended Act has simplified the mechanism for evidencing cases of discrimination before courts and enabled the victims of discrimination to be represented by non-governmental organisations and the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights.

A notable achievement is the introduction of so-called temporary special measures. Their purpose is to eliminate disadvantages of people discriminated against on the grounds of their national, racial or ethnic origin. The temporary special measures may also be focused on people discriminated against on the grounds of gender, age or disability. The objective of temporary special measures is to ensure equal opportunities in practice. The measures are designed to support members of vulnerable groups in employment, education, healthcare services, culture and access to services. Yet, there is still room for improvement of the Anti-discrimination Act, for example by extending the set of entities entitled to adopt temporary special measures. Under the currently applicable legislation, these measures may only be taken by state authorities.

1 The Towards Equal Treatment Project

The project entitled “Towards Equal Treatment: awareness raising and multi level empowerment of the civil society and public actors in the field of anti-discrimination ” was implemented jointly by four Slovak non-governmental organizations – Občan a demokracia (Citizen and Democracy), Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), Partners for Democratic Change Slovensko and Hlava 98. In terms of their legal form, all four organisations are civic associations. The Občan a demokracia NGO was responsible for project management and administration activities; all four partners performed their specific tasks during the project. The project was implemented from December 2007 to November 2008. It was funded by the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity PROGRESS (2007 – 2013), the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic and contributions from the implementing organisations.

The key objective of the project was to positively influence the Slovak public through a series of various activities and thus contribute to eliminating discrimination in Slovakia. The project was based on the fact that discrimination of various population groups represents a serious problem faced by Slovak society, which is not adequately discussed by the professional and the general public, even though existing legislation addresses this phenomenon quite comprehensively. At the same time, project outputs and activities responded to the fact that discrimination is a complicated, structural problem. On that account, multi-level interdisciplinary approaches to problem solutions were chosen in order to meet the objectives. To improve the effectiveness and synergy of the steps, a combination of legal, sociological, psychological and media approaches was selected.

The initial situation was characterised by the strong public need for more comprehensive anti-discrimination activities, which was identified on the basis of several indicators, such as the non-existence of a systematic approach to discrimination by government authorities and public institutions, as well as the many years of the absence of structural measures in this area. Another example is the lack of a conceptual approach to anti-discrimination and human rights education. Specialised anti-discrimination curricula, which could be used at elementary and secondary schools, have still not been developed. Other stakeholders involved in the promotion of human rights issues, values and opinions, also struggle with poor human rights and anti-discrimination education, which in turn leads to the further reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices. This situation may result in more frequent discriminatory behaviour (and, paradoxically, to its institutionalisation).

The complexity of the situation was proven by a number of sociological surveys. In a representative survey conducted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights in November 2006, no less than 67% of respondents said they had experienced age-based discrimination in hiring/firing from employment, 46% cited discrimination based on parental (maternal) duties, 42% quoted their Roma origin. As many as 81% of respondents could not name a single institution responsible for anti-discrimination activities in

Slovakia. According to the empirical data of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, in November 2005, only 39% of the respondents knew that the anti-discrimination law existed.

The project objectives were achieved through the coordinated implementation of various activities – research, training, publications and a media campaign. The project activities focused on several target groups – the general and professional public, community and NGO representatives, policy-makers and persons with decision-making authority. The focus was given to all grounds of discrimination referred to in the EU anti-discrimination directives, hence in the Slovak Anti-discrimination Act as well. The project took advantage of a multi-level approach that enabled us to view and address the problem from a number of different perspectives. The multi-level and inter-disciplinary approach of the project stood on the following pillars:

- searching for and collecting information on the specifics of each of the grounds of discrimination through standardised and qualitative research, accompanying surveys, interviews with experts;
- raising awareness on the specifics of various grounds of discrimination, elimination of stereotypes and increasing the sensitivity of public and key actors;
- empowering all actors – training on discrimination and on anti-discrimination measures;
- creating new innovative approaches to the application of the obligation to promote equal treatment of actors;
- exchanging information, experience and good practices gained through the project, on the national and European levels.

In addition to the general and professional public, the project also aimed at influencing entities responsible for the implementation of the equal treatment principle and the media. Specific target "sub-groups" included university students who participated in an anti-discrimination school, as well as employers and representatives of regional/local authorities and regional NGOs.

Most of the project activities were prepared and carried out jointly by all four project partners; all partners made a considerable and unique contribution to the project outcome. Občan a demokracia has been committed to combating discrimination for many years; its experts have prepared and tested numerous strategies for the effective prevention of this phenomenon. The Towards Equal Treatment project helped to implement several activities that are more than crucial in order to create incentives and to launch most of the necessary processes in the preparation of anti-discrimination policies. In addition to being the project leader responsible for the project and financial management and project administration, the NGO carried out all activities that required legal expertise, such as the publication of a commentary to the Anti-discrimination Act, the "What we (don't) know about discrimination" brochure, as well as a collection of expert texts and analyses on the possible implementation of the amended anti-discrimination legislation

in practice. The organisation also administered and regularly updated the www.diskriminacia.sk project portal, organised an Autumn School of Anti-discrimination for university students, a panel discussion entitled “Can we live without discrimination in Slovakia?”, and a training course for employers focused on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment and diversity management practices.

The Institute for Public Affairs (Inštitút pre verejné otázky, IVO) was responsible for project research activities – a representative survey, focus group discussions, interviews with experts, project evaluation (an omnibus survey, additional research activities, interim evaluations) and organised a conference aimed at awareness raising on equal opportunity issues, and one of the project’s two public panel discussions. Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia (PDCS) carried out training sessions for local partnerships with local authorities; also, this project partner supervised the activities of a working group engaged in the preparation of the internal rules for non-discriminatory behaviour by regional authorities.

Last but not least, Hlava 98 prepared and implemented the most visible project activity in the form of a social and communication campaign. Also, it was responsible for the preparation of an artistic documentary named “Back Passing”. The film won the main award at the One World international human rights film festival in November 2008 in Bratislava.

The project had several strengths that considerably contributed to its successful implementation, nationwide effect and achievement of the project objectives. The project partnership brought together high-profile organisations actively engaged in various anti-discrimination related areas, which bolstered the quality of the project implementation process, cooperation among the project partners was without any serious problems. The qualities and courage of the four major non-governmental organisations to form a proficient partnership led by Občan a demokracia, first to coordinate, and within a very short time of one year, to continuously extend its actions and manage, more or less without problems, a large variety of activities in a transparent manner and in line with all of the complicated rules, are not commonplace. It is an example of an effective approach taken by non-governmental organisations in Slovakia with respect to administratively challenging tasks that require a high degree of coordination and internal discipline.

The strength of the project lies in the fact that several non-governmental organisations worked together in order to find possible solutions to a serious social problem. Also, the use of multi-level inter-disciplinary practices and the combination of a wide range of various activities focused on several target groups, which was reflected in the effective and efficient collaboration of diverse professionals in the project team, was appreciated by the majority of team members who described it as enriching, inspiring, effective and useful. It is extremely necessary that efforts continue in the same direction even in the future. Especially since anti-discrimination is, and will continue to be a very unattractive topic and requires a better targeted structural approach.

The project delivered more than 20 different activities and outcomes (see the Project Activities section, pg…). Their synergies facilitated the accomplishment of project objectives – to sensitise and inform the Slovak public on the discrimination issue and thus to contribute to its elimination in the environments where it occurs most frequently. During the 12-month project period, all project activities went according to the original plan. One activity was modified. As a result, a collection of texts published on www.diskriminacia.sk was produced on the basis of an analysis of possibilities for the implementation of the amended anti-discrimination legislation.

The project did not aspire to intervene directly in the elimination of discrimination and/or discriminatory behaviour; its goal was to facilitate changes in the public mindset through a multi-level approach and the application of various intervention methods – from management training, through public discussions, to the facilitation of working groups in cooperation with regional/local authorities. It was rather satisfying to learn that employers had a relatively strong interest in joining a survey on the implementation of diversity management in their organisations. On the other hand, the results of the survey showed that neither business, nor the public sector had done enough as far as the implementation of diversity management practices and the principle of equal treatment is concerned. International companies/organisations are an exception to the rule, but even they show room for improvement with respect to management training.

The project accomplished the objectives that corresponded to its actual capacities. It kick-started cooperation with people in public institutions and public administration who can affect reality and the legislative environment, activated opinion leaders from the non-governmental sector, and reinforced the active civic approach to the elimination of discrimination by increasing public sensitivity to the issue. It delivered information on what discrimination is and under what circumstances (when, where and how) it occurs in our society. Several project outputs, which continue to have an impact on the general public even after the completion of the project (the film, publications, the web portal, etc.) represented added value to the particular project objectives. Its aim to improve public perception of the gender equality issue was also accomplished.

The project also endeavoured to shift the approach by both the general and professional public to discrimination from reactive to pro-active, in particular as far as public administration is concerned. This goal was partially accomplished as the topic has become part of a wider public discourse (including discussion forums and conferences organised as part of the project). In addition, it was repeatedly presented at educational project events (employer training on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment, the autumn school for university students).

In addition to the activities involving the direct participation by professionals and experts (discussion forums, conferences) this target group can also benefit from the comprehensive commentary to the

Anti-discrimination Act, the first publication of its kind in Slovakia. Backed by expert texts published on www.diskriminacia.sk, the publication represents a significant contribution to legal discourse that basically addresses (anti)discrimination issues for the first time. Law students also represented an important target group. The commentary is a very useful project output for them, as it deals with a relatively new theme that has yet not been discussed in detail at law schools. Project team members learned of new inter-disciplinary contexts related to (anti)discrimination and, in return, delivered their in-depth knowledge of the issue to humanities students in a participatory manner; this implies that the project can be sustainable in relation to the wider professional public.

In terms of the accomplishment of project objectives and the project's successful implementation, the effects it had on the public perception of discrimination and on its increased sensitivity to this phenomenon are also deemed crucial. That a significant change occurred in this respect is proved by the "visibility" of this topic in public discussion. Several project activities were closely linked with the dissemination of project results to their target groups. They directly facilitated the establishment of discrimination as a topic for public discourse. A survey conducted through www.diskriminacia.sk found out that still more companies speak about "diversity management" and, moreover, several public institutions have already started searching for possible ways to actively engage in anti-discrimination efforts, which is a very good example.

The social campaign, a series of research activities, pilot cooperation with local and regional authorities, the specialised brochure on discrimination, and training for employers and students are clearly positive outcomes of the project. They have brought the issues of anti-discrimination and diversity into the focus of public discourse and public knowledge, which is necessary in order to change the public mindset towards the real implementation of the equal treatment principle.

The project reached the general public and, to a certain degree, increased its interest in the discrimination issue. This has also been proved by an increased number of visits to specialised internet sites on discrimination (mainly on www.diskriminacia.sk administered by Občan a demokracia), as well as by an omnibus evaluation survey conducted in November 2008, in which as many as 20% of the respondents confirmed they had noticed the social campaign carried out under the Towards Equal Treatment project. The results of surveys conducted throughout 2008 imply that several changes occurred in the perception of discrimination, which indicates that the Slovak public has become more sensitive to this phenomenon.

Most of the project partnership members have agreed that the applied multi-level inter-disciplinary approach proved successful and delivered positive results. Despite this positive assessment, some critical voices have been heard as to the sustainability of the project results, since a number of project activities were rather pilot activities which must continue if we wish to achieve a real change in society. There is

a risk that the level of public anti-discrimination discourse attained thanks to the project efforts could deteriorate over the next years if public institutions and government representatives do not pay enough attention to this topic. In addition, the positive developments related to anti-discrimination could also be put at risk if the programmes that have been launched and tested are not further developed, and if no support is given to the follow-up activities of all stakeholders.

In addition to the continued performance of all key project activities, i.e., cooperation in the further development and updating of www.diskriminacia.sk, endeavours to change the legislative and policy environment, cooperation with non-governmental organisations and journalists, participation in public and expert discussions on (anti)discrimination, it will be necessary not only to retain, but even reinforce and further develop the potential of the Towards Equal Treatment project through the implementation of a wide range of follow-up activities on the regional and national levels.

2 How to Communicate on Discrimination Issues with the General Public

Janka Debrecéniová, Šarlota Pufflerová, Občan a demokracia

Discrimination is a very complex issue, and one that is difficult to communicate. The main reason is that this problem needs to be addressed from a number of perspectives – legal, psychological, sociological, and many others. Also, it occurs under various circumstances, in different environments and in a multitude of forms. To explain all aspects of how, when and why discrimination occurs, what discrimination actually means, and what is its historical context, is also difficult due to the fact that it represents a human rights issue. Major difficulties are encountered in an environment where the values and principles of democracy have yet not been firmly established and, what is even more important, interiorised. In this context, not only the content, i.e. what we want to say, but also the form, that is, how we want to speak about discrimination and how to present it visually, is extremely important. If we do not grasp this topic in a proper and, most importantly, sensitive enough manner, we can do more harm than good. We should bear in mind that our target audience also includes discriminated people, and there are more than just a few of them. Actually, everyone has been discriminated against during their life, be it on grounds of their young or old age, ethnic origin, belief, or simply because of being a woman. An insensitive approach could seriously hurt such people, without being of any help to them at all. Quite the opposite, we may even deepen their wounds. Therefore it is necessary that we think carefully in advance about how to avoid complications in communicating discrimination issues while respecting the dignity and intergrity of those that we wish to protect. Also, we should remember that we want to encourage our audience to give more thought to the matter by presenting the topic in a proper “light” and clear of any of prejudice.

Anyone who is engaged in the anti-discrimination efforts and wants to increase the sensitivity of the general public and, at the same time, provide them with comprehensible information, is faced with a problem of how to reconcile the incompatible. In countries with a low level of legal awareness, as in Slovakia for example, even more skills and energy are necessary, since one can only hardly rely on the knowledge of the Constitution, international documents, or human rights in general. Moreover, different target groups require different forms of presentation. Experts will take an utterly different approach to discrimination than employers or public institutions. It is different to communicate with a person who is discriminated against because she is a woman than to communicate with individuals discriminated against on grounds of their religion or ethnic origin. To address everyone, that is, the general public, is the most challenging task.

www.diskriminacia.sk

- Zdravotné postihnutie
- Sexuálna orientácia
- Pohlavie / Rod
- Vek
- Náboženstvo / Viera
- Rasa / Etnická príslušnosť
- Pomoc
- Slovník
- Študovňa
- Výchova / Vzdelávanie
- Výskum
- Legislatíva
- Verejné inštitúcie
- Médiá
- Redakcia

Správy a publicistika

- **Verejný ochranca práv dostal v tomto roku 2500 podnetov**
  29 Dec 2008 - 18:56
- **Antidiskriminačný zákon treba rozšíriť aj na obce, tvrdí Čaplovič**
  28 Dec 2008 - 19:02
- **Putin vracia Rusko do stalinistickej éry, tvrdia aktivisti**
  18 Dec 2008 - 11:17
- **Členom Výboru OSN pre práva dieťaťa sa stal po prvý raz Slovák**
  17 Dec 2008 - 15:00
- **MVO: Program starostlivosti o ženu a matku bude diskriminujúci**
  17 Dec 2008 - 13:51
- **Janka Debrecéniová: Je chimérou si myslieť, že právo je objektívne a neutrálne (2. časť)**
  15 Dec 2008 - 12:50
- **Zavraždenú Bénazír Bhutt ocenili za boj za ľudské práva**
  13 Dec 2008 - 17:35
- **Bieloruská polícia zadržala desiatky aktivistov na Deň ľudských práv**
  11 Dec 2008 - 17:37
- **Najčastejším problémom detí je podľa ombudsmana šikana**
  10 Dec 2008 - 18:03
- **Janka Debrecéniová: Je chimérou si myslieť, že právo je objektívne a neutrálne (1. časť)**
  10 Dec 2008 - 16:23

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Najnovšie príspevky

- **Seminár: Pomoc obetiam domáceho násilia**
  3 Jan 2009 - 18:53
- **Uzávierka súťaže: Dráma 2008**
  3 Jan 2009 - 18:47
- **Ako na Nový rok...**
  Jana Juráňová | 3 Jan 2009 - 15:40
- **Verejný ochranca práv dostal v tomto roku 2500 podnetov**
  29 Dec 2008 - 18:56
- **Antidiskriminačný zákon treba rozšíriť aj na obce, tvrdí Čaplovič**

Tipy redakcie

- **Ako na Nový rok...**
  Jana Juráňová | 3 Jan 2009 - 15:40
- **Antidiskriminačný zákon treba rozšíriť aj na obce, tvrdí Čaplovič**
  28 Dec 2008 - 19:02
- **Rodina**
  Jana Juráňová | 22 Dec 2008 - 11:21
- **Všakovakí kandidáti by nemali vychovávať spoločnosť**
  Hana Fábry | 17 Dec 2008 - 19:40
- **Členom Výboru OSN pre práva dieťaťa sa stal po prvý raz Slovák**
  17 Dec 2008 - 15:00
- **Diskriminácia z dôvodu vierovyznania: vybrané rozsudky Európskeho súdu pre ľudské práva**
  15 Dec 2008 - 15:56

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Nadchádzajúce udalosti

- **Uzávierka súťaže: Dráma 2008**
  (39 dní)

kalendár ›

Najnovšie z blogov

- **Všakovakí kandidáti by nemali vychovávať spoločnosť**
  Hana Fábry | 17 Dec 2008 - 19:40
- **Queer Leaders Forum: Pripojte sa k novej komunikačnej sieti pre queers Q-PEOPLE**
  Hana Fábry | 15 Okt 2008 - 12:02
- **Téma anti/diskriminácie Na Pohode 2008**
  Hana Fábry | 19 Júl 2008 - 23:00
- **Moje dni sa blýžja**
  Hana Fábry | 27 Mar 2008 -

Meno:
Heslo:
nový užívateľ
Často kladené
« Január 2009

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One of the main objectives of the Towards Equal Treatment project was to facilitate the elimination of discrimination through awareness-raising activities targeted at the general public. Several research studies have shown that Slovak citizens are generally not clear about the discrimination issue. However, the impact of educational activities delivered throughout 2008 and focused on various target groups was limited to a certain number of people who took part in them directly, or who received such information later. The only way to accomplish the set objective and appeal to as many people as possible was to present the topic in electronic media, using advanced technologies. Therefore we decided to bolster our media campaign by taking advantage of the means and possibilities offered by the virtual world of the internet and to present (anti)discrimination via a specialised portal, www.diskriminacia.sk. Though the media campaign had a relatively substantial impact and quite a few people noticed it (some 20%) its effects did not last long after it was finished. The effects can only be sustainable if the set of relevant information is permanently available in a form that is comprehensible to people with various interests and levels of education, in different life situations, and includes diverse knowledge of the various levels of complexity and expertise presented in the most understandable way. From this point of view, internet-based presentation is an extremely effective method of delivering information about discrimination, including most recent updates, to the largest number of people over a long period of time.

2.1 The www.diskriminacia.sk website

Combating discrimination is a long-term commitment that requires a systematic, multi-level approach. On that account, it is necessary to build on the results and experience from the previous work and continue with efforts that will lead to further improvements. The www.diskriminacia.sk website is a good example of the coherence of the efforts taken under various (anti)discrimination projects and of the synergy resulting from the cooperation of a number of non-governmental organisations. The website was launched in 2007 under one of the projects implemented within the European Year of Equal Opportunities initiative and was funded by the European Community, the Slovak Government and from other private and public sources, such as Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe; in 2008 it was also co-funded by the Community PROGRESS programme, the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, the EEA Financial Mechanism, and the Open Society Foundation.

The development of the website was initiated by the Občan a demokracia NGO. The structure and content of the website were designed in cooperation with partner organisations (editorial board). They participate in the development of the website's concept and provide up-to-date and attractive content. The web site is universal open platform for the publishing, retrieval and distribution of information about the principle of equal treatment, discrimination and its occurrences and causes, as well as pos-

Zdravotné postihnutie
Vysvetlenie pojmov
Diskriminačné správanie
História
Spôsoby diskriminácie
Prostredia
Právny rámec
Riešenie
Prípady
Odkazy
Kontakty

Domov

Diskriminácia z dôvodu zdravotného postihnutia

- **Diskriminácia z dôvodu zdravotného postihnutia alebo ČO TO JE?**
- **Diskriminačné správanie alebo ČO SA DEJE?**
- **História diskriminácie alebo PREČO A KOMU SA TO DEJE?**
- **Spôsoby diskriminácie alebo AKO SA TO DEJE?**
- **Prostredia diskriminácie alebo KDE SA TO DEJE?**
- **Právny rámec alebo ČO NA TO ZÁKON?**
- **Riešenie alebo ČO ROBIŤ?**
- **Prípady alebo ČO SA STALO?**
- **Odkazy alebo KDE HĽADAŤ INFORMÁCIE?**
- **Kontakty alebo KAM SA OBRÁTIŤ?**

» Ak chcete pridať komentáre, tak sa musíte **prihlásiť** alebo **zaregistrovať**.

Meno:
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« Január
Po Ut St Št
najč
Monitoring médií
Tlačové správy
Databáza MVO
Diskriminácia z dôvodu sexuálnej orientácie
Diskriminácia z dôvodu zdravotného postihnutia

sible approaches to its elimination and stakeholders who can facilitate it. It is built on the principles of impartiality, cooperation and transparency, which is reflected in the sharing of the common space and implementation of inter-disciplinary approaches in its design. It provides information about current and planned discrimination-related events and activities. The website contains various references and links to other organisations and web sites, and is regularly updated.

The website is divided into two sections: the information section that displays information and facts about (anti)discrimination and related issues; and the communication section that provides room for discussion, exchanges of opinions, latest information, as well as citizens' participation through various campaigns, petitions and calls.

They can easily be distinguished on the homepage by their position and colour. This division is then also used on some other special sub-pages (e.g., in the case of individual grounds of discrimination) and other markers (e.g., schematic icons, pictograms) are added to help users to better navigate through the multitude of data.

The information (left-hand) menu includes information about concepts of discrimination, its forms, legal aspects and specifics of particular grounds for discrimination. It also contains information about international, European and national laws and regulations, related case-law and publications, relevant public institutions, educational materials and guidelines, articles on discrimination, etc. Theoretical and practical information is available about legal and non-legal means of redress that can be used in cases in which the principle of equal treatment is breached; some alternative approaches to the promotion of equal treatment are also outlined.

This section of the web site includes specialised information divided according to individual grounds of discrimination (race and ethnic origin, religion and belief, age, sex and gender, sexual orientation and disability). Such information is meant mainly for people who are subject to discrimination or unequal treatment, either by government authorities or by other people who have some power, authority or provide services. The language of the web site – of this information section in particular – is easy to understand and its vocabulary is very sensitive. Discriminated persons can learn basic information about the particular grounds of discrimination that affects them, or they are concerned with, as well as a number of facts from the past and present, illustrated by numerous examples from everyday life. Individual subpages have the same structure, but they deal with different manifestations of discrimination on different grounds. Each subpage explains what qualifies as discrimination based on that particular ground and provides information on the victims and typical forms of discrimination. In addition, discriminatory behaviour is explained in more detail and examples are given to illustrate various forms of discrimination (direct, indirect, harassment, instructions to discriminate against persons, etc.)

The subpages, arranged by individual grounds of discrimination, provide information about the legislation that prohibits or bans discrimination on a given ground, or provides protection against it (concrete laws and regulations, provisions, international treaties and conventions, directives and other applicable standards applied by the Slovak Republic, the EU, the UN, etc.). Everyone who is discriminated against on any of the given grounds can easily obtain comprehensive information that tells them where to seek help and assistance (including references to relevant institutions) and how to enforce their rights. Relevant case-studies, references and links to publications and other information sources, including useful contact data, are also available.

The lower left menu contains links to subpages that contain press releases, statements, news articles and interviews. A number of journalists have contacted Občan a demokracia with requests for consultations on discrimination-related topics. Representatives of organisations participating in the project were given room to present their opinions on discrimination in electronic media (TA3, Slovak Television, Slovak Radio, Radio Lumen, JOJ TV etc.) and the project's legal expert gave two in-depth interviews on discrimination.

The communication (right-hand) section of the website includes a structured menu that navigates visitors to various surveys, news, FAQs, forum, activities, and a database of NGOs involved in antidiscrimination activities and links to their websites where more information can be obtained. This section also regularly brings short stories on discrimination by Slovak writer Jana Juráňová, as well as blogs. Also, it provides information on current and scheduled discrimination and equal treatment related events and a directory of government, public and non-governmental organisations and institutions that deal with discrimination. Many interesting links are available which direct visitors to websites of other organisations and institutions – both domestic and foreign.

The website is regularly updated with new information and materials. Since the beginning of the test operation in September 2007, the website has registered nearly 30,000 visits, including nearly 17,000 unique ones.

Exact statistics are available at:
http://diskriminacia.sk/statslog/december2007/awstats.diskriminacia.sk.html (for 2007),
http://diskriminacia.sk/statslog/december2008/awstats.diskriminacia.sk.html (for 2008).

The website is an open platform that brings together numerous non-governmental organisations. As one of the project's major communication means, the website still remains an effective information channel on discrimination issues, and engages all stakeholders. Two outputs of the Towards Equal Treatment project that are available on the website in electronic format are described below.

postihnutie
orientácia
/ Rod
tvo / Viera
nická príslušnosť
/ Vzdelávanie
štitúcie
ské organizácie
ián a demokracia

Dôležité webové stránky

22 Október, 2007 - 17:00 | Súvisiace články | Komentáre

Zoznam (v abecednom poradí) dôležitých slovenských a zahraničných webových stránok:

www.age-platform.org
Informačný portál Európskej platformy starších ľudí (European Older People´s Platform) ˜ organizácie, ktorej cieľom je obhajovať a podporovať záujmy starších ľudí žijúcich v krajinách EÚ a povzdvihovať povedomie o problematike, ktorá sa ich týka. Organizácia sa zaviazala bojovať proti všetkým formám diskriminácie súvisiacej s vekom a monitorovať vplyv aktivít EÚ na túto oblasť.

www.agepositive.gov.uk
Britská vládna stránka zameraná na odstraňovanie diskriminácie súvisiacej s vekom a na zlepšovanie podmienok starších ľudí na pracovisku. Stránka poskytuje napríklad informácie o britskej legislatíve, príklady dobrej praxe či prípadové štúdie týkajúce sa zamestnávania ľudí vo vyššom veku.

www.ageismus.cz
Stránka slúži ako informačný zdroj pre všetkých záujemcov a záujemkyne o problematiku diskriminácie súvisiacej s vekom. Sprístupňuje napríklad poznatky z oblasti legislatívy a výskumov uskutočnených v Českej republike i vo svete.

www.aspekt.sk
Stránka záujmového združenia žien Aspekt, ktoré realizuje množstvo feministických vzdelávacích a publikačných aktivít. Na stránke sa nachádza napríklad databáza ženských MVO, stručný prehľad aktuálnych správ, ponuka kníh a časopisov, prehľad pripravovaných podujatí, on-line katalóg knižnice Aspektu či glosár dôležitých rodových pojmov.

www.canadianelderlaw.ca
Informačný portál venovaný sociálnym a právnym záležitostiam, ktoré sa týkajú seniorov a senioriek v Kanade.

www.concourt.sk
Stránka Ústavného súdu SR. Stránka okrem iného obsahuje databázu rozhodnutí ústavného súdu.

www.curia.eu
Stránka Súdneho dvora Európskych spoločenstiev. Obsahuje informácie o úlohách a činnosti Súdneho dvora ES, umožňuje prístup

kontakt
e-novinky
mapa stránky

Meno:
Heslo:
nový užívateľ nové heslo

Prieskumy
Často kladené otázky
Fórum
Aktivity
Galéria
Adresár
Linky

kalendár

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- Monitoring médií
- Tlačové správy
- Databáza MVO
- Diskriminácia z dôvodu sexuálnej orientácie
- Diskriminácia z dôvodu zdravotného postihnutia

Články

CEDAW a mimovládne organizácie (stručný prehľad)

Aktívna participácia občianskej spoločnosti na dodržiavaní a ochrane ľudských práv a základných slobôd sa v súčasnosti považuje skôr za pravidlo než výnimku. Mimovládne organizácie sa stali hlavnými aktérkami v dohliadaní nad plnením ľudskoprávnych záväzkov vyplývajúcich či už z právnych predpisov, alebo z medzinárodných zmlúv, ktorými sú jednotlivé štáty viazané. Tak je to aj v prípade ochrany práv žien na národnej i medzinárodnej úrovni.

Tento článok je súčasťou Zbierky textov a analýz o možnostiach implementácie novelizovanej antidiskriminačnej legislatívy a o marginalizovaných antidiskriminačných témach za súčasného právneho a legislatívneho stavu, ktoré boli vybraté a spracované na publikovanie v rámci projektu **Progress** ako zdrojové texty pre aktérov a aktérky so zodpovednosťami v oblasti antidiskriminácie, ako aj pre odbornú a širokú verejnosť.

Adriana Lamačková | **Čítať viac**

Sexuálne obťažovanie

Výbor na odstránenie všetkých foriem diskriminácie žien vydal v r. 1992 Všeobecné odporúčanie č. 19 o násilí voči ženám. Podľa neho sexuálne obťažovanie zahŕňa také nepríjemné sexuálne motivované prejavy správania ako fyzické kontakty a sexuálne návrhy, poznámky so sexuálnym podtónom, predvádzanie pornografie a sexuálnej túžby, či už slovne, alebo konaním. Také správanie môže byť ponižujúce a môže ohrozovať zdravie alebo bezpečnosť – je diskriminačné, ak sa žena odôvodnene domnieva, že jej námietka/sťažnosť by ju mohla znevýhodniť v súvislosti s jej zamestnaním, vrátane prijatia do zamestnania alebo povýšenia, alebo ak také konanie vytvára nepriateľské pracovné prostredie.

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2.2 Collection of texts and analyses on the possibilities for the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation

The collection comprises studies and translated materials prepared under the auspices of Občan a demokracia with the aim of analysing the existing legal situation in relation to selected anti-discrimination issues and problems. Another objective was to introduce the possibilities of a diversified application of anti-discriminatory legal approaches with implications for public policies and anti-discrimination legislation in general. The texts cover various legal themes which are still deemed marginalised in the context of Slovak legal theory, though, internationally, they are inherent in professional discourse. They focus on various themes which open new horizons, for liberal arts disciplines in particular. Since various methodologies were used in the preparation of these texts, the possibilities for their application in theory and practice are varied.

Some texts discuss the concept of so-called positive action, primarily in light of the recently adopted provision of the Anti-discrimination Act that permits its application in practice. They present an in-depth and critical analysis of the applicable anti-discrimination legislation, building on the knowledge of legal theory and comparative legal science. On the other hand, they put forward proposals for the practical implementation of this instrument, using specific suggestions from relevant experts. The texts also address certain particularities of positive action (or temporary special measures) in particular from the point of view of the groups in whose favour they are adopted.

Another part of the texts in the collection analyses various aspects of gender equality, rights of women and feminist legal theory. For example, a text that serves as an introduction to feminist jurisprudence represents a unique achievement in the Slovak context; it thematises and conceptualises a number of key issues that have not yet been addressed by Slovak legal theory. Another text, which represents a major contribution, concentrates on some aspects of gender equality within legal discourse – on gender bias in judicial decision-making in particular. An authentic text on the utilisation of citizens' participation as an instrument for the enforcement of women's rights in the context of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, within the UN directly, is also of substantial value. A comprehensive summary of the most important issues related to sexual harassment represents another valuable contribution.

The collection serves as a source of information for actors involved in the area of anti-discrimination, and as an inspiring reading experience for experts and the general public. The texts are available at www.diskriminacia.sk and have also been published in specialised periodicals. They have contributed to the fulfilment of several project objectives, such as introducing the topic of affirmative action and gender equality to public and legal professional discussions, and drawing attention to the need for the training of the relevant actors in these areas.

2.3 What we (don't) know about discrimination

The second, updated edition of an information brochure entitled *What we (don't) know about discrimination,* published by Občan a demokracia, outlines basic issues and topics related to equal treatment and discrimination. The brochure is targeted at the general public, primarily people who are, or who are likely to be discriminated against. The publication is available in electronic format at www.diskriminacia.sk. It has several chapters. A general introduction on the equal treatment issue is followed by an overview of the international and EU legal framework with respect to the prohibition of discrimination, explanation of the term 'discrimination', prohibition of discrimination and its definition in Slovak and European legislation.

The Anti-discrimination Act specifies several types of acts that are deemed discrimination. The brochure discusses all of them – direct and indirect discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment) incitement and instruction to discriminate and the adverse treatment of people who have endeavoured to defend against discrimination. In real life, it is sometimes quite difficult to tell one form of discrimination from another as the boundary between them is often rather blurred. For example, it might not be absolutely clear whether a certain type of behaviour should be deemed an instruction or an incitement to discriminate, or whether it is direct or indirect discrimination. However, occasional problems with precisely defining the particular type of discrimination are irrelevant to the fact that discrimination, prohibited under the law, has occurred. Besides, a certain type of discriminatory behaviour may sometimes represent several forms of discrimination simultaneously, e.g., direct discrimination may also include elements of harassment, and vice-versa. The Anti-discrimination Act specifies several exemptions under which different treatment is not considered discriminatory; these are discussed in one of the sub-chapters.

The prohibition of discrimination is one of the methods of promoting the principle of equal treatment in practice. This principle, which is crucial for anti-discrimination legislation, is also discussed in detail. All definitions are illustrated by real-life examples and/or discrimination cases that have been brought before the courts or other competent authorities established for this purpose (e.g. the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights). This topic is discussed in the next section, followed by a chapter on the possibilities and legal means of protection against discrimination.The brochure includes a well-arranged overview of discrimination-related national and European case-law. Links to websites and institutions that can provide information and help are attached at the end of the publication.

Príbehy

Ako na Nový rok...

vonku mrzne
a vnútri tiež
čo ak sa z vajca
vyliahne jež

Jana Juráňová | Čítať viac | 3 Január, 2009 - 15:40

Rodina

po nábreží koník beží koník vraný
číže si ty šuhajíček namaľovaný...

„Čo bolo dnes v škole, Maťko?"
„Nič."
„Akože nič? Bol si tam vôbec?"
„Jasné, že som tam bol..."
„No a? Čo sa tam dnes dialo?
„Nič. Blbosti."
„Prosím? Vy sa tam učíte blbosti?"
„Učka sa nás pýtala na rodinu."
„Počkaj, a nemali ste dnes mať vianočné posedenie v triede?"
„To bolo práve to posedenie. Rozprávali sme sa o tom, čo kto bude robiť na Štedrý deň, a tak. Vypytovala sa, no – blbosti."

Jana Juráňová | Čítať viac | 22 December, 2008 - 11:21

Čokoláda so šľahačkou

čoko čoko čokoláda
aj roláda aj pomáda

Jana Juráňová | Čítať viac | 8 December, 2008 - 19:46

Starostlivý výber

okná dokorán a do dvora
aj tie okná do pitvora

kalendár

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3 Current State of Legislation - The Antidiscrimination Act: Commentary

The Towards Equal Treatment project has also produced a detailed and comprehensive commentary on the Slovak Anti-discrimination Act, the first publication of this kind in Slovakia (Debrecéniová, J.: *Antidiskriminačný zákon: Komentár*. Bratislava: Občan a demokracia, 2008, 1. vydanie, 305 s.). The book, *The Anti-discrimination Act: Commentary*, provides a comprehensive overview of theoretical knowledge that serves for interpreting the Anti-discrimination Act (i.e., Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on amendments to certain acts as amended) and makes practical proposals for its implementation and application. The publication can facilitate the implementation of the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination in Slovakia.

The structure of this detailed commentary follows individual provisions of the Anti-discrimination Act and therefore offers interpretations on a relatively wide range of legal relationships, standards, terms and other issues pertaining to the Anti-discrimination Act. In particular, in provides a detailed interpretation of the content and very meaning of the principle of equal treatment and its particular components, the reasons for which this principle must be complied with, individual forms of discrimination (direct, indirect discrimination, harassment) entities required to comply with the principle of equal treatment, as well as the areas where it is applied and where exemptions are permitted under the Anti-discrimination Act. It also gives an in-depth description of the procedural aspects of protection from discrimination in Slovakia within so-called proceedings on cases involving the violation of the equal treatment principle, and their legal particularities, e.g., the option for the applicants to be represented before courts by a non-governmental organisation or the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, the application of the so-called reversed burden of proof, or popular actions (actio popularis).

The commentary attempts to incorporate relevant aspects of the Community *acquis,* in particular, relevant provisions of individual anti-discrimination directives and applicable principles established by the European Court of Justice case-law. These are directly reflected in the text of commentaries on individual provisions of the Anti-discrimination Act and in separate sections of these commentaries, summarising the relevant legislation and case-law. The author also takes a similar approach to Slovak legislation and case-law, which is again reflected in the text of the commentary itself, as well as in respective sections with references to related laws and court decisions. The publication also builds on the relevant context of international and comparative law and the latest knowledge of legal science which, especially abroad, has considerably enriched the legal discourse and helped to establish anti-discrimination law as a separate branch of law.

The applied methodology combines detailed interpretations of individual provisions of the Anti-discrimination Act with references to relevant legislation and case-law (including quotations from key judgments of relevant courts) with comprehensive footnotes and cross references in the body of the text, and *de lege ferenda* considerations. It can serve as a handbook for various groups of stakeholders engaged in anti-discrimination activities, e.g., law enforcement authorities, entities that are obliged to comply with the principle of equal treatment (employers, providers of goods and services, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, providers of social services, etc.) law and policy-makers, or institutions with special tasks in the field of human rights and the equal treatment principle. The publication can also serve as a source of information for law professionals/students and representatives of other research institutions.

4 Current Situation Regarding Discrimination and Human Rights Issues as Seen by Experts

Excerpts from a series of interviews

The following excerpts come from a series of interviews with individuals in Slovakia who are committed, in efforts and thoughts, to the idea of (anti)discrimination. Complete interviews are available at www.diskriminacia.sk and www.ivo.sk.

Mgr. Janka Debrecéniová, MJur., human rights lawyer

(excerpt from interview)

…The answer depends on various factors and points of view. If we were to objectively ask how serious a problem is discrimination and anti-discrimination in Slovak society, the answer would be – pretty serious. I would say that it is one of the major problems our society is confronted with today.

Discrimination prevents people from fully utilising their capacities; it is a kind of treatment and behaviour that is undignified, that changes people into second-class or even third-class citizens, and wastes them completely. It is a behaviour that has no place in a country which claims to have respect for human rights. Objectively speaking, discrimination deprives our society of diversity, of the knowledge we could gain from interactions with people of different religious and cultural backgrounds, etc. It prevents us from capitalising on the potential that this society could have. It is a great shame that we have not grasped this problem yet, that we have not started dealing with it “right from the start”.

The question of whether discrimination subjectively exists and how it affects our society is a very difficult and complex one. We have only partial information from surveys in which various non-governmental organisations have participated. These surveys clearly indicate that discrimination exists here and that it mainly affects the Roma, women and older women. We know that women still earn more than 25% less than men, or, when viewed through the prism of feminist economic theory, men earn 37% more than women. Because this also indicates who represents or who sets the benchmarks. These are objective facts. The problem is that people still seem not to know what discrimination means. They think that discrimination is any injury or injustice they have suffered. An employee of a public human rights institution even told me of a story in which someone came to complain that they felt discriminated against because a geodesist had measured their plot of land incorrectly. People not only tend to misinterpret this term, they even feel discriminated against when a certain problem starts to be resolved in favour

of those persons who are objectively subjected to discrimination due to various and extremely diverse structural reasons. It is extremely common with the Roma. And there is one more interesting and surely not uncommon phenomenon – discriminated groups are not perceived identically. While we are likely to feel pity for people with disabilities, which, by the way, is not a solution, as it helps no one and solves nothing, we have an extremely negative approach toward some other groups. This applies in the case of Roma and non-heterosexual individuals in particular; their rights are not even formally recognised, especially as regards the possibility of legally arranging their personal and property relations. So there is still a great deal of work ahead of us.

And those problems are so complex and structured that it is very difficult to give a short answer. I would also like to say a few words about political elites. It is not only that the political elites have yet to identify with anti-discrimination standards; they have a problem adhering to human rights standards in general. Otherwise, it would be impossible for a Minister of Justice to make anti-Semitic insinuations, for a Minister of Finance to say he had gone to see some chicks or for the Prime Minister to compete against the Minister of the Interior in decorating cakes, folding tablecloths and hanging curtains and tell women that he would like to hug them all. It's no surprise, if women had not done all those things and had not kept the entire system up and running, it would have gone to pieces long ago. That's why I really think that this society is still full of raw sexism, racism, nationalism, homophobia and many other isms. Of course, it all starts from the highest political elites and infiltrates all social structures. It's sad but true that the media still considerably contributes to spreading these feelings and ideas in our society…

http://www.diskriminacia.sk/?q=node/671

http://www.diskriminacia.sk/?q=node/678

Prof. PhDr. Miroslav Kusý, CSc., political scientist

(excerpt from interview)

...All efforts seem to have slumped after our entry to the European Union. Political representatives think we do not need to play-act any longer. All pre-accession games, about how committed democrats we are and how strongly we are committed to human rights, are over. Political representatives are completely ignorant of this topic. Not only those in the ruling coalition, all of them. That was also a problem with Dzurinda's government. I was an advisor for human rights and minorities and I saw it all going down. The situation is much worse now; we can see a universal ignorance of these problems as something that is already obsolete. Unfortunately, this sort of indifference is not a Slovak specialty; it's much wider than that. International institutions, human rights organisations don't work; the International Helsinki

Federation is dysfunctional. And nothing is heard of other organisations either. UNESCO still functions, formally, its human rights department, but we do not even meet. Before, we used to hold meetings of UNESCO departments every year; we defined the main problems and discussed them. Now there are no meetings, everyone runs their own show…..Commonplace problems, such as the violation of civic and political rights, no longer occur in the Union. That's really over. Not even Mečiar dared to cross the line, even though we were not an EU member back then. It's over now but new problems have emerged, which, however, do not stir up such emotions as in the past when powerful civic movements formed in order to defend civic and political rights. Maybe China and Cuba, but that's it. Yet we face a whole range of problems. While we were a candidate country, we had to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, including those in the field of human rights. The Union left everything else up to us, for example, the issue of children, the rights of the child or women's rights. And it has also remained here.

Non-governmental organisations committed to solving these problems try very hard, but without any attention from state authorities and the general public. Let's say women have a sort of committee in the parliament, with Laco Nagy, but you don't hear about it much. Minority rights, there is a multitude of problems which suggests that something needs be done. But Slovak society believes there's nothing left to solve here. Even "witticisms" that occur in the media are largely ignored. For example, Minister Maďarič says that Hungarian should not be spoken in public. Well, that's frightening! Ten years ago it would have provoked a storm of public outrage. Today it's viewed just as a trivial odd remark. Nothing more. Or what Slota says. I think that the problem is with the public. If the public responded with agitation, the politicians would be more cautious with their words. If people responded to Slota with outrage he would not dare to make such statements in public. But when they take it as a joke, he feels brave. And that's not only Slota. I have read that xenophobic opinions start occurring among young people. But it just reflects that anything is allowed now. When it can be said on TV or in the parliament, why can't we talk like that as well. And in a broader context, it has much to do with the entire consumer society; other issues are deemed as priorities...

http://www.diskriminacia.sk/?q=node/640

Romana Schlesinger, activist and journalism student

(excerpt from interview)

...I'm not a sociologist, but I'm very sensitive to this issue. People around me also reflect and take it very sensitively. I can't give you a complex or "Slovakia-wide" picture and I don't want to engage in controversy. But I think that the 'let sleeping dogs lie' approach prevails. For example, I always say it

would be great if activities aimed at explaining the issue of homophobia and increasing public sensitivity to this particular problem were initiated by the heterosexual community because homophobia is their problem. But it would be utopian to expect a large number of Slovaks to suddenly engage in some sort of massive action, since we are rather passive in general. I'm afraid that the public is more likely to be insensitive, arrogant and ignorant. People are more responsive to economic problems than to the beating of a group of Roma citizens …

...We badly need to implement an equal opportunity concept. The fact is that I often hear "What equality? Equality already exists!" But the concept of equality includes such things which many people regard as absolutely natural. When we speak, for example, about men and women, it is such a "pink and blue world", like that book by Aspekt. If you have been told since your childhood that you are supposed to be altruistic, take care and sit at home with children, you don't find it unusual and do not feel it as some sort of injustice or inequality, you think it's normal. It disadvantages women, even those who don't take their whole maternity leave. But it's discriminating against men, too, because the system was set differently; if both parents were paid equally, they would not be forced to decide which of them should stay at home with children because the other one gets a better pay. The decision to stay at home with children would then be a strictly personal and free choice. But at this moment, it seems to me as a sort of a strictly economic decision which forces families to decide that mothers should stay at home with children. It then goes further to the "why, it's normal, all women do it like this" way of thinking. Therefore no one gives it a second thought. When I wanted to talk about it with my parents, my mother said: "Well, but it's normal, my mother did it, my grandmother, all the women in our house do it that way. It would be funny if fathers stayed with children." And the vocabulary we use – maternity leave – clearly says that it's all about mothers. Fortunately, Slovakia has some really capable women's organisations whose efforts targeted at gender mainstreaming are a success. It's a shame, however, that their efforts are overshadowed by statements made by people who get much more attention from the media. Quite recently I noted comments made by Slovak Vice-Premier, Dušan Čaplovič (SMER) with regard to a shadow report to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, binding for Slovakia). According to Mr Čaplovič, there's no discrimination here, the sterilisation of Roma women were only isolated accidents, NGOs travel abroad where they only blabber and make complaints but they don't communicate with the government. It was quite a surprise for me, since the shadow report to the official Slovak report to CEDAW was very well prepared by relevant women's NGOs that are familiar with the situation. It highlighted real problems and was justifiably critical, in my opinion. And after that, an official political representative, responsible for human rights on top of that, declares it is an exaggerated fabrication and that someone gets emotional about something which is not even true …

http://www.diskriminacia.sk/?q=node/617

Mgr. Zuzana Fialová, PhD., sociologist, independent human rights consultant

(excerpt from interview)

...The main problem in Slovakia is, in my opinion, that ordinary peopled have very little knowledge of human rights. Due to communist as well as post-revolutionary rhetoric, the problem of human rights is now largely misunderstood and misconceived, unfortunately. Human rights have always been presented in two extremes. The first extreme: as a right to a better life, that is, to everything I want and am entitled to, including the right to development, the right to better housing, the right not to get "hoaxed", the right to better pay, and even the right not to get deceived by some cheater to whom I entrust my money. All of those are human rights. Second extreme: human rights were utterly narrowed down to national minority rights only; again, that's extremely misleading, therefore this term has lost its credit in Slovakia and doesn't serve its true purpose any longer. As regards human rights education in Slovak schools, we are real moss backs here. At the time when the UN declared the Decade for Human Rights Education and an education strategy for elementary and secondary school was supposed to be drafted, I endeavoured to do something about it. It was when I worked with the Centre. Some people from Občan a demokracia were also involved.

Today I can say that absolutely nothing has been done. Some fragments exist today, included in some schools subjects, but it has no concept, no quality. And the crucial thing is that those who provide information to pupils and students, I mean teachers, they don't understand it at all. I know what teachers think about human rights and the rights of the child. They mistake them and complain that children have rights and they as teachers have no rights at all; they're absolutely wrong. That's what I think is a serious problem. Moreover, rhetoric used by the current government actually encourages such views. Simply put, this topic dwindles in importance and takes on a rather vulgar social shape. The main idea is lost. We forget about the rule of law, legal certainty for people, trust, the right of citizens to trust their state and their government. People don't like listening to this. And we forget about discrimination as well. I keep saying that I would favour a less extensive scope of discrimination or anti-discrimination, but let's do it well. Because when we fight on several fronts at once, the effect is weaker. So, as far as respect for human rights is concerned, I think the level of knowledge is very poor, it's Uganda.

Another important issue is the situation in the judiciary, as the rule of law principles depend, to a large degree, on the quality of the judiciary. Our judicial system is a mess. There are very few judges who are willing, capable and interested in learning. The system is full of institutional problems which simply lead to the fact that ordinary people have to try very hard in order to enforce their rights before a court; they must have money, energy and, moreover, it's often ineffective. Of course, there are also other important issues in this context, such as the enforcement of judicial decisions which doesn't work either. You have

a court's ruling that the field is yours and not your neighbour's, but the ruling doesn't change anything. Another example, a woman is awarded a restraining order against her husband who mistreated her, but the paper doesn't help in practice. A different thing is whether competent authorities are able to actually enforce the judgment. All other things are secondary; we can talk about racism or anything else, but in the end it always comes back to this point. Since even an individual on the street who suffers something – he is attacked, insulted – even that individual should go to court in the end. There must be some possibility for ordinary people to complain effectively against anybody, even a police officer. If this doesn't work, nothing will work. I think the main problem is that everyone just waves it aside; it's the way it is and that's that. All other problems only derive from this crucial one...

http://www.diskriminacia.sk/?q=node/571

PhDr. Klára Orgovánová, psychologist and Roma rights activist, former Plenipotentionary) of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities

(excerpt from interview)

...Of course, people evaluate things from various aspects. During my professional career I have seen this issue from a number of various perspectives. From the point of view of an NGO, since I worked in the NGO sector for eight years. Then I had the chance to look at things from the most senior governmental post for Roma – from the post of the Roma Plenipotentiary....

Yes, those fundamental formalities have been met. Citizens have a right, guaranteed by law, to apply for a number of things, they can go to the court, they can demand something... But if we mentioned only this, without having any idea of how things really work, we would not be talking about reality.

Many people don't know how to use the means they have at their disposal in order to defend their human rights. Many people, and I will speak about Roma most of the time, don't even care about it. Because they don't think they could really achieve something, because it is a very complicated road to take sometimes – to sue someone. They always need someone to protect or guide them. Often, these people don't even file an action, they give it up, they don't trust it... Pure and simple: we have not yet arrived to that stage where we can regard it as commonplace that certain things cannot be done and that I have the means to defend against it.

...On another level, Slovakia has in fact formally complied with many things – we really do have laws, formally, we have various charters and I think that in any society, only then people want to go into more details and start realising what it all implies. We have gone deeper; we have even taken some measures that will facilitate enforcement of human rights. However, more advanced countries, in terms of economy

and democracy, go even deeper and I think we are not there yet. And maybe some people don't need it, they just don't care about it and those details are really about such things like those teachers in a school where most of the students are Roma children who will be aware of what they are doing when they behave in a certain way – let's say to Roma parents; and that we will know that the school should not be segregated and that those children should not be divided into Roma and non-Roma classes. This also seems normal to us, that it should be this way and many people really believe we shouldn't bother solving this because it cannot be resolved… It means we are not sensitive enough and we are unable to see, no, not unable – we don' want to – many people don't want to see or do anything. Because it would require much effort and – as I have learnt – they, more often than not, say to themselves that it's useless. Well, we are not there yet and I would like to contribute to achieving even those more detailed levels, that we talk about it and to work on it...

http://www.diskriminacia.sk/?q=node/655

PhDr. Lászlo Nagy, MP and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and Status of Women

(excerpt from interview)

I regard the situation in the field of human rights as if it were some homework Slovakia has to do but which is not driven by any internal motives or reasons, but rather as if prescribed from outside.

And Slovakia will always have a sigh of relief when it makes some progress. Just like in 1990, 1992, 1994 or 1998 when we adopted various basic human rights documents, or set up an institute for human rights protection. Or in the field of anti-discrimination policy, or in the field of equal opportunities… Slovakia will sigh with relief and the political representatives may say to themselves we have done our fair share of the work, it's over.

But the social reality in Slovakia is extremely resistant both to external and internal pressures. Probably because the external demand is always stronger. I was always aware of that when, in the period of "Mečiarism", we asked Brussels or Strasbourg for help. That's why we did everything in order to speed up our accession to the European Union, since we expected that Europe, or European institutions, would provide some kind of protection against what was going on here. When the Slovak constitution was adopted, Slovakia felt relieved that we had met requirements in order to become a democratic country. When the ombudsman was elected, it seemed to be all set and done.

In other words, we have adopted relatively good laws, institutions are formed, but Slovakia as a whole is resistant to these changes. In my opinion, this is clearly evidenced by the fact that in the last 15-20

years general elections have always been won by political parties that do not show much sensitivity to human rights problems. And I don't mean these last two years, but the last eighteen years. These political parties have never had basic human rights or ethnic rights, or status on their agendas. Nonetheless, Slovakia has adopted good laws. New institutions were established, after 1998 in particular, that is during the two Dzurinda terms in government. Those were some political acrobatics. That we managed, despite various other social problems and the atmosphere, to get Slovakia into the EU and to convince Europe we deserve to be there. But Slovakia is changing very slowly. Its citizens and the atmosphere in the country are changing very, very slowly, too. However, I acknowledge the major changes that have taken place here, both thanks to non-governmental organisations, and top politicians. It's a miracle what has been done in Slovakia, despite these unfavourable situations with this relatively comfortable country in the area of human rights. I think the basic problem is that the institutions which have been established are more formal than real. And then we also have that turmoil that society doesn't understand. Nobody understands how it is possible that a massive wave of discontent or a rebellion of the Roma suddenly explodes in the eastern Slovakia, just like it did five years ago. ...But more painful is the fact that although the institutions exist, the atmosphere does not change simultaneously with the well-established institutional basis.

http://www.diskriminacia.sk/?q=node/676

5 Research Findings of the Institute for Public Affairs

5.1 Human Rights, Discrimination and Minorities in Public Perception

(Results of quantitative survey)

Oľga Gyárfášová, Martina Sekulová, Institute for Public Affairs

Respect for human rights, discrimination, anti-discrimination, unequal treatment. All of these terms describe problems and areas that constitute major challenges for our society. Yet, little research has been done and few analyses have been conducted on this issue. In terms of research, discrimination, including the identification of its causes, relevant contexts, mechanisms of functioning or reproduction of the phenomenon, is a complex issue. The problem is structural and multilayered in its very nature. Discrimination is closely related to other specific problems, such as stereotypes and prejudices, racism, gender inequality, etc. The very first step necessary in order to raise people's awareness of and sensitivity towards this issue is to know their opinions. A social research poll[1] conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) focused on the following questions: How does the Slovak population perceive discrimination? Which areas, based on their opinions and experience, do they think are most affected by discrimination? Which groups feel the most discriminated against? Which groups are considered by the majority population to be most vulnerable to discrimination?

5.1.1 Human rights – dreams and reality

A large scope of human rights and freedoms are guaranteed under the Slovak constitution and other laws. The public has different opinions on their significance, as well as on how our society respects these human rights and freedoms. Let us have a look at their significance. Respondents were asked to rate the relevance of 21 rights and freedoms using a five-point scale, ranging from absolutely irrelevant (1) to very relevant (5). Table 1 includes the percentage of "very relevant" answers. The most important right is the right to healthcare (86%) followed by the right to social security (77%). Further rights that scored more than 70% include the right to personal security, equality before the law, human dignity, work and privacy. The right to a fair trial is also very important, scoring 69%. The middle range of relevance

[1] The field research was conducted from 14 to 21 May 2008 by the Focus agency on a sample of 1,209 respondents older than 15 years of age.

included, in addition to other social rights (education, the environment) the fundamental civic freedoms such as freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience and religion, the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections, the right to conscientious objection. Political rights, including freedom of assembly (demonstration, protest) the right to strike, organise and form political parties came in with the lowest ratings.

The second aspect of human rights perception is the assessment of the extent to which they are respected by our society. The study conducted in May 2008 has once again confirmed the best known fact – the rights people deem most important are least respected. In this case, however, the rights related to justice and the judiciary turned out to be even more problematic. Only 6% of respondents said that equality before the law and the right to a fair trial were fully respected, i.e., the situation may be described as critical.

The right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections are on the opposite end, as at least half of the respondents think they are fully respected.

Table 1: "Our constitution and laws guarantee various rights and freedoms. How important are the following rights and freedoms to you personally? And now, please, think about the extent to which these rights are violated and respected in Slovakia?"

	Relevance	Respect
right to healthcare	86	18
right to social security	77	10
right to personal security	76	14
equality before the law	73	6
right to human dignity	73	21
right to work	72	10
right to privacy	71	17
right to a fair trial	69	6
right to education	64	35
freedom of thought	61	34
right to property (private ownership)	60	28
right to the healthy environment	58	10
freedom of expression	56	25
freedom of conscience and religion	44	37

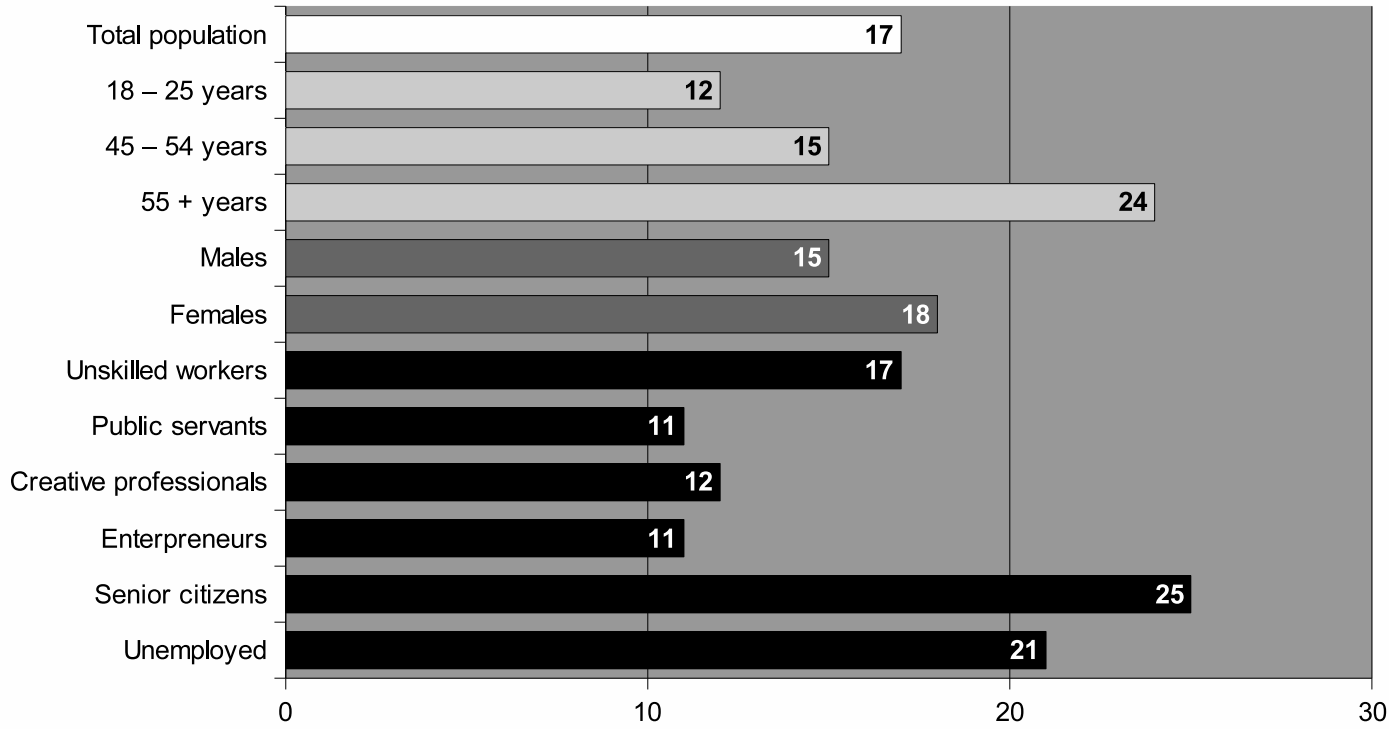
right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections	34	58
right to conscientious objection	31	13
freedom of assembly (demonstration, protest)	22	22
right to strike	19	18
right to organise (right of association)	8	25
right to form a political party	8	34

Note: The table includes the percentage (%) of "very relevant" answers from a five-point scale.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008

5.1.2 Perception of discrimination

The term "discrimination" is already well-known in the Slovak public. Various population groups have experienced unequal treatment and discrimination on grounds of gender, age, education, as well as profession. They are aware of and experience discrimination, though their subjective perception of the significance of this problem varies with the environment. On average, 17% of the respondents in the IVO survey say that they feel discriminated against. This subjective feeling of discrimination varied with different groups in terms of age, profession and education; it has upheld the existing empirical data obtained in previous surveys (*IVO 2006, SNSLP 2006)*. The survey has shown that elderly people feel discriminated against most frequently. The elderly who come from a more vulnerable environment say that they have experienced more discrimination based on all prohibited grounds of discrimination (Bútorová, et al. 2008 : 213*).* Among the respondents above 55 years of age, 24% said that they felt discriminated against. On the other hand, the 18-25 age group are the least discriminated against. The subjective feeling of discrimination varied also with gender: 18% of women and 15% of men said that they felt discriminated against. The largest group of respondents who feel discriminated against includes senior citizens (25%) people above 55 years of age (24%) and the unemployed (21%). All of the three groups are socially vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Chart 1 "Do you personally feel discriminated against?"



***Source*:** Institute for Public Affairs, 2008

The issue of discrimination is even more specific as not all people understand what this term actually implies. Also, Slovaks are not clear on what type of action and what type of behaviour constitutes discrimination and which aspects of life and social reality are affected. Empirical data from previous surveys (*Field survey*..., 2006:13) has already hinted at a relatively low level of understanding of the human rights and discrimination issue among Slovaks. Data obtained in the IVO survey also confirm a high level of misconception. In the case of respondents who said they personally felt discriminated against, we asked an open question to ascertain the grounds on which they were discriminated against. They gave a large number of miscellaneous answers, often including replies implying that this term is widely misinterpreted.

Table 2: "On what grounds do you feel discriminated against?"

	answers in %
based on older age	20
based on the difficulty of finding a job	9
based on insufficient financial remuneration	8
based on low old-age pension payments	7
based on unequal access to healthcare	5
based on support for the socially disadvantaged and minorities	4
based on nationality	4

Note: The respondents were asked an open question; the table includes only the most frequently given answers, divided into particular categories.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, May 2008

Table 2 includes the seven most frequently mentioned subjective reasons (57% of all answers; the remaining answers were so varied that they could not be included under any category). One-fifth of the respondents said that they faced discrimination based on age. Many people feel discriminated against on the labour market; this answer was given by 9% of the respondents, and another 8% mentioned insufficient financial remuneration. However it should be noted that in the case of answers to an open question, the disadvantage which may affect discrimination or unequal treatment is unclear. The answers describe consequences rather than causes. The truth is, however, that discriminatory behaviour occurs most often on the labour market. The respondents gave reasons other than those related to the labour market. They feel discriminated against in access to healthcare services, on the grounds of their minority origin and due to state support for minorities.

Many answers were rather controversial. For example, "citizens are manipulated by advertising" was cited as an example of discrimination. One answer was "in everything". This indicates that discrimination is construed in many ways and that the term is quite often misinterpreted, since discrimination is often viewed as any injustice in general. Also, the survey upheld the well-known fact that the combination of age, gender and labour market is currently the most substantial problem.

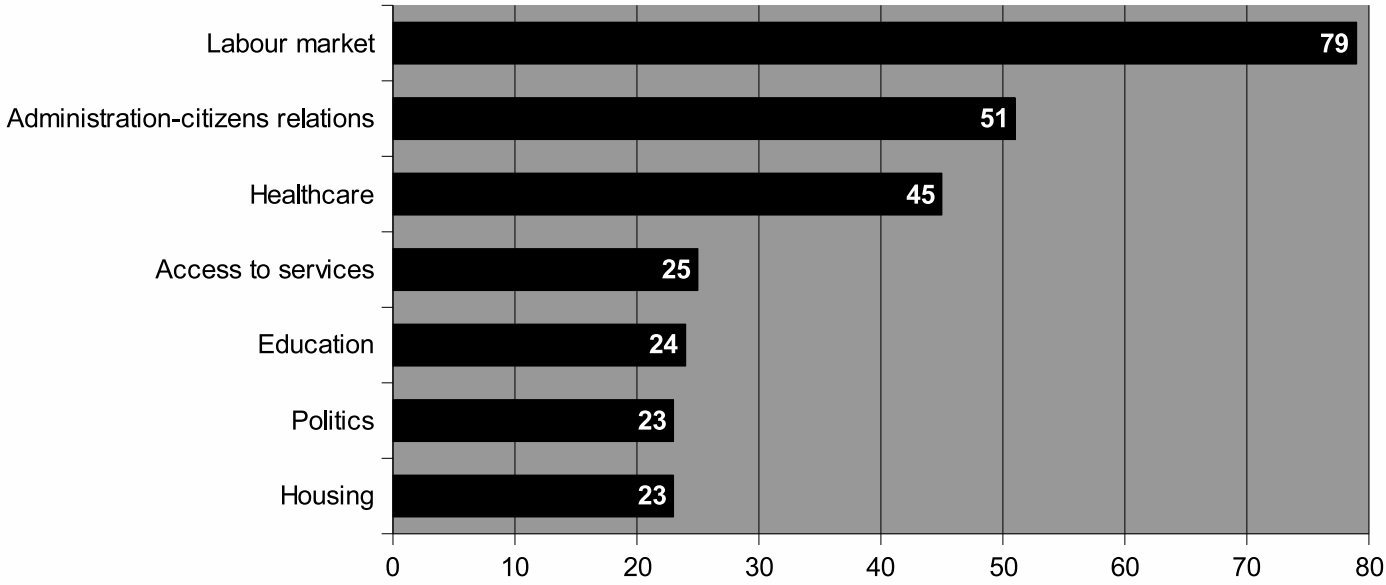
The answer "based on state support to minorities" points to another distinct particularity in the perception of discrimination in Slovakia. The perception is strongly polarised. Discrimination is understood too broadly or too narrowly. If perceived too broadly, discrimination is deemed a phenomenon that occurs "nearly everywhere". If perceived too narrowly, discrimination is only associated with minorities which, subsequently, leads to negative sentiments for efforts aimed at addressing minority problems and mis-

interpretation that the support provided to some groups (e.g. Roma or Hungarian minorities) constitutes the disadvantaging of the remaining Slovak population.

Most frequent places of discrimination

Unequal treatment and discrimination may be experienced virtually anywhere. The respondents were asked to specify where they think discrimination occurs most often, i.e., which environment is considered the most risky in terms of discrimination. The respondents could choose from seven different environments: labour market, healthcare system, housing, services, education system, politics and relations of public administration authorities to citizens. The labour market turned out to be the most problematic of all environments. Job interviews, addressing the day-to-day rights and duties of employees, special needs of particular employee groups, layoffs, remuneration and wages; all of these are areas where discriminatory acts take place in practice. The answers were also confirmed by several empirical studies *(IVO 2006, SNSĽP 2005, SNSĽP 2006).*

Chart 2 "Where does discrimination occur most frequently?"

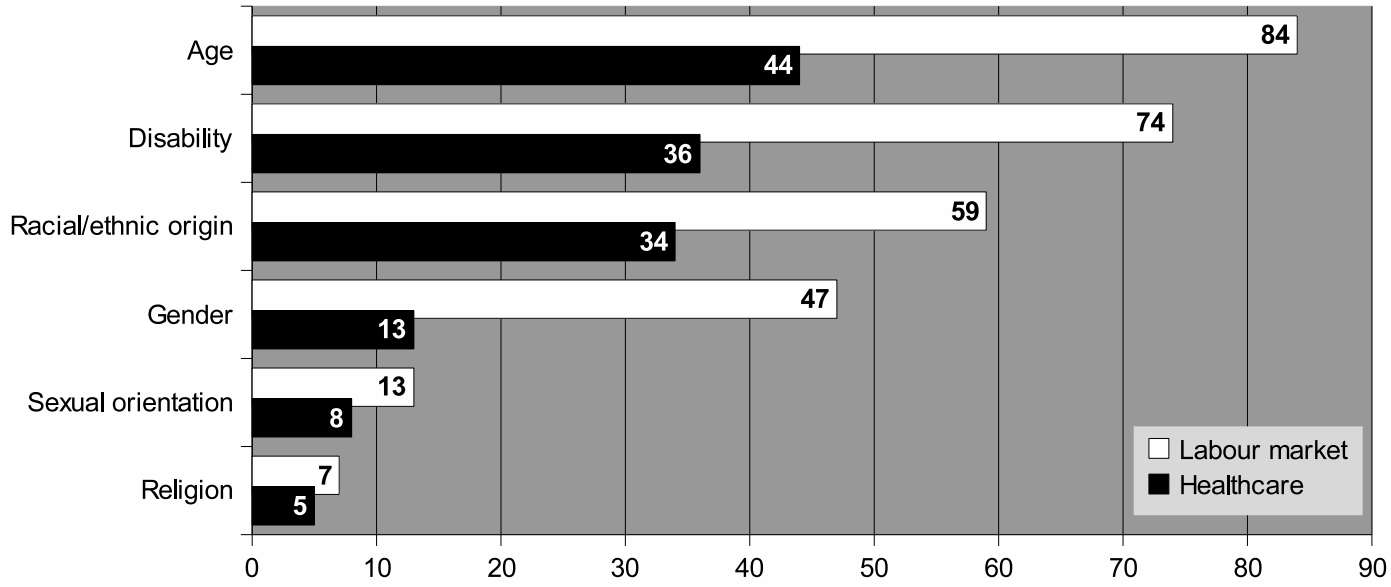


Note: Respondents could not give more than four answers.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, May 2008

As many as 79% of the respondents said discrimination was most common on the labour market. This high figure *inter alia* results from the fact that the majority of the Slovak population has had some experience with the labour market. The conditions and functioning of the labour market are extremely well-known for most Slovaks. In addition, this answer reflects not only the personal experience of the respondents, but also the experience of acquaintances, friends, etc. The second most quoted environment related to relations between public administration authorities and citizens (51%). This is probably a rather vague proposition since when asked an open question on where they felt discriminated against, most often the respondents said they had the feeling of being discriminated against due to the poor enforceability of rights before courts; they also expressed very little confidence in the rule of law in general. Nearly one half of the respondents (45%) said that discrimination was most commonplace in the healthcare system.

Better insight into the perception of discrimination can be obtained if we compare the perception of environments where discrimination occurs against individual grounds for discrimination. The respondents were asked about the frequency of discrimination based on specific grounds on the labour market and in the healthcare system.

Chart 3 "How common is discrimination on the labour market and in the healthcare system on the following grounds?"



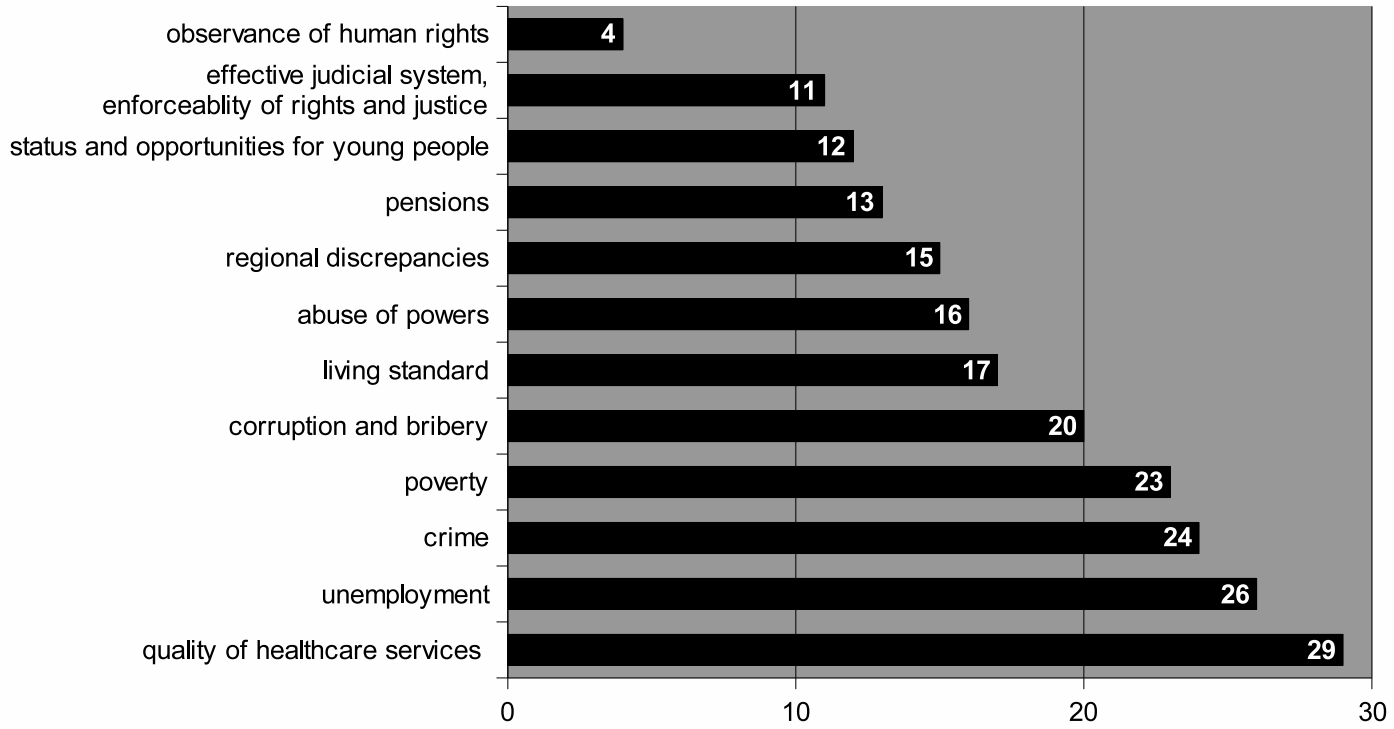
Note: The figures included in the table represent the sum of "very common" and "quite common" answers.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, May 2008

Similar to the open question, the respondents considered discrimination based on age as most serious, even in this case. Moreover, as many as 84% of the respondents said that discrimination based on age frequently occurred on the labour market. The age criterion was quoted by the majority of respondents even with respect to discrimination in the healthcare system. The second, yet equally alarming, most frequent reason for discrimination given by the respondents was disability. As regards the labour market and the healthcare system, disability was given as the reason for discrimination by 74% and 36% of the respondents, respectively. The third most common reason for discrimination was racial and ethnic origin, with the respective figures for the labour market and the healthcare system being 60% and 34%. Gender-based discrimination ended up fourth, quoted by 47% of the respondents in the case of the labour market and 12% of the respondents in the case of the healthcare system. It should however be stressed that discrimination is a very complex and many-sided phenomenon. Multiple discrimination, when a person is subjected to discrimination due to gender and age, also occurs rather often. On that account, it is very difficult to state "the main cause" of discrimination in certain cases, since the accumulation of disadvantages is typical for discrimination.

5.1.3 Discrimination in the context of the most serious social problems

In order to obtain the most comprehensive picture of the perception of the social reality in Slovakia as possible, we asked the respondents what they considered to be the most serious problems in Slovakia today. When ranking the selected social problems on the list according to their significance, the respondents placed the human rights issue or the issue of the specific status of certain population groups on the lowest ranks. This is due to the fact that there are other problems which affect people's subjective experience with greater force. In addition, discrimination and human rights issues are perceived separately from other, more important problems pertaining to living standards and social welfare. It seems that Slovak citizens do not associate these issues with their social conditions or living standards; to the contrary, social phenomena and problems are perceived separately from discrimination or, in other words, people understand discrimination as a specific problem which has no direct bearing on other aspects of their lives.

Chart 4 "Which three problems do you think are most serious?"



Note: The respondents could only name three out of the 30 problems.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, May 2008

As shown in Chart 4, problems pertaining to healthcare, social welfare and living standards were described as most serious by the respondents. The quality of healthcare services was the most serious problem according to 29% of the respondents. In order to interpret the data correctly, it should be noted that the healthcare system is very often considered as problematic due to the relatively frequent occurrence of such behaviour which Slovak citizens deem as discriminatory. The second most serious social problem was unemployment. It has been one of the most pressing problems for a number of years, although its relevance is slightly decreasing. The unemployment issue, which ranked second, is considered a serious problem by 26% of the population. The third most serious problem in Slovakia, named by 24% of the respondents, is criminality and organised crime. In spite of this relatively high figure, the feeling of internal security among the Slovak citizens is gradually strengthening (*Slovakia, 2007:240)*. Poverty was considered a serious social problem for 23% of the respondents, the living standard was a crucial issue for 17% of the Slovak population.

Problems associated with discrimination, respect for human rights, the status of minorities and marginalised groups are considered less serious. Respect for human rights was deemed a problem by 4% of the respondents. On one hand, this may be caused by the fact the people are less sensitive to this particular issue when compared to other problems. On the other hand, people in Slovakia may associate the problems linked to human rights and discrimination with other problems, such as the aforementioned quality of healthcare services. An interesting finding is that an ever increasing number of people include intolerance, aggressive behaviour, racism and xenophobia among serious social issues (*Slovakia, 2007:240).* Based on the IVO survey conducted in May 2008, 9% percent of the population are sensitive about these issues, which is a considerable increase compared to previous years.

Table 3: "Extremism, xenophobia and racism perceived as a serious social problem."

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Xenophobia, racism, intolerance, extremism	5	4	7	9

Note: The respondents could name only three out of the 30 problems.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2005 - 2008

5.1.4 Respect for human rights – actors and citizens' "self-defence"

Important aspects of the perception of discrimination and human rights include the level of public knowledge of the institutions that should address these issues; the extent to which these institutions are visible, and whether the citizens believe that the competent institutions would assist them in critical situations.

In the May 2008 survey, the respondents named two institutions which contributed most considerably to the observance of human rights in Slovakia: the public rights defender or ombudsman (33%) and the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, SNSĽP, (32%). In particular the Centre achieved substantially better results than two years ago. At that time, only 19% of the respondents were able to answer an open question asking them to name at least one institution engaged in anti-discrimination activities in Slovakia; 81% could not name any (SNSĽP, November 2006). A closed question, where concrete institutions were specified, confirmed the poor public awareness of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights – nearly half of the respondents said they had never heard of such an institution (SNSĽP, November 2006). The current positive image of both institutions, required by law to monitor compliance with the equal treatment principles, may be explained in two ways: first of all, the names of both institutions were stated and hinted at the "protection of rights" or "human rights", which evoked positive associations among the respondents. Another reason for their improved image may consist in an objective improvement recently in "visibility" and public perception. The truth is that human rights and

their protection have become much more prevalent in public debate. On the other hand, the number of "I don't know" answers has remained relatively high – 15% and 22%, respectively. More importantly, as we will demonstrate later, only a very small number of people would contact these institutions if they were subjected to discrimination.

Third place was taken by non-governmental organisations in general, i.e., human rights NGOs, followed by the Slovak Government and international institutions, the EU and the UN. Courts, political parties and, ending up without much surprise in the last place, employers were assessed as the worst. Employers were even described by the majority of respondents, as much as 11%, as "having a negative impact on human rights, they either violate or endanger them".

Table 4: "Evaluate the following institutions in terms of their actual contribution to observing human rights in Slovakia."

	clearly positive contribution	moderate contribution	no contribution	negative effect on HR; HR violated/ endangered	don't know
Office of the Public Defender of Human Rights (ombuds-man)	33	37	14	2	15
Slovak National Centre for Human Rights	32	32	12	2	22
non-governmental organisations	26	40	17	3	13
Slovak government	24	48	15	4	8
European Commission	24	38	16	3	19
United Nations	24	36	15	4	20
church	19	40	22	6	13
parliament (National Council of the Slovak Republic)	17	45	22	7	9
local authorities	14	45	28	5	8
courts	11	44	28	8	9
political parties	9	47	27	8	8
employers	4	44	32	11	9

Note: most frequent answers up to a total of at least 50% are highlighted.
***Source*:** Institute for Public Affairs, 2008

Increased public sensitivity to the human rights issue and discrimination should also include an activation component – strengthened civic competence – i.e., they know whom to contact and are ready to act. Simply put, it is important not only to know your rights, but also to overcome civic powerlessness in their enforcement, either by yourself or along with others.

The respondents were asked what would they do if they were subjected to unfair treatment by a civil servant or another public administration authority and felt they had been discriminated against. A "do nothing" strategy still remains widely popular – it was the second most frequent answer in the survey (17 %). Feelings of powerlessness and helplessness are often experienced by elderly people (as much as 26% in the above 60 years of age group) people with elementary education (21%) people of other than Slovak or Hungarian origin, i.e., Roma, very likely (28%).

However, a majority of the respondents (24%) opted for an active approach – they would write a letter of complaint to a superior of the civil servant in question. Another 15% would return to the given office and demand their rights, 11% would inform the media. Other answers were given by less than 10% of the respondents.

Table 5: "Imagine a civil servant or another public administration authority treated you unfairly and you felt discriminated against. What would you do?"

I would write a complaint letter to his/her superior officer	24
I would do nothing	17
I would go to the given office and insist on my rights	15
I would inform the media about this injustice	11
I would seek recourse in court	8
I would contact the public defender of rights (ombudsman)	7
I would contact the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights	5
I would write a complaint to president or prime minister	3
I would seek help from a relevant non-governmental organisation	2
other	3
I do not know	6

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008.

The actual enforcement of existing laws requires citizens' commitment to observing human rights and anti-discrimination. A survey conducted as part of the Plus for Women 45+ Equal initiative project in August 2006 showed a large degree of scepticism with respect to defending rights at the workplace. As

many as 65% of female respondents said that women aged 45+ do not defend their employee rights sufficiently (Bútorová et al. 2008:224).

5.1.5 Tolerance and intolerance towards different groups

In terms of the social status and living opportunities of various population groups in the context of major social problems, the most pressing problems include the situation of young people (21%) and the living conditions and opportunities of the elderly (8%). However, we can once again say that the problematic position of the elderly people may also be a part of a different social problem, e.g., unemployment, the status of women, the quality of healthcare service or pensions. The status and opportunities for women was considered serious by 6% of the respondents. According to 4% of the respondents, the living conditions and status of people with disabilities is a serious issue. The status of religious minorities was named by the lowest number of the respondents – only 0.5% - which results from the fact that religious life in Slovakia is dominated by the Roman Catholic Church.

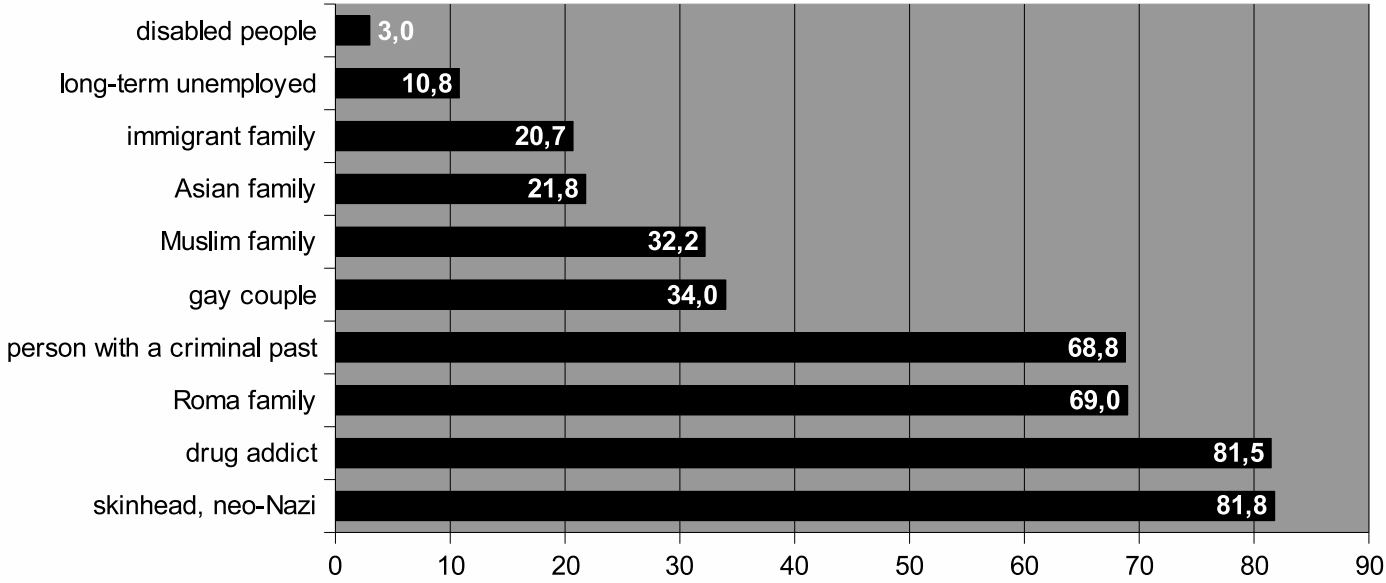
Table 6: "Which three problems do you think are most serious?"

status and living opportunities for young people	12
protection of employees' right in private companies	9
intolerance, aggressive behaviour, racism and xenophobia	9
status and opportunities of the elderly people	8
status and opportunities of women	6
living conditions and opportunities for inhabitants of Roma settlements	6
solidarity with the socially vulnerable	4
living conditions/status and opportunities for people with physical disabilities	4
living conditions and opportunities for Hungarian minority members	2
status and living opportunities for gays and lesbians and other people with a minority sexual orientation (e.g. bisexuals)	1
status of religious minorities	1

Note: The respondents could name three out of the 30 problems. The table includes selected problems related to discrimination and human rights.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008.

As shown in the chart and table above, the awareness of the position of living opportunities of individual population groups, as well as disadvantaged groups, varies. There are some groups which, due to various reasons (both objective and subjective) are considered problematic or unwanted, and social distance exists in their case. The respondents' social distance from selected population groups was examined against their willingness to accept a member of a certain group as their neighbour. Examining attitudes towards certain population groups is of particular importance due to the fact that the existence of negative prejudice is very closely related to discriminatory behaviour, and they often trigger such behaviour.[2]

Chart 5: "If any of the following groups moved into your neighbourhood, which one would you find most annoying?"



Note: The respondents could name several groups they would find annoying.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, May 2008

The largest number, 82% of the respondents, distanced themselves from skinheads and neo-Nazis. Drug addicts represent the second group with the largest social distance (81.5%). However, a Roma family ended up no better than third place and were described as unwanted neighbours by 69% of the respondents, which corresponds to the prevailing great social distance between the majority popula-

[2] The data concerning the relation to minorities were obtained within the social research pole "Citizenship and Participation in Slovakia 2008" implemented in the framework of the project of the Centre of Excellence of the Slovak Academy of Sciences for Research and Development of Citizenship and Participation. The data are used with the agreement of the Department of Social and Biological Communiucation - the leading partner within the project.

tion and this particular group, as well as the strong level of stereotyping associated with this group. A continued strong level of social distance from the Roma has been highlighted by a number of empirical studies (*IVO 2006, SNSLP 2006).* More than one third of the respondents (34%) said they would not like to see a gay couple move into their neighbourhood. The perception of non-heterosexual persons constitutes a specific problem, while the perception of gay and lesbian couples also differs. A relatively large degree of social distance also exists with respect to immigrants, as 21% of the respondents said they did not want them as their neighbours. It is obvious that the Slovak population retains a rather reserved approach to diversity, to different population groups, which may have various causes, for example, stemming from past experience (towards the Roma) or it may be a brand new problem (keeping distance from immigrants).

The perception of selected groups and the approach taken by the majority population towards them was also examined to find out whether society should be accommodating towards them, i.e., whether it should be helpful in resolving their problems. We asked the respondents whether they deem it right when society provides assistance to selected population groups and helps accommodate their specific needs. The answers again indicated important correlations with continued negative attitudes towards certain groups and with the existence of unfounded negative prejudices. Also, such implications are very rarely based on any actual personal experience, e.g., experience from direct contact with migrant workers from less developed economies.

Table 7: "Should society help these groups of people in resolving their problems or accommodate their specific needs?"

	Definitely yes + rather yes	Definitely no + rather no
people with physical disabilities	97	3
chronically ill persons (diabetes, serious allergies, asthma, migraine, chronic aches and pains, etc.)	96	3
elderly people	95	4
victims of violence and torture	93	7
people with mental disabilities	93	6
drug addicts	58	37
former convicts	57	38
heavy drinkers	56	39
immigrants from economically less developed countries	49	43

people with different skin colour	48	45
members of the Roma community	45	51
lesbians	21	68
gays	19	70
bisexuals	16	71
people practising a religion not common in Slovakia (Muslims, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.)	14	75

Note: The values in the table represent the sum of "definitely yes" and "rather yes" answers and the sum of "definitely no" and "rather no" answers. The remaining answers were "I don't know".
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008

The survey results show that Slovak society is highly sensitive to groups of people with health problems, physical and mental disabilities, the elderly and victims of physical violence. A relatively strong level of sensitivity and solidarity is also apparent with respect to drug addicts and heavy drinkers. But as far as the Roma community is concerned, those who disapprove of help being provided to this particular group prevail over those in favour; the respective figures are 51 and 45%. The groups that should not be provided any assistance and support by society include bisexuals (71%), gays (69%) and lesbians (68%). Even in this context, one can see a considerable social distance between the majority population and non-heterosexual minorities. In addition, there is a certain tension evident in relations with the non-heterosexual population groups. The relations with gays and lesbians were described as tense by 38% and 34% of the respondents, respectively. In terms of complexity of mutual relations, Slovaks see their relations with the Roma community as the major problem, named by 80% of the respondents.

Table 8: "Is there any tension or problems in relations between the majority Slovak population and people from the following minority groups?"

	Definitely yes + rather yes	Definitely no + rather no
members of the Roma community	80	16
drug addicts	76	18
heavy drinkers	75	21
former convicts	70	23
people with a different skin colour	48	42
immigrants from economically less developed countries	46	43

gays	38	46
people practising a religion not common in Slovakia (Muslims, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.)	38	49
people with mental disabilities	36	59
lesbians	34	51
victims of violence and torture	33	60
bisexuals	32	50
elderly people	31	66
people with physical disabilities	28	68
chronically ill persons (diabetes, serious allergies, asthma, migraine, chronic aches and pains, etc.)	18	78

Note: The values in the table represent the sum of "definitely yes" and "rather yes" answers and the sum of "definitely no" and "rather no" answers. The remaining answers were "I don't know".
Source: Institute for Public Affairs 2008

It is quite surprising that as many as 46% of the respondents described relations with migrant workers from economically less developed countries as problematic, even though Slovakia is more of a transit country for migrant workers. What's more, it applies a very stringent asylum policy which accounts for a very low presence of these groups in Slovakia. An even more interesting fact is that 66% of the respondents said they did not know any migrant workers at all, that they had no personal experience with them and had never been in direct contact with such persons. Also, only less than 1% of the respondents count such a person among their closest acquaintances or family members, while 6% know such a person. The survey results indicate an increased level of stereotyping in respect to this population group.

Similar results were also obtained in the case of Roma community members, people with a different skin colour and gays. As regards gays, only 5% of the respondents count any homosexual person among their closest acquaintances (or know about the non-heterosexual orientation of a person in their vicinity) and 16% of the population know and regularly encounter such persons. For the Roma community, the respective figures are 5:31, for the people of a different skin colour it is 3:14. It means that attitudes and opinions regarding these groups are largely built on suppositions, stereotypes and, unfortunately, prejudice.

Table 9: "Membership in various groups and contacts with such groups"

	among my family members or friends	I know and meet them personally	there is such a person in my vicinity	I don't know such persons, have no experience
lesbians	1	4	14	75
gays	5	16	29	47
bisexuals	1	3	11	78
immigrants from economically less developed countries	1	6	24	66
members of the Roma community	5	31	41	22
people with a different skin colour	3	14	32	49

Note: The remaining answers were "I don't know".
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008

Positive action

Public opinions on positive action differ. The strongest public affinity exists in relation to support for the employment of parents with small children (42% said they would consider positive action measures absolutely justified, another 46% considered it rather justified). Parents with small children were followed by the physically disabled, the elderly and the mentally disabled. The majority of the population tends to approve of support and assistance programmes and measures designed for these particular groups. The system of quotas to ensure better participation of women in the parliament is also supported by the majority of the respondents, though their support is not as robust as in the former case. However, positive opinions on positive action measures sharply weaken when it comes to the Roma population. Only 13% of the respondents think that preparation of Roma children for school entrance examinations is an absolutely justified positive action measure; as regards a quota system aimed at increasing Roma participation in local self-government authorities, the support falls to a mere 5%. This particular mindset reflects the social distance between the majority population and the Roma minority, as well as the popular belief that various social allowances are assigned on an ethnic rather than social principle and that the advantaging of minority groups leads to the disadvantaging of the majority (Gyárfášová - Sekulová 2008). A similar phenomenon is also apparent in the answers to another question (Table 11).

Table 10: "Our society includes also certain disadvantaged groups with decreased chances of success. How much do you think the following measures could be justified?"

	absolutely justified measure	rather justified measure	rather unjustified measures	absolutely unjustified measures
Support for employment of parents with small children	42	46	7	2
Measures taken by an employer in order to make work for people with physical disabilities easier	34	53	8	1
Measures taken by an employer in order to make work for its elderly and female employees easier	33	51	11	2
Support for employment of people with mental disabilities	29	53	10	2
A quota system to ensure better participation of women in the parliament	23	46	19	5
Preparation of young Roma people for school entrance examinations	13	46	25	10
A quota system to ensure better participation of the Roma in local self-governing authorities	5	31	36	20

Note: The remaining answers were "I don't know".
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008

Table 11: "Imagine you had an opportunity to decide on the allocation of SKK 100,000 from your municipal budget for the following priorities. It means that you have SKK 100,000 at your disposal, which you may earmark to the following ten areas – you can allocate the whole amount to one area or you can divide it among more areas. How would you divide it?"

housing construction for socially vulnerable families	78
establishment of a daily sanatorium for people with memory defects (Alzheimer's disease, etc.) who are unable to take care of themselves	75
construction of a sports facility	64

environmental improvement project	64
construction of barrier-free pavements and entrances to shops and cultural facilities	63
support for a mothers' centre	63
investment incentives for a promising investor that would create new jobs	59
establishment and equipment for protected workshops	54
establishment of a detention station for drunks	33
payments for Roma assistants	26

Note: The table includes the % of respondents who would allocate at least some financial amount.
Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008

5.1.6 Conclusions

The empirical survey conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs has proven that discrimination is a serious social phenomenon, with 17% of the population having the subjective feeling of being victims of discrimination. Although discrimination is not a new phenomenon, a considerable portion of the Slovak population does not understand it and tends to understand discrimination as any injustice in general.

According to Slovak citizens, the most important human rights include the right to healthcare (86%) the right to social security (77%) the right to personal security (76%) and the right to equality before the law. Quite paradoxically, respect for these rights is on an average or below-average level. Absolutely respected rights include the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections (58%), freedom of conscience and religion (37%) and the right to education (35%).

The issues of discrimination and human rights rank lower on the list of social problems as perceived by the public. The most serious social problems include healthcare services, social welfare and living standards.

Slovaks do not seem to associate discrimination and human rights with social conditions and living standards. Quite to the contrary, social phenomena and problems are perceived separately from discrimination or, in other words, people understand discrimination as a specific problem which has no direct bearing on other aspects of their lives.

As far as the environments where discrimination occurs are concerned, most respondents (79%) named the labour market. The labour market is even more prominent when age-based discrimination is taken

into account, as 84% of the respondents said that discrimination based on age was the most frequent type of discrimination on the labour market.

As many as 17% of the respondents decide not to do anything when they feel discriminated against by public administration authorities; the feelings of powerlessness and helplessness are more common among the elderly (as much as 26% for respondents in the above 60 age group), people with elementary school education (21%) and people of other than Slovak or Hungarian origin, i.e., the Roma, very likely (28%).

The majority population feels a social distance between them and several population groups; this feeling is largely based on suppositions, assumptions and stereotypes. A good example illustrating this fact is the attitude of the majority population towards migrants from less developed economies. Even though 66% of the respondents do not know any migrant workers and only 7% of them know someone like that, some 43% of the respondents say that relations with this particular group are problematic.

When examining the contribution of public institutions to the reinforcement of human rights, the Office of the Public Defender of Rights with 33% and the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights with 32% scored the best. It could however be caused by the fact that names of these institutions directly hint at and are associated with human rights activities.

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5.2 Do We Know What Discrimination Means?

(Results of a qualitative survey)

Martina Sekulová, Oľga Gyarfášová, Institute for Public Affairs

Discrimination, a term based on the concept of discrimination and equality, is currently a topical issue in public debate. Media coverage includes reports and information on cases of non-compliance with human rights and discrimination against various population groups. In addition, the word *discrimination* is part of the Slovak public's common, day-to-day vocabulary. This term is generally known and widely used. But is this term used correctly in public debate? Does the Slovak population have good knowledge of the concept of discrimination; do we comprehend the true meaning of this term? What other meanings are associated with it? In order to find answers not only to the aforementioned questions, a qualitative survey[3] was conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs from March to May 2008[4].

Discrimination, as defined for the purposes of the IVO survey, means unreasonable unequal treatment of individuals, or groups of individuals. Discriminatory treatment fails to award equal rights to all groups

[3] The qualitative survey was performed using the focus group method in four locations – Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina and Bratislava. A total of 37 respondents between the ages of 18 and 54 participated in the survey. The Žilina and Bratislava focus groups consisted of young people under the age 35, who work, and/or study. The Trenčín group included respondents between the ages of 33 and 50 from various environments. The gender homogenous Nitra group was comprised of female respondents between the ages of 30 and 49.

[4] The survey is part of the "*Towards equal treatment: awareness raising and multi level empowerment of the civil society and public actors in the field of anti discrimination*" project implemented with support from the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007 – 2013) and with the support of the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The analysis reflects the views of the authors and the Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information that forms part of the project outputs.

and individuals, it demonstrates animosity towards diversity. Under the Slovak Anti-discrimination Act,[5] direct discrimination is defined as "any action or omission to act which results in one person being treated less favourably than another person has been or could be treated in a comparable situation." Another definition says that discrimination is "the disadvantaging or restricting of a person or a group of persons based on their sex, race, colour of the skin, language, age, sexual orientation, belief, religion, political or other views, national or social origin, membership in a national or ethnic group, based on property, gender, or other status (Debrecéniová, 2006, 4).

The main objective of the survey was to obtain a concrete picture of how the public perceives discrimination, that is, to discover the implications the Slovak population associates with discrimination, human rights and equal opportunities. We wanted to learn about the various connotations these terms take on in the perception of the general public and who/which groups/ are most frequently considered to be discriminated against. In order to obtain relevant answers, we decided to divide the work into three separate thematic parts. In the first part, the respondents were asked to freely express associations that came to their minds when they heard the terms human rights, discrimination and equal treatment. In the second thematic part, the respondents were asked to assess how important it is for Slovak society to deal with discrimination and human rights, they reflected on which areas are more problematic in terms of discrimination than others and, at the same time, they were asked to specify which groups were most and least vulnerable to discrimination. In the third phase of the survey, the respondents were presented with six case studies and then asked to identify the person who had perpetrated the act of discrimination and the grounds for the act of discrimination, and the victim of and reason for the discrimination.

Information about discrimination

The questions asked in the survey were based on the premise that the understanding of discrimination and the level of knowledge of this phenomenon is insufficient. These assumptions have also been upheld by other studies dealing with this particular issue[6]. A study of the level of knowledge and attitudes towards human rights conducted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNSLP) in November 2006 showed that the respondents had no knowledge of cases of non-compliance with human rights, i.e., they were unable to provide a negative assessment with respect to the observance of human

[5] Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and protection against discrimination and amendments to certain acts (the Anti-discrimination Act) - in force from 1 April 2008.

[6] *Field research on the observance of the equal treatment principle at the beginning and termination of the employment relationship of selected categories of citizens* (Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Bratislava 2006), *The representative research on the perception of human rights and the principle of equal treatment of the adult population in the Slovak Republic* (Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Bratislava 2007), surveys conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs in 2005, 2006 and 2008.

rights. Also, 52% of the respondents of the same survey said that human rights were important but that there were other areas that deserved to become priorities. Another indicator of the poor level of awareness and understanding of the discrimination and human rights issues on the part of the Slovak public was the fact that an extremely high number of respondents (81%) did not know any Slovak institution responsible for anti-discrimination activities. According to the results of another representative social survey conducted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights in 2005, 10% of the population does not know the meaning of the term *discrimination,* 30% have an idea about its meaning, and 64% are convinced they know exactly what it means. The authors of the study alone stated, "both the experts and general public continue to disagree on its interpretation and a considerable portion of the population is not familiar with its content" (Field research..., 2006: 14). In addition, the same survey showed that people had very little information about the possible means of protection against discrimination. Only 40% of the respondents knew that the Anti-discrimination Act had been adopted, 54% knew nothing about it, and 6% thought it had not been passed yet.

5.2.1 Qualitative survey result analysis

Understanding the notion of discrimination

The answers given by the respondents from various age and social groups revealed that the understanding of discrimination had no clear shape or strictly defined limits. The notion of discrimination was perceived as a negative action against an individual, most frequently described as injustice, unfairness, misuse, denial of rights on the basis of "something", making prejudiced conclusions, restriction, suppression, inequality, etc. Speaking in general terms, the statements by all respondents contained discrimination-related implications and evidenced that the respondents had already encountered and known of this notion.

The extent and scope of the understanding of discrimination became more apparent during discussions but, above all, during the assessment of case studies about which the respondents were asked to determine the discriminating and discriminated person and the grounds for discrimination. Generally speaking, the discussion groups were able to identify discrimination in the case studies and specify who was discriminating and who was discriminated against. However, the notion and concept of discrimination was rather unclear to some focus group participants. Their answers reflected various dimensions of discrimination, for example, an unclear dividing line between the right to private property and the restriction of human rights of other groups, understanding discrimination as depending on various circumstances, the hierarchised perception of groups vulnerable to discrimination and misinterpretations of the term.

On the other hand, some respondents were extremely clear about what discrimination denoted. The respondents' statements and responses provide valuable information on the perception of discrimination by selected social groups in the particular time period; they give a better picture of how the Slovak population perceives discrimination and the implications it has taken on in the public perception.

Respondents' definitions of discrimination

The survey showed that the respondents define and understand discrimination in a number of distinctive ways. One group of respondents perceive discrimination as violation of the rights that an individual is entitled to, as described by Lucia, a pedagogue from Bratislava:

> *"Violation of a right based on some factor; being a female, skin colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin. Simply put, violation of a right to which I am entitled."*

Another group of respondents defined discrimination as a restriction from achieving something or as preventing certain groups from acting on the basis of a specific reason. Sandra, an architect from Žilina, who understands discrimination primarily as a situation in which an individual is prevented, on any grounds, from doing something he/she has set out to do, provided an apt description:

> *"I would probably describe it as a situation in which I cannot do something only because of what I am, for example, the colour of my skin, because I am female, because I earn less, because I dress differently. It is when you are prevented to act, speak, enter...".*

Juraj, a research worker from Bratislava, characterises discrimination in a similar way:

> *"I think it means that a person, who is deemed equal with other people based on certain standards, suddenly finds out that he/she is inferior because of his/her skin, gender. Simply put, you suddenly learn you do not possess those rights you should enjoy as a citizen."*

A notable group of respondents understood discrimination as any subjective feeling of injustice, unfairness or a different status of various social, ethnic or minority groups.

Discrimination misconstrued

The respondents' answers included several statements implying that the notion of discrimination is often misconstrued. "Language discrimination" was mentioned in three of the four respondent groups, in Bratislava, Žilina and Nitra. This type of discrimination was experienced by those respondents who had applied for a job in a multinational company and were required to speak a foreign language in their day-to-day communication, in particular, in those cases where their position did not necessarily require

that they communicate in a foreign language on a daily basis. The respondents felt discriminated against by their employer, the company.

Marek, a technician from Žilina:

> *"The foreign influx into Slovakia has brought along some…discriminatory pressures. That an employer discriminates against its employees by requiring a hundred-percent language from them. I also think it is discrimination if my entire job, my entire work is in a foreign language, different from my native language though I work in our country and just a short distance from my home."*

Daniela, an administrative worker from Nitra, also deemed it unfair when her employer required that she speak a foreign language:

> *"You apply for a job and the owner wants you to speak five languages. And it is very difficult. Some clerk, for example."*

Marcela, a manager from Nitra, shares the same opinion, describing this problem as an unfair adaptation:

> *"They all are foreign companies; you have to communicate both in writing and orally. They won't hire you if you don't speak a foreign language…they came to Slovakia and we are supposed to adapt?!"*

It is quite interesting that the intense inner feeling of injustice and unfairness associated with the requirement to speak a foreign language in work was equally common among elderly respondents and people under the age of 30. This problem is probably caused by the insufficient language skills of the respondents included in the survey. The foreign language requirement then represents a serious obstacle for them, puts them under pressure and makes them afraid of failure, which they want to compensate for by "blaming" their employer. "Scapegoating" and accusations against an "exploiting employer" were not rare in the narrations of the respondents evaluating their life and work situation in relation to employment.[7]

Another variation of "language discrimination" was described by respondents who considered minority rights as being discriminatory against the majority population of Slovak origin. Statements describing it as discriminatory when members of national minorities (the Hungarian minority in particular) speak poor Slovak or do not speak it at all occurred in all four focus groups. Discussions about discrimination in relation to the Hungarian minority turned out to be especially emotional since the respondents had very antagonistic opinions on this particular issue.

[7] An Institute for Public Affairs survey discussing stereotypes and prejudice regarding the unemployed arrived at a similar finding. See the chapter Stereotypes and Prejudices – the Basis of Unequal Treatment. In: Unemployment and Discrimination, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava 2007.

Martina, a businesswoman from Žilina, thinks that Slovaks living in the southern regions of the country suffer discrimination:

"The Slovaks in the south are, for example, discriminated against. It happened to a friend of mine, a Slovak woman from the north. She doesn't speak a single word of Hungarian. She went to a store and nobody served her actually, total cold shoulder.. ...That shop assistant ignored her completely. Absolutely nothing... I am not saying that it happens only there, it happens elsewhere too. There is so much intolerance among people, because they are of a different nationality."

The respondents in focus groups felt discriminated against as the majority in several cases; this feeling of injustice was most prominent in the context of minority rights, as well as immigrant rights. Negative attitudes stemming from the fear of the unknown are typical for the relations between Slovakia's majority population and immigrants.

Marek from Žilina:

"We, the genuine Slovaks, suffer discrimination. I regularly travel to Lučenec, to Nové Zámky and a shop assistant in Kaufland can't speak Slovak. I don't know if she can't or does not want to. But she would say in Hungarian how much money I should give her, I can see it on the display of course, so I could give her the money. I give her that money, tell her that I am Slovak, I say something, somehow. Nonetheless, I feel bad when I leave as she keeps looking at me."

The most common mistake in understanding discrimination as shown from the respondents' statements is that they associate discrimination with any subjective feeling of injustice or unfairness. Hana from Trenčín feels discriminated against because she has to comply with such rules in her workplace that she finds inconvenient for her.

"Discrimination also occurs at work. I work in Kaufland, where there is a newsstand. We are discriminated against by Kaufland in that that when I need to go to the bathroom I am not allowed to close the shop. I have to get someone to keep an eye on my shop and cash register. Yes, it's a trifle, but still…"

According to Jozef, a mechanical engineer from Bratislava, any restrictions affecting the citizens are discriminatory, for example, restrictions imposed on importing cigarettes from Ukraine:

"For example, it was on TV yesterday that you could bring several dozen cigarettes per person from Ukraine, now it is only a few boxes. They're what I call discriminated people."

Another view of the discrimination issue was presented by Zuzana, a geodesist from Trenčín, who considered the recent amendment to the act on television licence fees (each electricity customer must pay a TV licence fee) unfair, saying that her husband deemed it discriminatory.

"My husband thinks it is discrimination that we have to pay the fee, although he does not watch STV."

The survey outcomes make it clear that the respondents think discrimination affects a wide range of different groups, going even beyond what is covered by the Anti-discrimination Act[8]. Unequal treatment and discrimination were often mentioned in connection with various socially vulnerable groups.

Martin from Bratislava raised the issue of former convicts, where a considerable social distance exists.

"A certain group has a problem…convicts are also such kind of group. Let's say that not all of them are bad guys… Some might have changed for the better, yet they have a criminal record. Now, everywhere you have to prove you have a clean record and the whole problem is that a reformed convict, when he gets out after 10 years, can't get a job and the first thing that comes to his mind is 'well, it wasn't that bad in prison, I was taken care of' and there he goes again. He simply ends up in prison again."

A number of respondents pointed at discrimination against population groups who differ from the majority in that they are socially dependant, or face social problems. Radoslav from Bratislava said that everyone should have access to their areas of interest but the situation was different.

"...rights, including for example the right to work, are curbed depending on a certain group. Let's look at our Roma for example, I mean also other socially vulnerable groups, such as the homeless, they will not be given a job if they don't have an ID card."

Problems in relations between the majority population and minorities

The respondents agreed that Slovakia applies an open minority policy. However, they provided different interpretations of discrimination. One group thought that minorities were disadvantaged, another group considered various measures aimed at improving living and working conditions of minorities as advantages (e.g., bilingual display of municipal names in communities where minority members account for more than 20% of its permanent residents) that are discriminatory against the majority population. Positive action measures and policies designed to improve the situation of various social or ethnic groups in Slovakia were quite often regarded as discrimination. Even measures aimed at improving the living situation of disadvantaged groups of population, such as the unemployed and the Roma, were

[8] Act No. 356/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and protection against discrimination and amendments to certain acts (the Anti-discrimination Act) in force from 1 April 2008, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion or belief, racial, national or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital and family status, skin colour, language, political or other opinions, national or social background, disability, age, property, gender or other status.

described as discriminatory by some of the focus group respondents. It means that strong stereotypes still survive particularly with respect to the most vulnerable groups.

Milan, a sole trader from Trenčín, felt that the minority population, including himself, was discriminated against by various policies adopted with the aim to eliminate discrimination against the Roma community:

"If a politician talks about discrimination against a certain ethnic group, I will speak about the Roma, to be more specific, then the question is whether eliminating discrimination against the Roma does not lead to discrimination against the rest of the population. I provide assistance based on the equality of gender, skin colour, I view that group as Slovaks. Yet for one group, I will create almost perfect conditions that are constantly abused, and this is discriminatory against the rest of the population. Even though that politician says so, he is only doing it in order to avoid a certain problem which might originate from that ethnic group."

Darina, a nurse from Trenčín, shares a very similar opinion on state-provided social assistance. A high dependence rate among the Roma population on social assistance services is, in her view, discrimination against Slovakia's majority population.

"As long as those funds and large social allowances, all those possibilities, starting from school, kindergarten, are available, they will misuse it. They get more than twenty thousand. They feast on that money, they can waste it in a second, and then children stop going to school, the doctor writes them an excuse; it's a vicious circle. They lose that money, then we have no money, we go to a social security office, they give us something there. In the past you had to work for some time and then they got that money, but it's automatic today."

Darina's view is clearly full of stereotypes and prejudices against the Roma minority. Four years after the social reform she still mentions "twenty thousand koruna allowances", "free money", etc.

Having analysed respondents' replies, we arrived at further interesting findings. Their answers reflect both the public debate, as well as debates within the social and cultural groups the survey participants belong to. A group of mature males and females was particularly sensitive about age, parenthood and health aspects. Young people were extremely sensitive about political and economic developments; they were concerned about non-compliance with human rights, such as the right to private ownership, freedom of information, enforceability of law, etc.

Is discrimination a serious problem?

Discrimination was perceived as a marginal problem by the majority of the focus group respondents. Especially the group of young people was "optimistic". In their opinion, the situation in Slovakia is bearable; even though some groups still suffer discrimination, it is not that bad.

Martin, a research worker from Bratislava, thinks the situation has improved.

> *"I think that as far as discrimination is concerned, there were worse times. ...Today, the issue is publicly discussed, questions are asked, solutions sought… How can discrimination be eliminated – that's discussed today promptly. Now, when they make a job offer, it is not about 'we are looking for a (female) assistant', but they say we are offering a position for such-and-such person, but they don't specify gender."*

Sandra, an architect from Žilina, thinks the situation in Slovakia has stabilised. She became even more insistent on her opinion when she compared the situation to developing countries.

> *"I guess that when compared to the world and countries where the situation is incomparably worse than here, it is not such a serious problem. I am happy to have been born here. I could have been born in Africa, I could have been born in Iraq, simply in a country that is confronted with brutal discrimination."*

However, a few opposite opinions claimed that the human rights situation had gotten worse and that the number of discrimination cases had increased. Such answers were mostly given by young people in Bratislava and Žilina. Deterioration in human rights and non-discrimination efforts is a consequence of actions taken by the current political elites who passed a new Press Act, as well as new expropriation laws.

Martina, a businesswoman from Žilina, distinguishes the multiple pressures that lead to deterioration in the field of human rights and discrimination. The crucial reason is the current political climate that undermines the rights of the individual.

> *"Discrimination is a serious problem; it is linked to the political situation that exists here. And since it goes top-down, I have a feeling that it affects anyone who has access to information and thinks about these matters a bit. I guess it is even more important, because it's forced from above."*

Juraj, a research worker from Bratislava, is of the opinion that the Slovak political elites deal with human rights and discrimination issues solely with the aim of pursuing their own political interests and objectives. Any efforts to implement equality principles are rather artificial and aimed at accomplishing the set goals.

"The politicians see human rights merely as a tool to gain power or win elections. Depending on their mindset, each politician chooses a right that suits him from the multitude of human rights. A Christian, for example, the right to life and similar things. It's very instrumental, these steps of the politicians. I personally disapprove of talking about social rights in the political sphere."

5.2.2 Case study assessment[9]

Discrimination can depend on the circumstances

Discussions focused on the assessment of six model situations have shown specific aspects linked with the perception of discrimination. Interviews with the respondents demonstrated that discrimination was not necessarily perceived in absolute terms. It means that understanding certain actions as discriminatory depends on particular circumstances. For instance, the respondents did not think "unintentional" actions or actions initiated by a third person were discriminatory; in other words, if someone discriminates unknowingly, it is not discrimination. Also, the respondents did not consider it wrong if an employee was "instructed" to take discriminatory actions by their employer.

Respondents' opinions on the *Ill children* model situation (Box 1) differed. According to Marek, an IT specialist from Žilina, the employer's conduct was OK and fair:

Box 1: Ill children

An employer drops a hint to the HR manager that it would be good to "get rid" of an employee who often stays at home with her ill children. The HR manager refuses to do so, saying that such action seems unfair to her. For the next three months, the HR manager receives no bonus payments.

I think it was fair; she refused to fulfil work instructions and was punished for that....That HR manager wasn't discriminated against. Why? She was given instructions, she failed to do them, so…".

Later on, Marek explained his standpoint in more detail:

*"The employer discriminated a bit, but imagine that you are in his shoes and you have three employees and one of them keeps doing something like that (*A/N: stays at home with an ill child*). Your*

[9] The respondents in all four focus groups discussed the following six case studies: ill children, bus, discotheque, grammar school entrance exam, discount on recreation and visit to a nightclub. Three case studies were chosen for the analysis, which provide the most comprehensive picture of the respondents' perception of discrimination.

firm then doesn't run as it should, your accounting goes wrong…Simply put, a part of your firm does not function and it has to be resolved."

Juraj, a civil servant from Bratislava, expressed a similar view. But he also highlighted another important dimension in understanding discrimination. Several answers implied that the respondents viewed discrimination as a certain right of an employer.[10] It means that when employers so decide, they can be discriminatory when hiring new employees (it is their freedom to choose whoever they wish irrespective of the equal treatment and non-discrimination principle) or in their HR policy towards their existing employees.

"First of all, I would probably distinguish between public administration and a private company. Because if it's a private firm, the owner pays that employee. And since he pays, he wants his employees to perform at 100% percent and he can't afford to employ other people who would cover those periods. I would be slightly in favour of the employer because if that employee stays at home with her ill children every month, or every second month, the firm is adversely affected. The firm does not perform the way it should, it does not earn that much and therefore something needs be done about that employee. But if it is public administration, it's OK."

The *Visit to a nightclub* case study also confirmed that discrimination was conditioned by circumstances. Danica, a tailor from Nitra, considered the club owner's previous experience a decisive factor. If it had been bad, his actions were not discriminatory but legitimate.

Box 2: Visit to a nightclub

Ivana, her Roma origin evident at first sight, and her non-Roma friend, Jana wanted to spend the evening in a nightclub. They were dressed decently and had not drunk any alcohol. Despite that, the doorman refused to let them in, claiming the club was full. He did not change his mind even after a visitor leaving the club had told Ivana that the place was half empty. Ivana and Jana reported it to the police. The police found out that the guard had been verbally instructed by the nightclub owner, "do not to let any Gypsies in under any circumstances, this place is for whites only."

"A couple of drunken Gypsies might have been there who made problems. Then he did not want to see them come back again... Maybe he was pissed off that they had made a mess there. If I had a nightclub where gypsies go, even if they come five times and pay, but then they destroy the club,

[10] The fact was also confirmed by *Field research of the observance of the equal treatment principle at the beginning and termination of the employment relationship of selected categories of citizens* (Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Bratislava 2006) which showed that 15% of the Slovak population fully approves of the employer's absolute freedom of choice when hiring new employees regardless of whether such an action is discriminatory.

I would probable make the same decision. First, I would keep away those particular guys, but if it happened again, I probably wouldn't let anybody in."

Martin, a research worker from Bratislava, elaborated in a similar way, but arrived at the opposite conclusion. He agrees that a previous bad experience could legitimately make the nightclub owner take a more cautious approach, but he said the owner's actions were discriminatory beyond any doubt.

"It's just plain discrimination. I just want to say that if the owner had had a bad experience with gypsies who had destroyed or stolen something from there, I'm not surprised that he made that decision. The question is why this person, who was allegedly decently dressed, who did not misbehave. She did not have to suffer for that. But it is discrimination. If they were suspicious characters, then OK, but in this case it is discrimination."

In connection with this case study, the respondents emphasised another important aspect related to the perception of discrimination. Their replies indicated that the right to private ownership may be considered superior to human rights. The survey proved that there is no clearly drawn line between these two rights in the public perception. Milan, a sole trader from Trenčín, gave an example when the right to private ownership restricts human rights but is still deemed legitimate. He said that it was landlord's sole right to decide whether to let his flat to a Roma, homosexual or heavy drinker.

*"I believe that any owner has a right to select his clients, based on his experience or anything else. Anyone could feel discriminated against even if there is (*A/N: in a restaurant or club*), for example, a private party, when somebody has hired the place and nobody else can get in. If a landlord wants to let flats, he can specify whoever he wants to have there or not, it's his free choice. It doesn't have to be only a Roma, but other groups too, such as drug addicts, alcoholics, whoever…"*

Juraj, a civil servant, took a similar standpoint:

"That club is private property and the owner is free to decide 'I want to have only men between 18 and 25 come here'. He can specify criteria for the visitors who will be allowed in; it's private property, he does not have to let anyone in."

The answers only reflect what the respondents said in connection with the given question. What they would do for real, whether any prospective tenants would "arbitrarily" be turned down by the owner remains questionable. It is quite probable that the respondents wished to indicate that everyone has certain rights to enjoy their property, but only insofar as they do not interfere with the human rights of other persons. It is also obvious from Zuzana's (a nurse from Bratislava) answer:

*"At first, I thought it (*A/N: the Visit to a nightclub model example*) was discrimination but when I look at it from the club owner's point of view (*A/N: from the point of view of the right of an individual to

private ownership*) that there is some reason for it, I would also limit it somehow. I deem it as the protection of his property."*

Equality depends on circumstances too

When discussing other model examples, the focus group proved to be able to identify discrimination in certain cases more easily than in others. Different perceptiveness to discrimination results from personal experience. If the model example includes a situation from a familiar environment (e.g. , the workplace) and is likely to happen to anyone, the respondents identify discrimination more easily. The *Discount on recreation* (Box 3) case study is an example in which the respondents were almost unanimous in that this form of unequal treatment was discrimination. Milan, a sole trader Bratislava:

Box 3: Discount on recreation

When she came to work, Jana found a new bonus offer from her employer in her e-mail box. Married people from the company were offered a good discount on a recreational visit to the Tatras. Jana was again upset as she was still single, even though she had been living with her girlfriend in a single household for three years..

"I think it is discrimination by the employer if he doesn't care about the private life of his employees who come to work on time and duly perform their duties. From what is written here, not clearly, that there is no law on partnerships between woman and woman, man and man, it means that discrimination hits you in the face. It's discrimination, simple as that; and it has nothing to do with work performance."

Darina, a teacher from Nitra, replied in a similar way:

"That she lives with a girlfriend doesn't matter to us. But it's discrimination; why shouldn't a single woman have the same rights as a married one?"

The focus group participants responded to a number of issues included in the particular case study examples. With respect to the *Discount on recreation* case study, several respondents mentioned the issue of registered partnerships of same-sex couples which has not yet been legalised in Slovakia.

For example, Daniel, an IT specialist from Bratislava, said that discrimination occurred not only on the part of the employer but on the part of the state as well, since registered partnership had not been legalised:

*"I think that he (*A/N: the employer*) discriminated unintentionally. And I believe that it is discrimination by the state since we are not allowed to have same-sex marriages. Hence it's discrimination by the state in this case, not by the employer. Because he did not specify it had to be man-woman, but he said they must be a married couple. So it's discrimination by the state."*

Despite an improved perception of registered partnerships and the gay-lesbian minority in general, some homophobic opinions against this minority group were also expressed.

Juraj, a public servant:

"When the state … stops discriminating against same sex marriages, the birth rate starts falling even more dramatically…".

Ambivalent feelings towards gays and lesbians were also quite frequent among the respondents who claimed to be tolerant. However, their actions imply the opposite.

Jaroslava, a research worker from Bratislava:

"I absolutely accept homosexuals; I don't have any problems with that. But when I see two men in the street, holding hands, or two women, I feel awkward and look the other way. My first thought is not positive, it's something inside me that's just there, I can rationalise it all, all right. I have it inside and it's something spontaneous."

Some examples showed that not all groups deemed vulnerable to discrimination by law were perceived by the public in the same, legitimate way. The majority of respondents said that really vulnerable groups (they "deserve help the most") included mothers with small children, mothers after maternity leave, men and women over the age of 45/50, and the disabled. There were more problems associated with the perception of sexual, ethnic and cultural minorities. While homophobic views result mainly from stereotypes, prejudice and the lack of information about this population group, problems in the perception of ethnic and national minorities, Roma and Hungarian minorities in particular, are much more complex and rooted in our past experience. The survey has however proved a strong degree of stereotyping and the great social distance between the majority Slovak population and these minorities, encouraged further by stereotypes reproduced by the mass media and, in the case of the Hungarian minority, by political representatives.

5.2.3 Conclusions

This qualitative survey conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs using a focus group method, highlighted several significant aspects in the perception of discrimination and human rights by the Slovak

population. It has provided better insight into the public perception of discrimination as a term, the non-discrimination principle and the understanding of discrimination as a concept.

The survey results imply that the understanding of the notion of discrimination varies and has no firm shape. In addition, the perception of non-discrimination as a principle varies according to the groups affected by the particular action. Similar to previous representative surveys, the IVO survey has revealed considerable differences in the perception of discrimination by various groups, according to age or education, which implies a low level of education and training in human rights and discrimination issues.

The answers provided by the respondents further showed that the liability for an act of discrimination is considered as conditioned by circumstances (there is no generally unacceptable discrimination action, all discriminatory actions can be justified in certain situations).

Some of the respondents were able to define discrimination and identify acts of discrimination illustrated in sample case studies very accurately. Other groups understood the value principle of equality for all on a very intuitive basis. The selected sample of respondents has clearly shown, however, that discrimination is not perceived principally and that its perception is affected by numerous factors.

At the same time, there is a tendency to regard certain groups as “truly discriminated against”, in particular those groups which the public opinion perceives as discriminated against, for example, men and women above 50, mothers with small children, etc. On the other hand, the situation is more complicated in the case of national, ethnic and sexual minorities. This implies a more serious finding. The public perception reflects the fact that the equality principle has not been interiorised by all members to the same extent; the difference between uniformity and equality often narrows, which may result in stereotyped and xenophobic attitudes that, under certain circumstances, can lead to discrimination. At the same time, there is no clearly drawn line in which the right to ownership should end because it starts to interfere with human rights of other individuals.

The survey has also demonstrated that the Slovak population retains a reserved approach to diversity, minorities and immigrants, which encourages various prejudices and stereotypes. In light of the increasing social, national and ethnic diversity in Slovakia, the survey results suggest that the issues of multiculturalism and multicultural education will surely require still more attention.

The results also indicate that we need a more consistent approach in order to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices and that the Slovak population must become more sensitive and better informed about human rights and discrimination.

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6 Diversity Management - Evaluation

Oľga Gyárfášová, Institute for Public Affairs
Šarlota Pufflerová, Občan a demokracia

Diversity management is an approach taken by employing organisations that value the principles of heterogeneity and respect for the right to equality and dignity in hiring, employing, remunerating and training their employees, as well as making other employee-related decisions. In other words – this approach values diversity with respect to the sex and gender of employees, their age, ethnic, racial and national origin, sexual orientation, religion, disability and other personal qualities. It is equally important to consistently respect the diversity and uniqueness of every single employee. The concept of diversity management builds on the assumption that diversity in the workforce has positive impacts both on the company's economic performance and working conditions in general. A high quality diversity management policy also reflects the company's respect for the laws and regulations that lay down the obligation to comply with the equal treatment principle.

Under the "Towards Equal Treatment" project implemented as part of the PROGRESS programme an on-line survey was performed to obtain information on the implementation of diversity management policies in various employing organisations and companies in Slovakia. The inquiry was conducted in cooperation with the Business Leaders Forum (the Pontis Foundation) and Global Compact Network Slovakia (UNDP).

A short questionnaire, accompanied by an explanatory note on the goals of the survey and a request for cooperation, was sent to 620 organisations in October 2008. The return rate of nearly 11% was average for this type of inquiry. Sixty-six questionnaires were chosen for evaluation. We are aware of the fact that organisations with higher sensitivity to equal opportunity and diversity management issues applying policies and practices in compliance with these principles could be better motivated to fill in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, we consider the answers provided by 66 organisations as relevant, albeit not representative, insight into this little explored area. Also, we realise that the survey reflects the views of employing organisations and not their employees, which may also lead to some distortions. The issue will require more extensive and diverse research methods in the future.

6.1 Key findings

The term diversity management is quite popular with employing organisations in Slovakia – 71% of respondents said they knew of this term and understood its meaning.

More than one half, 55%, of organisations apply diversity management practices. But as much as 85% of organisations implement the principles of equal opportunity. Management practices respecting diversity seem to constitute the next level of a non-discriminatory employment policy, an “add-on” to the equal opportunity policy.

While equal opportunity principles are equally applied in domestic and foreign companies, as well as in the public and private sectors, our survey implies that diversity management was more often applied by foreign and private companies.

Hiring and employee training are the two areas that the companies committed to diversity management named as the most usual areas of Diversity management application.

In half of the cases, the diversity management programmes were developed in-house, usually in the form of a detailed internal regulation (code of ethics, working rules…).

Where the diversity management activities are reviewed, the organisation’s management appreciates their results.

6.2 Structure of the sample

The majority (48) of the 66 organisations that completed and returned the questionnaire operate in Slovakia only, 19 organisations (29%) run international operations.

As regards the size of the workforce, the majority of organisations had 50-250 employees. The sample also included 4 companies with more than 5,000 employees and 8 companies with up to 5,000 people.

More than two thirds (68%) of the companies come from the public sector and 29% of the companies come from the private sector.

Some 17% of the questionnaires were completed by a company director, 19% by a top management member, and 20% by a human resources manager. In 46% of the cases, the questionnaire was completed by an employee in a position other than those mentioned above.

We also asked about the knowledge and understating of the term diversity management. The majority (71%) of the respondents said they were familiar with this term and its meaning.

Manažment rozmanitosti - dotazník

Manažment rozmanitosti - vyhodnotenie

Manažment rozmanitosti (diversity management) je prístup zamestnávateľských organizácií, v ktorom je za dôležitý považovaný aspekt heterogenity a rešpektovania práva na rovnosť a dôstojnosť, a to pri prijímaní zamestnancov a zamestnankýň, ich zamestnávaní, odmeňovaní, vzdelávaní či ďalších rozhodovaniach o nich.

Čítať viac | 11 November, 2008 - 16:40

Manažment rozmanitosti - dotazník

Tento dotazník vznikol v rámci programu Európskeho spoločenstva PROGRESS podporeného Európskou komisiou a Úradom vlády SR. V spolupráci s Business Leaders Forum a Global Compact Network Slovakia má pomôcť zmapovať, či a ako je na Slovensku uplatňovaný manažment rešpektujúci rozmanitosť ľudských zdrojov vo všetkých sektoroch – súkromnom, štátnom aj mimovládnom.

» Ak chcete pridať komentáre, tak sa musíte prihlásiť alebo zaregistrovať.

GLBT komunita, žiješ?

Milí priatelia, milé priateľky, ďakujeme vám, že ste si našli čas na vyplnenie tohto dotazníka. Pýtame sa v ňom na vaše názory na témy ako je GLBT komunita, potreby GLBT ľudí, občianska participácia, aktivizmus a ďalšie. **Dotazník je určený pre GLBT (gejov, lesby, bisexuálov/ky, transgender) ľudí a heterosexuálov/ky, ktorí/é majú záujem sa k týmto témam vyjadriť a prispieť svojim názorom k napredovaniu v tejto oblasti.**

Čítať viac | 22 Október, 2007 - 17:00

kalendár

« Január 2009 »

Po	Ut	St	Št	Pia	So	Ne
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

najčítanejšie

- Monitoring médií
- Tlačové správy
- Databáza MVO
- Diskriminácia z dôvodu

6.3 Diversity in organisations

The organisations are most diverse in terms of the age of their employees. From the gender point of view, diversity occurs in less than one half of the organisations. Homogeneity clearly prevails as far as nationality, racial or ethnic origin and disability are concerned. Religion and sexual orientation are "invisible" attributes of the organisations' employees (with the most frequent answer to diversity/homogeneity question being "I don't know").

Table 1: Diversity in organisation by various aspects (in %)

	rather diverse	rather homogeneous	I don't know
age	90	10	0
gender	47	53	0
religion	30	14	56
nationality	29	64	7
racial and ethnical origin	18	67	15
disability	18	62	20
sexual orientation	15	33	52

6.4 Implementation of specific programmes, the equal opportunity principle and diversity management

Many organisations implement programmes and activities focused on various groups of their employees. However, the number of "I don't know" answers (24 out of 66, i.e., 36%) indicates that more than one third of the organisations do not have such programmes in place.

The most common target groups of specific programmes are employees with small children (Table 2). This group is followed by employees on parental leave and elderly employees. There are very few, if any, special programmes aimed at minorities, the disabled, racial, ethnic or national minority groups or religious minorities. This situation may however stem from the fact that the respective organisations have no such minority employees.

Table 2: Does your organisation apply any corporate policies, programmes or services targeted specifically on any of the following groups?

	number	%
employees with small children	24	36
employees on a maternity/parental leave	16	24
elderly employees	14	21
employees after maternity/parental leave	10	15
disabled employees	9	14
racial, ethnic or national minorities	3	5
religious minorities	1	2
non-heterosexual employees	0	0
other	10	15
I don't know	24	36

As many as 85% of the organisations said that they applied the principles of equal opportunity and 55% said they that applied diversity management practices. Management practices respecting diversity constitute the next level, an "add-on" to the equal opportunity policy, as all organisations committed to the equal opportunity principles are also committed to diversity management.

Table 3: Is your organisation committed to ... (v %)

	...equal opportunity principles	... diversity management
Yes	85	55
No	3	23
I don't know	12	22

We also wanted to know the most common type of organisation applying the respective practices. Our sample indicates that there are no significant differences between domestic and foreign organisations, or between the private and public sectors, as far as the issue of equal opportunity is concerned. The average percentage, 85%, was nearly the same in all categories.

Some differences are evident in the case of diversity management. Diversity management is more popular with companies that also run foreign operations (or in foreign companies running operations in Slovakia) and in the private sector. Diversity management is applied in 45% of the domestic organisa-

tions and 79% of the international organisations, and in 74% of the private organisations and 47% of the public sector organisations.

Hiring and employee training are two areas in which the companies committed to diversity management named as the most usual areas of Diversity management application.

Table 4: In which areas, if any, does your organisation apply diversity management practices? (In %) (n= 36)

recruitment and hiring	44
employee training	42
social programmes	32
team building activities	27
incentive programmes	17

In half of the cases, the diversity management programmes applied by the companies were developed in-house. The same number of organisations uses diversity management programmes developed by their parent company, but adjusted to local needs and conditions. Only one organisation stated that these programmes developed by a parent company were applied without any modifications. In the majority of cases (75%) these programmes have the form of detailed internal regulations (code of ethics, working rules…). A diversity management approach is only very rarely defined as one of the goals of the organisation without being further specified and developed, or applied as "unwritten rules". None of the answers said, "they are written, formalised and complied with; in the case of non-compliance, penalties are imposed".

The question concerning the assignment of responsibility for diversity management compliance with an organisation brought about some interesting findings. About one half of the respondents named company management, the one third named the human resources department. Employees themselves are responsible for diversity management compliance in five companies.

Some 42% of the organisations monitor and assess diversity management activities, one quarter does not; the answer provided in the remaining questionnaires was "I don't know". Where the diversity management activities are reviewed, the organisation's management appreciates their results. This experience could (and should) be transferred as good practice to those organisations that have yet to introduce diversity management policies.

6.5 Training on the implementation of the equal treatment principle

Under the *Towards Equal Treatment* project, part of the PROGRESS programme, IBM Slovensko was awarded for its active implementation and promotion of diversity management and for the application of the equal treatment principle in practice. An IBM Slovensko representative presented the company's programmes for employees and job applicants at an event entitled "Respecting diversity in human resources management", organised as part of our project in the European Information Centre in Bratislava on 21 and 22 May 2008. The aim of the event was to demonstrate principles and practical tools of management respecting the diversity of human resources. The seminar was specifically focused on human resources managers from business and public sectors. It aimed at presenting diversity management as an efficient economic management tool that builds on the principle of non-discrimination and the implementation of the equal treatment principle.

The seminar program was designed to include the legal bases of this principle arising from European Union directives and the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, as well as measures necessary in order to implement changes. The participants had the chance to learn about particular practices that should be complied with if we wish to effectively implement diversity management. Through interactive presentations, the participants were familiarised with situations, problems and challenges accompanying changes in corporate culture. They were also given examples on the preparation of preventive measures, including the perspective and potential impact of this type of progressive human resources approach in modern management in the public and business sectors. The training consisted of three basic components. The first component was designed to stimulate a sensitive approach to the diversity of individuals and minorities in order to identify sources of discrimination and possible obstacles. The second component helped to get to the heart of the diversity management issue, describing its origins, potential, options and mission. The last component focused on diversity management programmes prepared by the participants for concrete organisations or their planning that has already implemented.

Training on the implementation of the equal treatment principle also focused on discussions about a code of ethics and the preparation of fair treatment standards in employment with respect to discrimination. The participants had the chance to learn about particular examples and practices that should be complied with if we wish to effectively implement diversity management.

IBM Slovensko can be considered a best practice example in Slovakia with respect to diversity management. IBM strives to be the most diverse and inclusive organisation in Slovakia. In IBM, they value employees for their individuality, their uniqueness and their difference because they believe that creativity flows when diverse minds meet; when people with a broad range of experiences work together to find a solution. IBM Slovensko proactively encourages inclusivity and equality in the workplace as a business imperative. The senior management promotes this approach as a corporate strategy. Permanent social

programmes are provided to women, the disabled and members of the GLBT community (international anonymous discussion groups).

A good example of a programme for people with disabilities is the joint educational project (to improve IT and English language skills) implemented in cooperation with the Slovak Disability Council at the end of 2007 in Bratislava.

7 Towards Equal Treatment – Social Campaign

"Why should some people encounter an obstacle where others enjoy a free road?"

Vlado Talian, Hlava 98
Oľga Gyárfášová, Inštitút pre verejné otázky

The social campaign – consisting of TV and radio spots, newspaper advertisements, billboards, citylight panels, posters, stickers and a documentary film – was carried out under the "Towards Equal Treatment" project. All of the aforementioned media represent communication means usually employed for similar campaigns. The total number of communication means usually depends on the budget of the project implementers and the willingness of media partners to support the project by offering discounts. The funds and means at our disposal were sufficient for conducting a minor nation-wide media campaign. Defining the message of the campaign turned out to be a wholly independent issue. The content issues were jointly outlined by the entire project team based on analyses from a number of quantitative and qualitative opinion surveys and, ultimately, by testing several message proposals and graphic designs.

7.1 Starting point

Our creative team set several theses as the base for the creative concept of the campaign. These theses should not be deemed as the standpoint of the entire Slovak public towards discrimination issues yet, as proved by the survey results, they represent views of a significant portion of the population. Such views deserve our attention, particularly in situations where the social campaign is targeted at the society as a whole.

Thesis 1: People know the term discrimination but fail to understand it clearly.

People believe that discrimination is any feeling of injustice, mainly of a social nature (the rich vs. the poor; employees vs. employers, etc.). However, in many cases, what they say is discriminatory behaviour is not true discrimination. Therefore the term "discrimination" should be used carefully. Using the term without knowing its actual meaning may even strengthen existing stereotypes – *discrimination is any injustice I have suffered* – people will not understand that it should be associated with unreasonable disadvantaging of truly vulnerable groups or individuals.

Thesis 2: The disadvantaging of some groups is not deemed as discrimination by a certain part of the population.

People admit that age, gender and disability-based discrimination exist in Slovakia, and that it is wrong. On the other hand, they do not agree that other vulnerable groups (the Roma in particular) are also subject to discrimination. Or they do not consider such discrimination inappropriate, claiming it is usually their own fault that the majority population discriminates against them.

Thesis 3: People do not think discrimination is a major problem.

People do not have the feeling that discrimination is a problem that affects them directly. They think that discriminatory behaviour and practices are mainly attributable to state bodies, employers and public authorities. They do not know how ordinary people can help to eliminate discrimination.

Building on the three aforementioned theses, we arrived at the conclusion that comprehensively and clearly defining the term discrimination and identifying truly vulnerable groups should lie at the heart of our campaigning. Even though such an objective may seem trivial at first sight, we do believe that it may significantly contribute to improving the knowledge and understanding of both the causes and consequences of discriminatory behaviour. The relationship between the majority population and the Roma in the context of discrimination is so controversial that it is impossible to cover it solely through a media campaign. Therefore we decided that this relationship should also be the main theme of a documentary film which had been planned as one of the project components. As opposed to a media campaign, a documentary can go much deeper into the topic, using such means for the delivery of a message to the audience as a touching human story. A media campaign can only do this in a very limited scope.

7.2 Campaign Objective, Target Groups

Keeping in mind the aforementioned theses, the social campaign did not aim to bring about a change in public opinion. In our view, the Slovak public is not ready for such a change. Moreover, accomplishing this objective would require a vast range of activities conducted over a long-term period, above all in the education sector. The fact is that the majority of the Slovak population still deems discrimination as a relatively new issue and perceives it as accompanying Slovakia's integration efforts rather than as a real, independently existing social problem. Unlike other advanced democracies that have for years experienced a real battle for equal treatment of minorities and vulnerable population groups, Slovakia must first learn what discrimination means, what forms it takes and where it occurs. The "Towards Equal

Treatment" social campaign was designed to meet the above mentioned goal. Given the nature of the project, its target groups comprise all of society, including groups vulnerable to discrimination.

7.3 Campaign tools

The "Towards Equal Treatment" media campaign included TV and radio spots and several types of print media (billboards, citylight panels, newspaper ads, posters, stickers). The documentary film entitled "Back Passing" (duration: 30 min, directed by Jaro Vojtek) represents a separate chapter of the project.

A. Print media

Thanks to the helpful approach of our business partners (Akzent Media, EuroAWK, Pravda, SME) newspaper ads were placed 11 times in the nation-wide dailies, SME and Pravda (from 20 to 31 October 2008) on 254 citylight panels (from 3 to 16 November 2008) and on 183 billboards (from 1 to 30 November 2008) throughout Slovakia.

The campaign employed the slogan *"Why should some people encounter an obstacle where others enjoy a free road?"* Two alternative texts explaining the meaning of discrimination were used, depending on the type of the media. A shorter text was used on billboards and stickers, its longer version appeared in newspaper ads and on citylight panels.

Longer text: *"Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging. Gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, racial or ethnic origin should not be the cause for unfair treatment. All people should have an equal chance."*

Short text: *"Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging. All people should have an equal chance."*

B. Spots

The TV and radio spots took the campaign message further; they focused on particular groups vulnerable to discrimination. In the print media, our campaign provided the definition of discrimination; the spots referred to specific examples of discriminatory behaviour. Visually identical spots – a pedestrian crossing with collapsing stripes of asphalt – were prepared in six versions, one sport for each vulnerable group. The groups were chosen based on the grounds for discrimination as defined in the Slovak Antidis-

crimination Act and applicable EU directives – age, racial and ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religion and gender. The texts used in the radio spots were identical to those prepared for TV.

The spots were aired from 16 to 30 October 2008 on TA3 – the all-news television channel (30 times), on STV (15 times), on Rádio Slovensko (12 times), and Rádio Regina (36 times).

1. Gender based discrimination; text:

   Earning less than my colleagues at work only because I'm a woman? That's discrimination! Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging All people should have an equal chance. Towards equal treatment. An initiative of the European Community PROGRESS Programme.

2. Disability based discrimination; text:

   Not being able to get on the bus only because I am in a wheel-chair? That's discrimination! Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging. All people should have an equal chance. Towards equal treatment. An initiative of the European Community PROGRESS Programme.

3. Sexual orientation based discrimination; text:

   Losing my job only because I don't hide my sexual orientation? That's discrimination! Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging. All people should have an equal chance. Towards equal treatment. An initiative of the European Community PROGRESS Programme.

4. Age-based discrimination; text:

   Not getting a job only because I am somewhat older? That's discrimination! Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging. All people should have an equal chance. Towards equal treatment. An initiative of the European Community PROGRESS Programme.

5. Discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin; text:

   No job interview just because I'm a Roma? That's discrimination! Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging. All people should have an equal chance. Towards equal treatment. An initiative of the European Community PROGRESS Programme.

6. Discrimination based on religion; text:

   Should my child feel uneasy at school only because we have a different religion? That's discrimination! Discrimination means any unreasonable disadvantaging. All people should have an equal chance. Towards equal treatment. An initiative of the European Community PROGRESS Programme.

C. Documentary

The campaign also included a documentary film. The decision to shoot a film with a strong story and straightforward artistic aspirations was made when preparing the project outlines. The results of a quantitative focus group survey conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) in April 2008 inspired us to look for a story about how the majority population approaches the Roma – the population group most vulnerable to discrimination. The survey results clearly showed that while most people are willing to admit that discrimination exists against certain population groups, it is not that clear when it comes to the Roma. Compared to other minorities, the relationship between the majority population and the Roma community are most influenced by various prejudices, past developments, personal experience, biased information, etc. For this reason, it is not enough to portray this relationship solely through the limited means of a media campaign.

The story for the film was brought forward by director Jaro Vojtek. He proposed to make a film about a mixed football team that travels to a youth tournament against racism held in July 2008 in the city of Kragujevac, Serbia. The trip was organised and young players – both Roma and non-Roma – were chosen by Vlado Sendrei, a well-known Roma musician and activist. The film was entitled "Back Passing" and was produced in cooperation with Artileria, a production company which had also produced "Blind Loves" a successful documentary film by director Juraj Lehotský. "Back Passing" won the main award at the One World international human rights film festival held in Bratislava in November 2008. STV (Slovak Public Television) has also expressed interest in airing the film.

"Back Passing" documentary; synopsis:

Vlado Sendrei, a forty-year old Roma, organises a multitude of activities in the small Slovak town of Kokava nad Rimavicou. He organises community work, he is a singer and manager of a Gypsy band named Kokava Kere Lavutara, and as a former football player, he coaches the local youth football team. One day he receives an e-mail message inviting him along with a mixed white and Roma youth football team to the Serbian city of Kragujevac to take part in a youth football tournament against racism. Vlado decides to build a team within a few days. He gets some players from SK Tempus, a private football club comprised mainly of non-Roma players from "better off" families. The other players were chosen from among the talented children who spend their long summer days in the nearby youth correctional facility in Čerenčany. The last player to complete the team is little David. David is the son of a Gypsy band guitarist who left his guitar and gold in a pawnshop so he could pay for David's trip and buy him football shoes.

This bizarre team, accompanied by several parents, sets out for Kragujevac on a trip that will, for many, turn into the best experience of their lives. Players from the correctional facility will get a chance to feel, at least for a short while, that they are somebody, even though many of them

have no families, no relatives. The Roma and non-Roma get to know each other. New friendships are formed, but there are also some hints of covert prejudice the children have brought from their native environment – from their families. These prejudices become more apparent when the team does not play well. Night interviews give us better insight into the lives of the children. These very personal confessions reveal their life ambitions and dreams. Zolo, the guitar player, is proud of his son even though, unlike the other parents, he has to camp out in front of the hotel because he has no money for a hotel room. The team loses a dramatic match for last place in a shoot-out.

The trip to Kragujevac provides an extremely personal insight into the life of children who grow up in different social backgrounds and are influenced by various prejudices from their families. In spite of that, for many of them, the tournament was the best thing they had ever experienced. At least for a moment they had the feeling that someone cared for them. Upon their return, they resume their ordinary lives where the crazy charm of football was replaced by the sterility and order of the correctional facility, discrimination and harsh living conditions in a Roma ghetto. However all experienced something new. They learned that even though the colour of their skin is different, that they come from different social backgrounds, they all have hope. Just like scoring a goal, they can make their dreams come true. All they need is a chance.

7.4 Campaign evaluation

A representative survey was conducted in November 2008 as part of the "Towards Equal Treatment" project in order to find out, *inter alia,* the visibility of the campaign.

The following question was asked in the survey: "A media campaign against discrimination entitled "*All people should have an equal chance"* was run in late October, early November. Have you noticed this campaign on TV, radio or in the daily newspapers? Positive answers were given by 20% of the respondents over 18 years of age. Compared to the total adult Slovak population, this percentage translates into 850,000 individuals.

The following table shows how much attention the campaign won from individual groups. Generally speaking, the campaign attracted more attention from people with higher education, higher professional qualifications, women, people aged from 55 to 64, Slovak citizens of Hungarian origin and citizens of the Nitra region. On the other hand, people over 65 years of age, people from cities with a population from 50,000 to 100,000 and inhabitants of the Bratislava region were less likely to notice it. There may be various reasons for these differences. One hypothesis suggests that people who are more vulnerable to discrimination due to their age and gender are more sensitive about discrimination-related is-

sues. Another theory says that the campaign won more attention in those environments that are more sensitive to and have better knowledge of this topic. This "cognitive predisposition" is clearly evidenced by empirical data – as many as 40% of the people who know the content of the antidiscrimination laws noticed the campaign.

Table 1: A media campaign against discrimination entitled "*All people should have an equal chance*" was run in late October, early November. Have you noticed this campaign on TV, radio or in the daily newspapers? (broken down by socio-demographic groups, in %)

	Visibility of the *All people should have an equal chance* campaign:	
	noticed	failed to notice
GENDER		
male	17.7	82.3
female	22.2	77.8
AGE		
18 – 24 years	19.5	80.5
25 – 34 years	21.3	78.7
35 – 44 years	19.7	80.3
45 – 54 years	20.3	79.7
55 – 64 years	**30.8**	69.2
65+ years	10.4	**89.6**
EDUCATION		
elementary	12.6	87.4
secondary without A-level exams	17.8	82.2
secondary with A-level exams	24.1	75.9
university	**30.0**	70.0
NATIONALITY		
Slovak	19.7	80.3
Hungarian	24.1	75.9

EMPLOYMENT		
unskilled blue-collar workers	9.8	90.2
skilled blue-collar workers	20.2	79.8
executive professionals	26.1	73.9
creative professionals	31.6	68.4
entrepreneurs, self-employed	19.7	80.3
pensioners	17.3	82.7
students	17.3	82.7
at home, on parental leave	21.2	78.8
unemployed	16.4	83.6
SEAT (number of inhabitants)		
below 2,000	18.5	81.5
2 – 5,000	23.8	76.2
5 – 20,000	26.3	73.7
20 – 50,000	20.7	79.3
50 – 100,000	12.0	88.0
BA, KE	19.2	80.8
REGION		
Bratislava	15.3	84.7
Trnava	21.7	78.3
Trenčín	18.2	81.8
Nitra	26.1	73.9
Žilina	18.0	82.0
Banská Bystrica	16.5	83.5
Prešov	20.7	79.3
Košice	22.5	77.5
Total Slovak population	20.0	80.0

Note: Statistically most relevant deviations from the average for the whole of surveyed population are highlighted. Source: IVO, November 2008.

Table 2: A media campaign against discrimination entitled "*All people should have an equal chance*" was run in late October, early November. Have you noticed this campaign on TV, radio or in the daily newspapers? (broken down by knowledge of antidiscrimination laws, in %)

	Visibility of the *All people should have an equal chance* campaign:	
	noticed	**failed to notice**
Do you think that Slovakia has laws (act) in place that prohibit discrimination...		
yes, it has and I know its content	**40.4**	59.6
yes, it has but I don't know its content	20.6	79.4
no, it has none	9.3	**90.7**
I don't know whether Slovakia has such laws	11.7	**88.3**
Total Slovak population	20.0	80.0

7.5 Conclusions

The concept of the "Toward Equal Treatment" media campaign complies with all the requirements of an antidiscrimination campaign. It re-defines the incorrectly or insufficiently understood term "discrimination" and it links it to actual examples of discriminatory behaviour and offers a model of non-discriminatory behaviour with which even a problematic, "less tolerant" part of the Slovak population can identify.

8 Equality Principle in Practice

The legislative process as well as the implementation of new laws in practice follow their own specific rules. A new bill may be motivated by the needs of society, or the necessity to resolve problems in practice may require it. However, an opposite approach is also possible – the adoption of new legal standards can ignite necessary changes within society. This is the case with the Slovak Anti-discrimination Act. Its adoption was one of the key criteria for our European Union membership and it took several years before the Act evolved into its current shape. The Act in its applicable wording does not only comply with European directives and the constitution, but it also responds, to a large degree, to the initiatives of a civil society which has continuously endeavoured to make it efficient and effective. One thing is to have good laws; another is to introduce the equality principle in practice.

8.1 The experience of local initiatives with the implementation of the equality principle in cooperation with local authorities

A case-study from Levice and Nové Zámky

Andrea Chorváthová, Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia

Partners for Democratic Change Slovensko (PDCS), an independent non-governmental non-profit organisation, has for more than 15 years endeavoured to exert its best efforts in order to make the principles of democracy and constructive approaches to conflict prevention inherent to the everyday life of the Slovaks. Not only on the individual level in personal and civic life, but on the level of organisations, municipalities, regions and countries as well. Concurrent activities on all of the aforementioned levels are possible both due to the fact that they are mutually interconnected and that the principles of democratic decision-making are universal, building on respect for human rights values and mutual tolerance. It is the reason behind one of the PDCS's main goals, that is, to promote local partnerships and teach people effective cooperation based on autonomous and free decision-making that respects democratic rules. If the work with local initiatives is to bring desired results, it must be long-lasting and provide people with enough room to discuss the problems they face and wish to resolve. Continuous or at least regular communication regarding planned activities, their objectives and content and, at a later stage, their impact on the community life, is equally important,

Under the *Towards Equal Treatment* project, two localities were chosen, Nové Zámky and Levice, where five-member working groups comprising local activists were formed in cooperation with the PDCS. The

groups included representatives of local partnerships for social inclusion, non-governmental organisations, local authorities, the police, the labour office, local school management and the local media. Each working group held six meetings in the course of the year. First of all, intensive training activities took place focused on the presentation of the human rights issue and the existing legal situation in the area of (anti)discrimination. The principle of equal treatment was introduced within these activities since the participatory approach not only makes it possible to understand the principle in more detail, but also to interiorise it. The group members jointly acquired basic knowledge and skills to identify discrimination on the individual and system levels so that they later could discuss possible means to prevent discrimination and strengthen diversity management in their community. The group was tasked to put forward joint activities (discussions in a local school, anti-discrimination measures for the municipal office) or it could start working on a joint project to manage diversity in their community and implement local strategies or public policies in the area of anti-discrimination.

8.1.1 Selection of localities for cooperation with local initiatives

In light of the possible duration of community activities within the *Toward Equal Treatment* project, the PDCS decided to focus on already established and effectively functioning networks of local activists. Local partnerships for social inclusion were major project partners in both cases.

What are local partnerships?

A local partnership for social inclusion (LPSI) is an independent local association of community activists, persons who represent key partner organisations and stakeholders, people representing various NGOs and individuals with business experience. There are currently 30 local partnerships in Slovakia. The LPSIs are designed to enable people to become actively engaged in the local decision-making process. Their goal is to give activists and local communities the chance to jointly address and resolve social problems in their environment.

The PDCS chose local partnerships from the Levice and Nové Zámky districts to work with under the *Toward Equal Treatment* project. The main selection criterion was the capacity of the partnership, the size and diversity of its members, their previous experience with similar projects and, above all, the interest of partnership leaders to cooperate under this project.

The local partnerships for social inclusion from Levice and Nové Zámky have a robust membership base comprised of representatives of non-governmental organisations, municipality authorities, the labour

office, the upper tier territorial unit, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities and natural persons.

The mission of both partnerships is, *inter alia*, to promote community development and the strategic development of their districts. They focus mainly on the inclusion of population groups vulnerable to social exclusion (the unemployed, the homeless, Roma communities). Their key activities involve assistance and consultancy services provided to municipalities and NGOs in the form of information on the possibilities and methods of work leading to the inclusion of marginalised groups, possible financial resources, project management, etc.

8.1.2 Working group meetings

In both localities, the working groups met six times. The first four were training meetings aimed at:

- identifying the level of the group members' knowledge of anti-discrimination
- finding out the participants' interest in particular issues related to anti-discrimination
- presenting the existing legal framework for anti-discrimination practices and policies
- discussing problems concerning compliance between the existing European standards and Slovak laws, and the practical implications of the applicable Anti-discrimination Act
- improving knowledge of individual forms of discrimination and examples in which the principle of equal treatment has been violated
- discussing prejudices, their identification, specific examples and methods of their elimination
- developing the ability to perceive and better understand differences between various religious, ethnic, cultural and other groups
- understanding examples and identifying the grounds for discrimination
- seeking possible solutions to concrete cases of discrimination

As a follow-up to the training meetings, two more joint meetings were held where both working groups discussed the most frequent forms of discrimination they encounter in their everyday life and identified problems they deemed necessary to solve (violence against women, bullying at schools) and which they then made the key focus of their activities. At the same time, they prepared their own (anti)discrimination activities and projects at the meetings, which they then implemented in between the meetings.

8.1.3 Activities organised by the working groups

A. Violence against women and domestic violence

The members of both working groups agreed that violence against women and domestic violence was an extremely serious problem and that it was necessary to organise meetings to address this issue. Subsequently, a working meeting was held in both localities with the aim of raising awareness with respect to the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence, with the emphasis on working with victims and on particular solutions to case-studies related to violence against women. The meetings were attended by working group members interested in dealing with this problem in the future, as well as other invited members of the local community.

Outputs

The "Ženy pre ženy" (Women for women) NGO from Nové Zámky planned a series of lectures for women on the prevention of violence against women and subsequently started looking for possibilities to raise funds to finance a project to set up a support group for female victims of domestic violence.

A Nové Zámky municipal police officer proposed the preparation of leaflets to improve the knowledge among the municipal police staff regarding violence against women and children. In cooperation with working group members, she started preparing a project on violence against children and women.

"Miesto v dome" (A place at home), a local NGO from Levice, decided to extend its activities to include assistance to victims of violence against women.

A group of local civic activists, named "Slnečnica" (Sunflower), was formed as one of the activities performed by the ICM civic association in Levice to address the problem of violence against women and domestic violence. The groups began preparations for a new awareness-raising project on this issue.

B. Bullying at schools

Bullying at schools was discussed in detail by both working groups. The meetings of the Levice group, which also involved school personnel, identified the need to pay increased attention to existing school rules. The group decided to ascertain (non)compliance between individual school rules and the Anti-discrimination Act and, in addition, to choose a secondary school where they could engage in amending its school rules.

Based on previous positive experience from its cooperation with the *Pod amfiteátrom* secondary vocational school, the PDCS decided to make it a project partner. In this case, the key goal of the partnership was to provide consultancy services and legal assistance aimed at incorporating the principles of anti-discrimination legislation into the School Rules as a follow-up to sessions at which its students and teachers had been given the chance to discuss the planned changes. The amendment process went through several stages:

- *Stage One:* a meeting between the school management and a student council coordinator was held to discuss mutual options and expectations, obtain written documents (School Rules) and determine further steps for cooperation.
- *Stage Two:* possible amendments to the School Rules were consulted with a legal expert from the Občan a demokracia NGO who provided comments on the anti-discrimination law-based draft amendments to the School Rules. Incorporation of the proposals made by the legal expert who brought the School Rules into compliance with the Anti-discrimination Act and added her own proposals for its individual sections was followed by *Stage Three:* a meeting with the student council members to discuss the proposed amendments.
- *Stage Four:* a member of the working group, and a school teacher, initiated meetings with two groups of first-year students. Each group consisted of some 20 students. The meetings focused on activities that helped students understand the very essence of the Anti-discrimination Act and, at the same time, taught them through experience how to work with and identify prejudice. The young people were mostly concerned about bullying, a problem which many of them had already faced on several occasions. Since the school wished to prevent bullying through amendments to the School Rules, it provided room to discuss the issue in more detail with those who are usually most affected. The students appreciated that their school had decided to address bullying under the *Towards Equal Treatment* project in cooperation with local partners and experts collaborating with the NGOs that implemented the project. As the following example implies, it is important to first identify the problem – or better, to define it precisely – and then incorporate the principle of equal treatment into the School Rules, the compliance with which is the alpha and omega for the prevention of discriminatory behaviour.

Example of draft provisions of the School Rules

(prepared by Daniela Lamačková)

Bullying prevention

1. Bullying means any action perpetrated by a student or group of students with the aim of causing harm to another student or group of students, or any act of threat or coercion. Bullying involves the targeted and repeated use of violence against a student or a group of students who are unable or incapable of defending against it, on whatever grounds. Bullying may have different forms that may affect an individual's mental and physical health.
2. Forms of bullying:
   a) direct: physical assaults, abusive nicknames, verbal insults, taunting, extreme coercion, theft, etc.
   b) indirect: overlooking and ignoring victims, for example.

The principle of equal treatment

1. Students, their legal guardians and the pedagogical and other school staff have the right to equal treatment and protection against discrimination and bullying.
2. The principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination apply to students, their legal guardians, the pedagogical and other school staff on the school premises during classes, including the meetings of school boards.
3. Students, their legal guardians and pedagogical and other school staff who believe their rights or their legally protected interests have been affected due to non-compliance with the principle of equal treatment may seek legal protection pursuant to a separate regulation.
4. The school shall not impose any penalty on, or otherwise disadvantage students, their legal guardians or pedagogical and other school staff for exercising their rights pursuant to a separate regulation.

C. Preparation of a joint strategy to address the problem of the "Ladislavov dvor" community in Levice

The "Miesto v dome" NGO representatives regularly attended the meetings organised by the PDCS and, at same time, were involved in a local project aimed at organising regular meetings with local authorities, school headmasters/headmistresses, the municipal police and the labour office. The project sought to address the problems of the "Ladislavov dvor" community, which comprises a predominantly Roma population. Ladislavov dvor is a segregated neighbourhood, some five kilometres from Levice, whose inhabitants represent a marginalised group of population. People from the "Miesto v dome" NGO organise regular "round tables" for all stakeholders where they seek to find solutions to the housing, education, drug and health-related problems of this community. Such projects have the best prospects of becoming the basis for our future efforts to develop local and regional anti-discrimination policies.

8.1.4 Joint meetings of both working groups in Levice and Nové Zámky

The need for mutual communication between the two working groups arose in the course of the project implementation. Therefore the working group members initiated a joint meeting to which other potential partners and stakeholders were invited in order to discuss further possible discrimination-related activities. The meeting was also attended by representatives of a Zlaté Moravce local partnership for social inclusion who wished to better familiarise its members with the Anti-discrimination Act. This helped to capitalise on practical experience and present the working methods of the Levice and Nové Zámky local partnerships in another district.

At the joint meeting, the participants discussed a psychological framework and organisational requirements pertaining to the implementation of anti-discrimination measures and policies in organisations. Their practical application inside organisations is a very challenging process, therefore the participants appreciated the fact that they could share their experience and knowledge on this issue and discuss not only examples of good practice, but structural measures and components of the corporate culture which could be introduced in order to prevent mobbing or other examples of social exclusion, as well. Ultimately, the discussion led to an extremely topical challenge for human resource management both in the private and public sectors: what are the best practices for implementing diversity management.

8.2 Respecting and Implementing the Principle of Equality in Services of the Košice Self-governing Region

Dušan Ondrušek, Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia

The approval of the Anti-discrimination Act[1] in Slovakia marked a considerable step forward in the never-ending struggle to eliminate discrimination. All people wish to live in a tolerant community without discrimination, xenophobia or other cases of unreasonable disadvantaging.

However, a legal regulation alone is not enough to achieve this goal. We believe that the philosophy embedded in the Discrimination Act will also "reflect in people's mind". And the more power and authority people have in the community, the stronger their "anti-discrimination" mindset should be. The anti-discrimination mindset should not only be some sort of peculiar "add-on". Our society will only really operate in compliance with the rule of law if non-discriminatory approaches become inherent in day-to-day interpersonal relations, as well as in relations between citizens and institutions. This vision is not unachievable. A very similar vision is pursued by the European Union through its various policies implemented both at the Community and national levels.

Therefore, codes of conduct, standards, good practice principles and a wide range of recommendations have emerged at the level of regions and public and private institutions. All are complementary to activities and standards prescribed by law and facilitate public awareness-raising at various levels. Codes of conduct, self-regulatory standards and similar documents which individual institutions voluntarily undertake to comply with cannot by imposed by laws. But maybe that is their strength. Their "standard-making" role consists in that people and/or institutions undertake to play by them voluntarily.

It was exactly this type of approach that we wanted to examine during the eight months of working within our volunteer working group. The group was comprised of 25 people from the Košice Self-governing Region (Košický samosprávny kraj, or KSK) – regional MPs, members of the upper tier territorial unit (VÚC) social committee, minority representatives and officials of institutions established and controlled by the Košice Self-governing Region. Their endeavours represent an attempt at a so-called active decentralised approach, i.e., a bottom-up approach to promote gender equality[2], equal treatment for

[1] ACT No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on amendments to certain acts (the Anti-discrimination Act) - in force from 1 April 2008.
Changes: Finding by the Constitutional Court published under No. 539/2005 Coll., Act No. 326/2007 Coll., Act No. 85/2008 Coll.

[2] E. Ľapinová, K. Jakab, Podpora zosúlaďovania pracovného a rodinného života v zamestnávateľskej organizácii (metodické a koncepčné východiská), *Support of Harmonising Work and Family Life in an Emloyer Organisation,* Banská Bystrica, Univerzita Mateja Bela, Ústav vedy a výskumu, 2008, 120 p.

all groups discriminated against on grounds of racial origin, age, gender, disability, or membership of a language, ethnic or sexual minority. Lengthy discussions, sometimes including even strongly opposing opinions, finally gave rise to a draft text containing principles which all members of the working group were willing to subscribe to and promote. These draft principles – a sort of self-regulatory standard – are based on the provisions of the amended Anti-discrimination Act, in force from 1 April 2008.

Even though promoting the principles of equality and non-discriminatory conduct has gradually become commonplace in the practices of public institutions and authorities in EU Member States, similar activities have only just commenced in Slovakia. We are still only trying to make clear how, when drafting the rules, to make the most effective use of initiatives and concerns of public institution employees and minority members who are able to formulate the needs of a target population more accurately.

The working group based its work on the idea of the threefold responsibility of the Košice Self-governing Region and institutions under its authority (i.e., those established and controlled by the Košice Self-governing Region). The Košice Self-governing Region in its capacity as a regional-level public administration authority fulfils three roles in relation to the community, i.e. the citizens:

1. as a service provider;
2. as an entity making and implementing regional policies; and
3. as an employer.[3]

All three roles are, at the same time, reflected in the nature of the activities through which these roles are performed. As a **service provider**, a well-functioning self-governing region wants to avoid discrimination in the development and provision of its services to the citizens. The self-governing region wants to publish information about its services in such a way as to make it available virtually to all people. It seeks alternative ways to deliver its services to accommodate people with specific needs. The self-governing authority alone makes efforts at self-assessment and the introduction of mechanisms to identify improvements or deterioration in the delivery of services, and takes measures to ensure that its partners behave in the same way.

As a **policy planning and implementing body**, a well-functioning self-governing region seeks to integrate an anti-discrimination perspective into each planning discussion when preparing and assessing regional policies. In addition to the application of anti-discrimination laws, an open self-governing authority attempts at taking steps that go beyond what is required under the law, and adopts preventive

[3] Equality and Anti-discrimination policy. Corporate Equality Plan. In: Elmbridge Borough Council Corporate Equality Plan 2007 – 2010. Elmbridge Borough Council 2008 , 38 pp. http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/documents/detail.htm?pk_document=11501 (visited on 25/11/2008)

actions through increasing public knowledge of anti-discriminatory practices. In doing so, it builds on nation-level practices but takes into consideration regional specifics as well.

From the position of an **employer**, a good self-governing authority monitors its employment practices and procedures on a regular basis so as to ensure the fair, understandable and transparent treatment of its employees. When advertising available job opportunities, a well-functioning self-governing authority is open and prepared to accept unconventional applicants as long as they meet the necessary qualification requirements and publicly announced conditions. It is prepared to accommodate the needs of prospective job applicants who could be disadvantaged on the grounds of their disability, and takes into account the need for specific measures that should be taken in order to employ people with disabilities, people of different ethnic or racial origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc. It seeks to inform its employees on the equality policy. All people must be aware of their rights when compared to other employees.

The working group identified target groups that are most vulnerable to discrimination and social exclusion in the Košice region. After some discussions the working group arrived at the conclusion that there are several potential target groups which require assistance and special attention, but it was necessary to identify those that seem to have the highest priority (that, of course, does not mean that there are no cases of discrimination in those other groups). The following target groups were identified as most vulnerable to discrimination in the Košice region:

- Roma– in particular those who live in inadequate living conditions in settlements whose inhabitants are endangered by generational poverty, suffer from social exclusions and are considered “derailed” – not only by the non-Roma population but by other Roma community members as well.
- The disabled – either physical or mental – in particular those who are treated by public institutions in line with a segregation model. The most complicated situation is expected in the case of children who face multiple discrimination.
- The elderly – in particular people over 60 years of age who live alone, especially in the anonymity of towns and cities without neighbourly assistance, control or concern.
- Women – in particular women who want to return to the labour market and attempt to enjoy working conditions.
- People from regions – in particular those who live in economically less advanced regions (e.g., in places too distant from central public administration bodies) as well as people disadvantaged in access to information.
- Children from low-income families, in particular children in emotional distress who often end up in the position of “whipping boy”.

First of all, the working group articulated its vision in relation to the promotion of equality and diversity. The draft text specifies they are committed to developing a thriving and cohesive regional government, which may be achieved through promoting the equality principle and, at the same time, combating discrimination and social exclusion. Diversity in the Košice region will also increase in the future. Even though the growing diversity (in terms of ethnic minorities, language, age, religion and belief) will always be accompanied by numerous difficulties, the working group deems diversity a value that brings benefits. The working group writes:

"We recognise and appreciate the richness of cultures, traditions and the mutually enriching aspect of diversity for all members of our society (in terms of age, gender, health conditions, social status, etc.).

We deem it natural to abide by the law in this respect and we adopt such measures in the area of employment and provision of services that facilitate real equal opportunity and help combat discrimination and unequal treatment.

In addition to the statutory prescribed anti-discrimination measures and promotion of the equality policy, we are convinced that the spirit of law and new opportunities for improvements and increasing efficiency in the delivery of our services will best be put into practice if discussions are held from time to time on the purpose and best form of the application of regulatory measures within specific conditions of individual institutions, and if the compliance with some anti-discrimination principles is monitored. As a follow-up to the monitoring and discussions, further steps will be recommended to be adopted in order to pursue equal opportunity and promote the diversity of the workforce at places that are part of the public institutions controlled by the Košice Self-governing Region. The outcomes of such discussions may ultimately be shaped into recommendations and suggestions for further improvement in the work of people employed by the Košice Self-governing Region and its institutions. One of the possible and, apparently, more effective ways also includes such mechanisms as inclusion index criteria, gender audit and work-life balance measures.

We strive to improve the quality of life and broader participation of the citizens in the economic, educational, cultural and community life of public institutions controlled by the Košice Self-governing Region.

We firmly believe that all citizens of our region have the right to services provided by public institutions which they need and which fall within the competence of the self-governing regional authority. Our mission is to safeguard equal opportunity for all people in the Košice Self-governing Region – for all citizens, employers and employees of the Košice Self-governing Region bodies."

Further in the text, the working group introduces the principles they wish to promote in two areas:

a) principles in relation to service users;

b) principles in relation to facilities (service providers) and employees of KSK bodies.

These principles are briefly outlined below and may serve as a source of inspiration for other self-governing authorities:

Equality Policy Principles[4]

Our understanding of the equality policy in relation to **service users** builds on the following principles:

- All service users and members of our society have the right to equal treatment and bear their share of responsibility for the promotion of equality and combating discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes.
- All service users shall have equal access to high-quality services that match their needs. We realise that there may be some people who need assistance in order to exercise this right. In this respect, we intend to adopt "non-standard" measures in the approach to disadvantaged citizens. Such measures are taken in the form of assistance provided to individuals, as well as in cases where an entire institution may be unreasonably disadvantaged (e.g., small social service facilities with less than 40 clients are treated differently than, and do not enjoy all the rights of larger institutions).
- All service users and employees have the right to life in a safe environment without discrimination and any other inconvenience.
- Solutions should be sought for the provision of consultancy services in the language of a minority community, if necessary and technically feasible.
- We need to regularly consult with our employees and service users in order to flexibly modify and adjust our policy to their needs.
- With respect to children in distress – both in their field work and under community projects – the employees themselves go beyond the statutory framework when providing care; they try to anticipate possible problems that may arise in connection with discrimination and attempt at adopting appropriate preventive measures.

[4] The principles were drafted by the working group of regional MPs of the Košice Self-governing Region (KSK), social committee members, minority representatives, and representatives of social service facilities under the authority of the KSK with the assistance of PDCS facilitators; the working group meetings were held from May to November 2008.

Our understanding of the equality policy in relation to **facilities (service providers)** and to **employees of self government bodies** builds on the following principles:

- All employees have the right to be heard out, to discuss equal opportunity and to be treated with dignity irrespective of their age, origin, gender, language, health conditions, level of education, etc.
- Within our working environment, we endeavour to create a culture that values individuals, and where everyone has their role in combating prejudice and discrimination. We wish to offer our employees equal opportunity for their development irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, membership in trade unions, or other personal attributes.
- We appreciate and encourage any interest in working for our institutions by groups that are underrepresented among service providers and self-governing region employees but that are strongly represented among service users and citizens. Our selection procedures include clear, open and measurable criteria set in advance.
- We encourage the development of a labour policy that will ensure maximum job opportunities for all (including those who might now be disadvantaged), i.e., we will seek the possibilities to offer flexible working time, work-at-home options, part time jobs, and short-time jobs to extend the possibilities that we have to offer.
- We encourage our employees to participate in further training activities and in doing so (e.g., improving professional qualification and skills through study trips, participation in educational activities, distance training courses, etc.) we promote the non-discriminatory selection and consider investments in education in light of its benefit for further professional and personal growth of applicants.
- We encourage an active approach to seeking alternative jobs for those employees who consider their current positions unsuitable for them due to their health conditions or disability.
- We encourage the adoption of internal self-regulatory mechanisms (for example, the introduction and promotion of ethical and moral principles at work) by service providers and their institutions.
- In organisations falling within the competence of the KSK, we encourage the adoption of measures to improve the organisational culture in relation to women, elderly people and people with disabilities, members of ethnic, religious, racial and sexual minorities. We promote a gender-sensitive culture and a culture of mutual understanding, tolerance and assistance in our presentations and at other public events.

There is still a long way to go before the equal treatment principle is fully established in practice and real anti-discrimination policies are introduced. Any attempt at taking the first steps and overcoming – a seemingly enormous and insurmountable – cultural and social gap deserves our appreciation and encouragement. It is excellent that a public policy aimed at preventing discrimination has already won such support in the Košice region.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Conclusions from public discussions

Two public discussions were organised within the *Towards Equal Treatment* project, attended by experts from various discrimination-related areas, representatives of the public and non-governmental sectors who are actively engaged in dealing with discrimination, business people, as well as those who have had hands-on experience with discrimination.

The first discussion was organised by Občan a demokracia on 19 June 2008 in Bratislava. The goal was to find answers to questions related to dealing with discrimination and the strategies and efforts that will lead to a reduction of the phenomenon of discrimination on the society level. The second discussion was prepared by the Institute for Public Affairs and held on 5 November 2008 in Prešov. The key focus was placed on opinion-formers (multipliers) who disseminate the ideas and values of anti-discrimination among the general public. Both discussions helped to outline the bases for conclusions, recommendations and future programmes.

Below is an overview of the key suggestions and recommendations as discussed at the two events:

A Barriers to the elimination of discrimination

- Poor civic consciousness is the cause of the persistently low public interest in community and civic affairs.
- Human rights education at schools within the life-long learning of people employed in the public sector is insufficient and lacks a basic concept.
- The need for continuous awareness-raising and educational activities on various levels, the key requirement in order to facilitate a change in thinking, has not sunk in and lacks structural solutions.
- Stereotypes are continually reproduced and impressed upon children by their parents in a kind of vicious circle.
- Children need positive role models. Upbringing within the family has not changed much as far as human rights values are concerned.

- It is crucial to specify who is in charge of addressing a problematic situation – the competencies and resources for systemic solutions, e.g., who should "bring up" the parents.
- The problem is also linked with the school system as schools do not provide enough room for education regarding responsible reproductive behaviour and parenthood; too much is left to "the hand of destiny".
- Our socialist-like way of thinking is also a check – even 20 years after the "velvet" revolution we seem incapable of enforcing cross-sectoral and structural changes.
- Low responsiveness and prejudices have negative impacts on the employment of certain population groups, such as people (from minority communities, women, etc.) who feel discriminated against because they are not given permanent job contracts and can only find work in the grey economy.
- Another problem involves reproducing stereotypes, many of which have negative impacts on gender equality in employment and the family. Women are under conflicting pressure if they want to be mothers and, at the same time, pursue professional careers; moreover, the time spent on child and family care adversely affects their old-age pension benefits.
- Stereotypes accumulate – in society as well as in the family. Women are "punished" for being women.
- Women's work is undervalued, financially and morally. This can by illustrated by women-specific "involuntary" volunteering.
- There are no positive role models and examples of the positive strengthening of civic consciousness through successfully resolved cases of discrimination.
- Room for improvement also exists in relation to the media. The so-called "celebratisation" of the public domain has occurred, but there are no role models to promote a positive approach to difference or diversity.
- The absence of specific statistics relevant to ethnicity impairs the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin – it is extremely difficult to implement targeted, nationwide and regional/local policies when there is so little information available about the population group they should address.
- The ongoing discrimination of the Roma population is caused by a non-comprehensive approach to this issue.
- Despite the individual approach to Roma children, negative behaviour patterns in Roma communities are reproduced through families.

- The majority population feels discriminated against by positive action targeted at Roma communities.
- Due to the complexity and the structural nature of discrimination, discriminated persons always pay for their endeavours to seek justice in the end (e.g., in employment relations, the business owner would rather fire an employee than solve the problem).
- The problem is that discrimination is primarily discussed by experts whose vocabulary is incomprehensible for ordinary people; this, for one thing, devalues the work of many good experts and for another, it fails to improve knowledge and information among the general public – the approach and method of communication need to be changed.
- Another lingering problem is that public authorities have still not sufficiently interiorised anti-discrimination and, in general, human rights principles. Their publicly presented opinions implying the lack of respect for these values represent real barriers to the promotion of equal treatment and are harmful for the whole of society.
- Poor mechanisms for monitoring and assessing adopted policies and programmes are also a problem.

B Problems in communicating discrimination to the public

- The media play an important role in communicating discrimination problems. They often have a negative influence since they reproduce and strengthen numerous stereotypes, which distort public discourse.
- The media are not concerned with discrimination; we are witnessing the “celebritisation” and “tabloidation” of the media.
- The media have an extremely important function as a communication channel that can facilitate awareness-raising on discrimination issues.
- The media are not immune to discrimination either; discrimination structures also exist within the media. It affects, for example, the choice (and often hierarchisation) of topics and the way they are handled.
- The Slovak education system does not train any professionals to act as multipliers, such as teachers or journalists.

In June 2008 the Slovak (public) TV was successful in discovering a discrimination case and, since it participated in the solution (disclosure), it became concerned about the topic of discrimination. Their

attention provoked a whole series of follow-up positive signals – e.g., the entity required to comply with the principle of equal treatment changed its internal regulations and, subsequently, encouraged other stakeholders to follow. One of the proposed solutions in this respect is cooperation with the media at other stages of communication as well, not only in awareness-raising and knowledge building activities, but to engage them even in discovering discrimination cases, which may eventually increase their interest in this particular topic. Hence, it seems that possible solutions lay in changing the nature of communication between experts and the media.

9.2 Conclusions and recommendations from the conference

A final two-day conference of the *Towards Equal Treatment* project, attended by more than 60 participants from throughout Slovakia who had also been actively engaged in other project activities, was organised by the Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia NGO on 22-23 October 2008 in Bratislava. The conference was intended to popularise and present the project outcomes to a wider group of stakeholders. One of its main goals was to promote the involvement of active and engaged people in the preparation of future anti-discrimination programmes, projects and public policies. On the first day, the project outcomes were presented to all relevant public and private sector institutions, as well as individuals. The following day, the participants worked in thematic groups with the aims of producing recommendations for relevant institutions and facilitating the development of action plans for the application of the project outcomes on a wider basis.

Conclusions and recommendations were tabled by small groups of participants that comprised individuals from practice and experts from the fields of health, social and educational services, public and non-profit institutions, as well as local and regional administration bodies and human rights organisations. Small group discussions (to ensure maximum participation) focused on the assessment of the existing situation in the implementation of anti-discrimination principles in practice. They discussed successfully implemented programmes and events that had proved effective and should be continued.

Discussion groups identified problems on which our attention should focus in the future. The following recommendations for new measures to be taken and approaches to be initiated were made:

Assessment of the existing situation

The following issues hinder the implementation of the Anti-discrimination Act in practice:

- not all stakeholders know the Anti-discrimination Act, which only multiplies the existing information barriers;
- the disproportionate participation of women in public life continues, backed by lingering prejudices and gender stereotypes;
- victims of discrimination are subject to intense stigmatisation which, in return, holds them back from asking for assistance;
- senseless and lengthy bureaucratic practices prevent the implementation of the Anti-discrimination Act in practice; and
- there is a lack of judicial decisions on discrimination and, even more so, a lack of successful litigation precedents that could also have an indirect educational effect on the general public.

Activities with positive impacts and good practices

- first court decisions in favour of a discriminated person in a case involving ethnic origin-based discrimination in access to services;
- the amendment to the Anti-discrimination Act;
- more competencies given to the *Slovak National Centre for Human Rights* and the establishment of its regional offices;
- information campaigns on discrimination;
- more intensive education at schools aimed at pupils, students and teachers;
- several good examples of comprehensive development strategies for marginalised communities, which have a potential to facilitate the elimination of discrimination;
- specific activities with marginalised groups (support for protected workshops, support for activities undertaken by churches, working with Roma youth);
- promotion of anti-discrimination ideals on the local level;
- inter-sectoral discussions to better understand discrimination issues;
- implementation of joint events to identify discrimination;
- support for the networking of people from diverse marginalised groups (e.g., the inclusion of people with disabilities in community life, while the community and local authorities have been trained for such co-existence and the inclusion is understood as a long-term strategic process);

- joint efforts of networking organisations and the building of coalitions to strengthen the prospects for the implementation of anti-discrimination practices.

Recommendations for the future

- implementation of in-depth structural changes in the office of the Public Defender of Rights (its tasks should be performed by an effective team of experts based on the applicable anti-discrimination laws aimed at regions and communities, depending on the regions' priorities);
- absolute separation of church and state;
- introduction of an anti-discrimination specialist at each ministry;
- adoption of laws that respect the specific issues of individuals with mental disabilities;
- elimination of discrimination of non-heterosexual couples (equalisation);
- incorporation of anti-discrimination education in elementary and secondary school curricula;
- enhanced use of the "testing" practice in identifying discrimination.

Recommendations regarding gender equality in the public sector

- more focus on gender analysis with respect to public policies;
- monitoring of the implementation of gender equality as a basis for an in-depth analysis of the existing situation;
- development of a gender sensitisation methodology;
- comprehensive education on gender equality and gender stereotypes;
- education and sensitisation of state administration employees in all sectors;
- development of model policies on gender equality for state administration and regional and local authorities.

Recommendations regarding assistance in social services

- support for motivation campaigns targeted at employers and the promotion of employment opportunities for groups vulnerable to discrimination;

- more focus on competencies of regional and local authorities and key institutions in addressing problems of discriminated persons;
- transformation of large-capacity social service facilities into smaller ones;
- transformation of social care homes.

Recommendations regarding the media

- comprehensive education of media personnel (on anti-discrimination and gender equality);
- more focus on anti-discrimination issues in the media (both regional and nationwide);
- incorporation of anti-discrimination and gender equality principles in the journalists' code of ethics;
- more minority members in editorial positions and in the media in general;
- presentation of good practices, more information on successful anti-discrimination measures and achievements and the development of investigative journalism in relation to discrimination.

Recommendations regarding non-governmental organisations

- initiation of public discussions on discrimination and available means of protection;
- stronger commitment by non-governmental organisations;
- stronger support for the advocacy activities of non-governmental organisations.

Recommendations regarding government authorities

- development of strategies for preventive anti-discrimination policies in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and regional/local authorities;
- support for employees who actively promote the implementation of the Anti-discrimination Act;
- inclusion of the explanation of discrimination issues in educational activities at elementary and secondary schools, as well as life-long learning activities of public sector employees;
- support for projects related to anti-discrimination information campaigns.

Recommendations regarding regional and local authorities

- employee and MP training on anti-discrimination and related issues (from their own budgets) to increase their sensitivity in working with diverse clients;
- elimination of barriers in offices – both physical and psychological, increased openness and a friendly approach;
- stronger support for their efforts to provide a service for citizens;
- more focus on information activities on discrimination on the local level.

9.3 Summary

The publication provides a comprehensive overview of the majority of outputs delivered under the *Towards Equal Treatment* project and offers a multitude of various views and opinions on the discrimination problem and possibilities for its systemic solution. We have presented both quantitative and qualitative data from two major surveys, along with their results, which may serve as a sound basis for the development of public preventive anti-discrimination and gender equality policies in the near future. We can observe that the project met its set objectives. It helped considerably to improve public knowledge of anti-discrimination and the principle of equal treatment, thus contributing to the gradual elimination of discrimination in Slovakia. The project proposal, its ambitious objectives and the partnership of four non-governmental organisations represented the strengths of the project, along with the division of competencies and responsibilities for the implementation of individual activities among them based on their specialisations. One of the greatest benefits of the project was a multi-level interdisciplinary approach that was primarily reflected in the complexity of the activities delivered, and in the choice of target groups. The project team was highly effective in its efforts as they combined practices and methods of sociological research, legal training and psychological activation. The team's effectiveness was further enhanced by its permanent efforts to enter the mass media and draw the attention of media people to discrimination issues.

The multi-level interdisciplinary approach had a combined effect: a strong legal input, which resulted in the preparation of two publications, was primarily supplied by the lead organisation. Občan a demokracia substantially contributed to the understanding and interpretation of the Slovak anti-discrimination legislation when during the project, it produced a comprehensive legal commentary on the Anti-discrimination Act. The publication is intended for law professionals (including law students) and entities required to promote the principle of equal treatment, as well as other professionals and the general public. Another significant project output is a brochure entitled "What we (don't) know about discrimination" which

provides, in a well-structured way, information on equal treatment and discrimination. One more activity by Občan a demokracia was also central to legal discourse - an analysis of the possibilities for the implementation of the amended anti-discrimination legislation, which focuses on the recently adopted legislative amendments, the established case-law of the Slovak Constitutional Court and translations of relevant texts. The analysis and other project results are available at www.diskriminacia.sk which provided up-to-date information on anti-discrimination issues and equal treatment throughout the entire project. Educational activities, an employer training programme on the implementation of the equal treatment principle and the "Towards Equal Treatment" autumn school, were also appreciated by their participants. They were significantly instrumental in meeting an objective defined at the outset of the project.

Another strength of the project included research efforts undertaken mainly by the Institute for Public Affairs. The project involved six focus groups, one representative social opinion poll, one evaluation survey and seven profile expert interviews with personalities engaged in anti-discrimination and human rights issues. The series of research activities contributed to the better understanding of discrimination in Slovak society and the explanation of its perception by the Slovak public, which is deemed crucial for the development of strategies and measures for its elimination. The research activities produced two comprehensive analyses which are available at www.diskriminacia.sk,; their Slovak and English versions are included in this publication.

On the local level, project work was delivered through educational and training activities for local partnerships with local authorities in Levice and Nové Zámky and regular meetings of a working group in Košice, whose establishment was initiated by Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia. The working group concentrated on the preparation of internal rules for non-discriminatory behaviour by regional authorities, which resulted in "Draft principles to promote equality and diversity". The result of this months-long effort is an attempt at an informal approach to the formulation of anti-discrimination recommendations for services provided by the institutions controlled by the Košice Self-governing Region (Košický samosprávny kraj).

The project culminated in a social and media campaign prepared and carried out by the Hlava 98 NGO; it was one of the most effective instruments used within the project with the aim of increasing public responsiveness to the issue of (anti)discrimination. The campaign activities opened room for public discourse on this issue. The evaluation survey found out that the campaign was noticed by 20% of the respondents, which undoubtedly proves the campaign's success. The social campaign included TV and radio spots and several types of print outputs (newspaper ads, billboards, citylight panels, posters, stickers).

The last, but no less important, pillar of the project was the strategy for the dissemination of project results throughout its entire duration. Two conferences, two public panel discussions, a press conference

and other events were held during the project in order to popularise project activities and contribute to meeting the set objective. Interim results and outputs were also communicated in an international environment, through the participation and presentation of the project at two EU-level international conferences. A Belfast event focused on communicating discrimination issues to the public. A *Towards Equal Treatment* project manager presented the www.diskrimincia.sk website in the conference section on advanced media technologies. At the Equality Summit 2008 held in Paris during the French EU Presidency, the project manager conveyed the views of non-governmental organisations on the situation in the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in Slovakia.

The project activities produced a multitude of material and outputs whose lifespan and sustainability will facilitate the elimination of discrimination even after the completion of the project. One such specific output, which will also aid public sensitisation in the future, is the artistic documentary called Back Passing. Publications, analyses, research data and working materials will serve the professional and general public in their further efforts to raise awareness on discrimination, as well as other professions and people concerned about equality and (anti)discrimination.

The project partners agreed that the effective cooperation of the project team was its strength. The partners benefited from an atmosphere of cooperation and innovative perspectives on discrimination which stemmed from the diverse professional and personal background of individual team members. One of the weaknesses of the project was its length. The project implementers agreed that 12 months was not long enough to achieve a more significant change in the public mindset, attitudes and values. The lack of time was the key factor that prevented the project from having even stronger impact. More effective events on anti-discrimination and compliance with the principle of equal treatment require a systematic approach and long-term programmes and strategies.

Another weakness was the insufficient direct engagement of multipliers, especially non-governmental non-profit organisations promoting the values of anti-discrimination and equal treatment, in the project. Non-governmental organisations promote fundamental values and standpoints and, at the same time, represent critical initiators and organisers of citizens' activities that strengthen civic consciousness which is pivotal for protection against discrimination. The more direct and intensive involvement of this target group in the project could have rendered its effects even stronger.

The lack of a European or international perspective was also one of the weaknesses of the project and project partnership, since most of the activities concentrated on regional and local aspects of discrimination. In terms of project administration and management, the disproportional division of administrative tasks among the project partners was another weak point. Project capacities and funds were also rather insufficient.

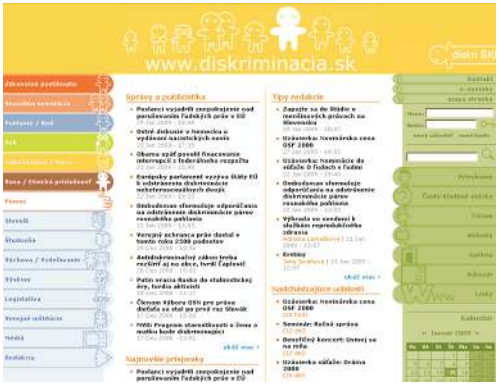
In addition, the project had some unexpected results, including the appointment of a project partnership member to the Government Council for Gender Equality, as well as several amendments to anti-discrimination legislation and public policies, with a major contribution from the project leader, Občan a demokracia.

As far as the project's key objective is concerned, i.e., helping to eliminate discrimination, we can say that the project was a success. The synergic effect of the multi-level approach and combination of various activities undoubtedly reached the key target group. However, in order to ensure a sustainable effect, the activities that have been launched must be continued. It will be necessary not only to carry on with the activities to promote anti-discrimination, but to focus on new approaches and to start up new activities. According to the project implementers, it will be necessary to "break the project down", to give more focus to the particularisation and a narrower targeting of future projects so that they will impact smaller target groups, but with greater intensity. Future anti-discrimination activities should also concentrate on the issues of active civic participation which is crucial for social change.

By the same token, public authorities should create appropriate conditions for NGOs to carry out their anti-discrimination activities. A good legislative, administrative and economic environment is only a small part of that which creates a favourable climate for the successful implementation of anti-discrimination programmes. The public authorities should in particular adopt the principle of civic participation as one of the key standards for the promotion of equal treatment, and to transform it into a vital and flexible instrument. Civic participation would then be involved on all levels of public decision-making, including the preparation of legislation and public policies.

With regard to legislation and public policies, it is important that the principle of civic participation is applied at the early stages of policy-making processes so that the real involvement of the citizens in the value and system setting of the measures adopted is ensured. Also, the public authorities need to understand the interdisciplinary nature of the discrimination phenomenon so that their anti-discrimination measures are developed in close cooperation with all ministries and all sectors – simply with the entire civil society.

10 “Towards Equal Treatment” Project Activities



Portal www.diskriminacia.sk

The portal is an universal, open platform for the publication, retrieval and distribution of information on the principle of equal treatment, discrimination, its manifestations and causes, possible methods of its elimination, as well as actors and other stakeholders who can contribute to such elimination efforts. The portal builds on the principles of openness, cooperation and transparency, which is reflected in the sharing of a common space and the application of interdisciplinary approaches to its design. It provides information about current and planned discrimination-related events and activities. The portal presents various references and links to other organisations and web sites. The portal is a project developed by Občan a demokracia and it is regularly updated by project partners in cooperation with many other organisations.

“What we (don’t) know about discrimination”

The second, updated edition of the information brochure published by Občan a demokracia outlines the basic issues and topics related to equal treatment and discrimination. The publication is intended for the general public, as well as for people who have been, or are likely to be victims of discrimination. A general introduction on the equal treatment issue is followed by an overview of the international and EU legal frameworks with respect to the prohibition of discrimination. A brief outline of the applicable Slovak anti-discrimination legislation describes individual forms of discrimination and available legal means of protection and redress. The brochure includes a summary of relevant European case-law and links to relevant web sites and institutions that offer further information and assistance. The electronic version of the publication is available at www.diskriminacia.sk

Collection of texts and analyses on the possibilities for the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation

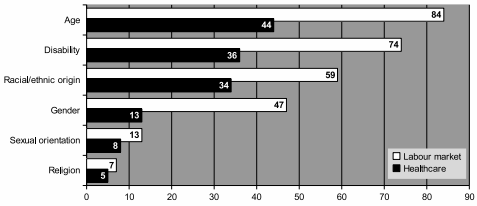
This collection comprises studies and translated materials prepared under the auspices of Občan a demokracia in the context of the established case-law of the Slovak Constitutional Court in order to analyse the existing legal situation and outline the possibilities for the application of particular provisions of the Anti-discrimination Act. The collection serves as a source of information for actors involved in the area of anti-discrimination and for the expert and general public. The texts are available at www.diskriminacia.sk and have also been published in specialised periodicals. It contributes to the fulfilment of several project objectives at the same time: to make the issue of affirmative action and gender equality part of the general public and legal expert discussion, and to raise attention about the need for the training of relevant actors in the public sector.

Commentary on the Anti-discrimination Act

This specialised publication by Občan a demokracia includes detailed commentaries on individual provisions of the Anti-discrimination Act and related anti-discrimination regulations (employment relations, access to goods and services, education, healthcare…). It provides interpretations of national legislative provisions in the European context, in particular with respect to the Treaty on the European Community and EU anti-discrimination directives, and the case-law of the European Court of Justice. The publication also contains the established case-law of the Slovak and Czech courts on the prohibition of discrimination. Part of the material addresses the obligation to promote equal treatment and anti-discrimination related preventive measures and public policies.

A series of interviews on the situation in the area of human rights and discrimination

In the autumn of 2008, the project activities included a series of interviews with personalities of Slovak public life – experts on human rights, equal treatment and anti-discrimination. They included public sector representatives, as well as NGO members who have been engaged in this issue for several years. The interviews focused on obtaining knowledge, experience and information on how experts perceive discrimination and related problems, on gathering forecasts on future developments and their proposals for possible solutions, as well as on obstacles that thwart the implementation of equal treatment policies in public and private institutions. The full versions are available at www.diskriminacia.sk and at the website of the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) that conducted the interviews. (www.ivo.sk)



Representative opinion poll on discrimination

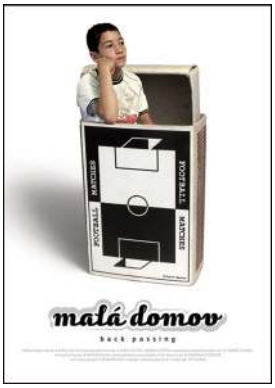
A rather extensive quantitative opinion poll was carried out by the Institute for Public Affairs. Its results have served as a sociological knowledge base for several project activities. The key objective was to prepare analytical studies that helped to prepare and better target a public awareness-raising campaign on discrimination. The survey also focused on uncovering the structures of prevailing stereotypes, the roots of so-called civic powerlessness vis-a-vis discrimination, the assessment of the public sector as to its image in the eyes of the public, the public perception of anti-discrimination measures and policies, and the level of public awareness and knowledge of discrimination. A study produced on the basis of the survey is available at www.diskriminacia.sk

Qualitative focus group based survey "Do we know what discrimination means?"

The Institute for Public Affairs conducted six focus group discussions in various social environments and regions. The qualitative approach helped to obtain better insight on how equal opportunities and non-discriminatory policies are perceived, and to identify information deficits and the most common stereotypes. The key objective was to analyse the arguments against discrimination that are relevant for different social environments, as well as different positions in accepting and implementing non-discriminatory measures. The outcomes served as an analytical background of training and educational activities performed under the project, in particular for a social campaign. The results are available at www.diskriminacia.sk

The Towards Equal Treatment social campaign

This social campaign designed to disseminate anti-discrimination values was carried out by the Hlava 98 NGO. The campaign consisted of TV and radio spots, and a multitude of print outputs (newspaper ads, billboards, citylight panels, posters, stickers, banners). The concept and content of the campaign were jointly prepared by all partner organisations on the basis of the findings from the aforementioned surveys. All print outputs bore an identical motif and were publicly distributed at all project events. The television and radio spots followed the same creative concept and anti-discrimination message of the campaign as the billboards. The campaign target group comprised the whole of society, including groups vulnerable to discrimination.



“Back Passing” documentary film

This 28 minute documentary film presents an artistic view of discrimination. It is the story of a mixed – Roma and non-Roma – junior football team that travels to a youth tournament against racism held in July 2008 in Kragujevac, Serbia. The film is one of the main communication channels of the entire project. It was produced in cooperation with Hlava 98 and a creative team of filmmakers. The documentary was screened at conferences and other public project events and won the main award at the One World festival, one of the most renowned human rights film festivals in Slovakia. The goal was to inspire a change in public opinion. Its impact is likely to be felt even after the completion of the project, as it is planned to be aired on the public STV television and other media.

Conference to raise awareness on equal opportunities

A conference to empower civil society and public actors in the field of discrimination, attended by experts from public institutions, non-governmental organisations and the business sector was organised by the Institute for Public Affairs on 11 June 2008 in Bratislava. The main topics on the conference agenda included the current state of affairs in the implementation of national anti-discrimination policies, a presentation of the findings from the surveys performed, and the activities and strategies employed to mitigate the discrimination of vulnerable groups in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Several agencies presented their creative social campaigns that were subsequently discussed. The event included a press conference, along with other media outputs, in an attempt to appeal to the general public and initiate a public discussion on the issue of equal opportunities.

Employers training on the implementation of the equal treatment principle

A training program designed for private and public sector employers was organised by Občan a demokracia from 21 to 22 May 2008 in Bratislava. It pursued two main goals – to familiarise employers with the legally binding principles of equal treatment, including a pro-active obligation to promote equal treatment and to focus on the respect for and implementation of diversity management for the sake of the very values of diversity, respect and dignity. The aim of the event was to demonstrate principles and practical tools of a management approach that respects the diversity of human resources. The training was designed especially for human resources managers from the private and public sectors. It aimed to present diversity management as an efficient economic management tool that builds on the principle of non-discrimination and the implementation of the equal treatment principle.

Diversity management questionnaire. Award for favourable conditions at workplaces in compliance with the principle of equal treatment

As a follow-up to the training and educational activities, an online survey was conducted by Občan a demokracia in cooperation with a research team from the Institute for Public Affairs to find out information on the implementation of diversity management approaches and policies applied by Slovak organisations. More than 600 organisations were asked to provide information on their internal diversity management policies; 10% of them responded. A questionnaire accessible at www.diskriminacia.sk helped us to find out the degree to which Slovak employers apply diversity management approaches, and to which their relevant employees understand and are able to define this term. This pilot survey produced unique results which were analysed by the IVO team and subsequently published on the project

website. IBM Slovensko was awarded for its active approach to the implementation and promotion of diversity management and the principle of equal treatment in practice.

Training programs for local stakeholders

The Partners for Democratic Change Slovensko NGO formed two working groups – in Levice and Nové Zámky – comprising representatives of local partnerships for social inclusion, NGOs, local authorities, the police, labour offices, local school management and the local media who regularly met in order to first acquire the basic knowledge and skills to identify discrimination both at the individual and systematic levels and, then, to discuss possibilities for the prevention of discrimination and strengthening diversity management within their community. They formed small, more efficient working groups that were able to cooperate more effectively and developed local anti-discrimination strategies.

Working group for the preparation of internal rules for non-discriminatory behaviour by local authorities (VÚC)

Thanks to assistance from Partners for Democratic Change Slovensko, a working group was formed and regular meetings were held at the office of the Košice Self-governing Region (KSK) in order to draft model internal rules for non-discriminatory behaviour to citizens – clients. They focused on adopting diversity management measures within institutions controlled by the KSK authority. The main benefits included better understanding of the discrimination issue among the working group members, permanent discussion on anti-discrimination, identification of vulnerable groups, institutionalisation of the rules of equal treatment and formulation of the principles of equality policy in relation to both service users and providers.

Autumn anti-discrimination school

The Občan a demokracia NGO organised an autumn school for 34 university students, from 1 to 4 October 2008 in Modra-Harmónia, with the aim of presenting the interdisciplinary nature of the legal, political, philosophical, sociological and psychological aspects of discrimination. The intention was not only to provide information about the aforementioned issues, but also to raise the awareness of the young people – future experts and prospective actors responsible for decision and policy making processes – regarding anti-discrimination. In addition to presentations, the participants had the chance to acquaint themselves with discrimination through experience and role plays based on participatory and interactive approaches. All project partners participated in the organisation of the autumn school.

Public panel discussions

Two public discussions that included experts from discrimination-related areas, anti-discrimination activist and persons with hands-on experience with discrimination were held. The first discussion was organised by Občan a demokracia on 19 June 2008 in Bratislava. The goal was to find answers to questions regarding approaches for dealing with discrimination and the strategies and efforts to be employed in order to reduce the phenomenon of discrimination at the society level. The second discussion was prepared by the Institute for Public Affairs and held on 5 November 2008 in Prešov. The key focus was placed on opinion-formers who disseminate the ideas and values of anti-discrimination among the general public. Both discussions helped to outline bases for recommendations and future programmes.

Final conference

The final conference was organised by Partners for Democratic Change Slovensko. It was held from 22 to 23 October in 2008 in Bratislava and attended by over 60 people from all over Slovakia. The conference intended to popularise and present the project outcomes to a wider group of stakeholders and engage them in the preparation of future anti-discrimination programmes, projects and public policies. On the first day, the project outcomes were presented to all relevant public and private sector institutions, as well as individuals. The following day, the participants worked in thematic groups with the aim of producing recommendations for relevant institutions and of facilitating the development of action plans for the application of the project outcomes on a wider basis.

Established in 1992, Občan a demokracia (Citizen and Democracy) is a Slovak, nation-wide, non-governmental, non-profit organisation committed to the promotion of justice and the application of the principles of democracy; it actively engages in developing effective mechanisms for civic participation in public policy-making.

Občan a demokracia creates opportunities for people committed to the development of democracy in Slovakia. The organisation values human uniqueness and believes that respecting that uniqueness is a sign of tolerance and self-respect. This belief reflects the organisation's ethos in terms of the profound promotion and application of the principles of rule of law and democracy, in searching for alternative ways for the facilitation of civic and social responsibility, and establishing cooperation reinforcing citizens' autonomy, freedom and positive social energy.

Its educational and training programmes advocate the idea of an open society through respect for civil and human rights, as well as the idea of a multi-ethnic intercultural society based on a partnership dialogue restoring the *social contract*. Interdisciplinary training programmes provided by the organisation are designed and implemented by experts on psychology, law, sociology and other disciplines.

The organisation's activities, which are to a large degree complementary to public sector activities, concentrate on facilitating and promoting civic participation, making people understand that their professional and/or human potential invested in public governance is greatly needed. Activities bring together various professions (teachers, police officers, and journalists) minority communities, and university students, along with experts from non-governmental, public and business sectors.

Občan a demokracia has in-depth experience in implementing programmes focused on equal opportunity, (anti)discrimination, human rights, civic participation; they are delivered in various forms, such as education and training, participation in policy-making, promoting legislative changes, strategic litigations, publication activities, etc. It has organised a number of training programs for various target groups focused on the social and legal aspects of human rights, and has published extensively on discrimination. It has also actively contributed to preparation and revision efforts with respect to anti-discrimination laws.

www.oad.sk, oad@oad.sk

Inštitút pre verejné otázky (IVO, the Institute for Public Affairs) is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation that brings together experts in various disciplines in order to promote the values of an open society and democratic political culture in public policy and decision-making.

IVO is an independent analysis centre for public policy issues in a number of different areas. It serves as a base for research and publication efforts in order to multiply the country's expert and professional capacities. IVO puts forward ideas that are capable of influencing the process of the drafting and implementation of crucial public decisions. All activities are underlined by the firm belief in the necessity of precisely formulated ideas and a non-partisan approach. Published research findings contribute to the discussion on major issues of public interest. IVO offers critical review and opposition to solutions put forward by various public stakeholders, including government authorities, prepares recommendations in order to sustain reform efforts and promote democratic values, and strives to bring about positive changes in the country's overall development. It identifies top-priority problems and examines major trends in these areas. The Institute focuses on the practical implementation of its own expertise on the legislative and executive level and on its communication to the professional and general public.

www.ivo.sk, ipa@ivo.sk

Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia (PDCS) a member of Partners for Democratic Change International (PDCI) is an independent, apolitical, non-governmental institution that provides assistance and training. PDCS was established in 1991 at Comenius University in Bratislava, later transformed into a foundation, and has been functioning as a civic association since 1997. Its mission is to help to build and promote a culture of democracy and democratic practices and mechanisms for the prevention and solution of conflicts in society, primarily in Slovakia. In 1999, the PDCS was granted accreditation by the Slovak Ministry of Culture for its training programmes, in particular programmes for trainers and consult-

ants, conflict prevention programmes and programmes on the management of non-profit organisations and the functioning of the third sector in Slovakia. In the past five years, more than 20,000 participants in 42 countries have benefited from training and consultation provided by the PDCS. It is a member of the European Network for Civil Peace Services (EN.CPS) and Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP).

www.pdcs.sk, pdcs@pdcs.sk

The Hlava 98 (Head 98) NGO was established in 1998 with the aim of organising the mobilisation campaign “I vote, therefore I am”. In 1999, the organisation saw the birth of a nationwide charity collection project “Hodina deťom” (Children’s Hour) when it produced a series of TV spots for its organiser, the Nadácia pre deti Slovenska foundation. A total of more than SKK 13,000,000 was raised to assist children in Slovakia. Hlava 98 also capitalised on its experience in working with the media and non-governmental organisations in other projects in which it participated, such as campaigning for a good act on access to information, the Rovnaké šance (Equal Chances) project carried out by the Pontis foundation, TV spots for the Maľujeme pre vzdelanie (Painting for Education) project, the civic campaign Nie je nám to jedno (We Do Care) the Korupcia nám pije krv (Corruption Sucks Our Blood) campaign, the social campaign Plus pre ženy 45+ (Plus for Women 45+) and many more.

www.hlava98.sk , hlava@rainside.sk