

European experiences related to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups

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ICUS (NKOS)- besides strong advocacy and enforcement of employee's interests in society, our organisation strongly participates with Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of Slovak republic, with employers and representatives of employees on enforcement of amendments in social sphere.

1st part: Groups of citizens in Slovakia threatened by poverty and social exclusion

Poverty and social exclusion have complicated and various appearances, which are connected to factors such as:

- Accommodation
- Salary and life-standard
- Opportunity for education
- Social safety
- Availability of adequate and worthy work
- Healthcare access

Portion of people living below the level of poverty in whole Slovak population is more than 11%. The regions most threatened by an unemployment are two eastern regions, namely Košický and Prešovský region and region in south of Slovakia, Banskobystrický region.

In greatest risk of poverty are:

- Incomplete families with children (26%)
- Families with three and more children (26%)
- And youth (17%)

Age distribution of individuals shows, that young people before the age of 17 and children, but also 18-24 years olds are threatened by poverty more than people over 65.

In case of people over 65 is risk of poverty at 8% level.

According to administrative data, there are 376 620 people with severe health disability.

(According harmonized statistical research EU SILC 2007 and data of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Factors that assist in the increase of poverty are unemployment and rising living costs.

Problematic factor in relation to poverty is its reproduction from generation to generation as lives of children are significantly affected by lives of parents, which are for example: education, income. Poverty doesn't threaten only unemployed but also low-income families.

Rate of long-term unemployed (over 1 year) is high in Slovakia and there's apparent insufficiency of work places for unqualified employees.

There're roughly 140 000 Slovaks working abroad.

Minimal salary in Slovakia is cca 300 euros.

Very important fact is, that poverty in Slovakia is determined by ethnical aspects and mainly is connected with gipsy population.

Marginalized gipsy communities:

In sociographic mapping were identified 1575 settlements, out of which 149 (120-150 thousands of inhabitants) are considered to be segregated settlements- settlements localized on the outskirts or in an isolated part of villages without water pipeline access and portion of illegal housing is more than 20%.(Sociographic mapping of gipsy housing in Slovakia, 2004)

2nd part: Year 2010 and prepared activities in Slovakia on national level

Fight against poverty is quantified also in the first Millennium development goal – until 2015 lower the number of people living in extreme poverty by half and also cut the number of people suffering by hunger by hunger.

One of the ways how to fight the poverty effectively is to afford opportunity of basic education to everyone or facilitate the possibility to undergo handcrafts course, help them achieve productive career and find an adequate job.

Because poverty effects mostly children, one of the priorities is to provide basic education for all children – boys and girls.

Everyone can fight against poverty – for example by supporting meaningful, concrete and effective initiatives and education programs in homeland and in developing countries.

One of the main commitments of Lisbon's strategy is :” Significantly effect the removal of poverty” until 2010.

For the campaign and supportive actions EU prepared 17 millions of euro.

European year 2010 has the aim to persuade citizens of EU and all interested parties in public, social and administration area. Its four specific goals are:

- to recognize the right of people living in poverty and social exclusion to worthy life and fully-fledged role in a society
- increase of public belonging in social inclusion policies by emphasising the responsibility of every person in relation to solving the problems of poverty and marginalization
- cohesive society, where no one doubts, that society as a whole benefits from removal of poverty
- the commitment of everyone involved, because the real progress requires a long-time effort including all levels of direction.

The government of Slovak republic has obligated in program declaration to apply the principle of social rights in a range typical for social state and fight against poverty eventually lowering rate of people threatened by poverty.

Reduction of poverty risk is one of basic legislative principles and searching for ways to help the groups in the greatest risk. In the sense of mentioned, Slovak republic is taking a part in program Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, the themes are poverty, generic equality and discrimination. During the European year Slovak republic is going to be the presiding country of the program Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, which will be accented in realization of activities on national and international level.

Sustainable decrease of poverty and elimination of social exclusion will Slovak republic secure by these key actions:

providing income support,
aiding in access to employment, education and integration on the employment market,
assisting in access to the public services and development of the human capital,

pertaining to the individuals and groups socially excluded or vulnerable to social exclusion as well as those making the policies and providers of the services. Policies of active inclusion can significantly strengthen not only advocating the social inclusion of people effected the most and their integration on the employment market, they can also help to decrease generic inequality.

Main goals in achievement of prevention and removal of poverty and social exclusion in Slovak Republic, period 2008 – 2010:

- reduction of child poverty and solving of a generational repetition of poverty by implementing preemptive measures and support to th families with children,
- increase of inclusion and fight against discrimination of vulnerable goups by improving the accessibility of public services, development of local solutions and increase of participation of excluded groups in social life,
- improvement of access to the employment market and increase in employment and employability of handicapped applicants and groups in danger of social exclusion.

According to MoLSAaF, Slovak Republic strenghtened and widened measures aimed at above-mentioned main goals with relation to changes happening in a fallout of the world financial and economic crisis.

The key task remains to be the provision of a complex approach to the making of social inclusion steps and policies, joining of different types of policies on national, regional and local level as well as spreading of social awareness of poverty and social exclusion, while improving cooperation and creation of partnerships on horizontal and vertical level.

National program of Slovak Republic for European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) supports coordinated fulfilment of above-mentioned measures in combating the poverty for year 2010 and mainly increase awareness of this field.

Activities planned within this program:

National conferentions oriented on the European Year (43 000 Eur)

Encouragement of inovative measures of social inclusion (80 370 Eur)

Increase of awareness of poverty, social exclusion and rights of people living in distress and endangered by social exclusion to live in a worthy enviroment and actively participate in a social life. (80 000 Eur)

Encouragement of development and education in relation to realization of policies oriented on eradication and alleviation of poverty and social exclusion (70 000 Eur)

Informing the public via media, universal information materials (66 000 Eur)

Altogether (339 370 Eur)

According to National Program of Slovak republic for European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010).

3rd part: Independent Christian Unions of Slovakia

They consist of 5 unions, representatives of which negotiate higher colective agreements realised in individual companies. NKOS (ICUS) is split up between presidium and board of directors. ICUS markedly annotate colective agreements and attempts to promote social teachings of the Catholic Church in society.

4th part: Activities of non-governmental organizations, associations and movements

There are several platforms of cooperation in the 3rd sector- non-govermental organisations, the objective of which is to find more effective ways to eradicate poverty and social exclusion. These are i.e. Socioforum <http://www.socioforum.sk/> , a.k.a. Stupavská konferencia, MVRO - Platform of non-govermental growth organisations <http://www.mvro.sk/> , Slovak Network against Poverty, Asociation of social services providers in SR <http://www.apssvsr.org/> , Virtual Volunteer Center www.dobrovolnictvo.sk and many others.

In an attempt to cooperate, Forum of Christian Institutions deals with networking and encouragement of social initiatives. Why are we dealing with this question? Initiatives operating in social field that are somehow connected to the Catholic Church are strong and capable enough to speak for themselves. Our situation also sometimes differs from other non-govermental organisations by our views of laws and interests.

What new value is brought by structure and network?

No need to look for solution, that already exists

If two people working on the same problem know about each other, they can confer on it, help each other out or band together

Better media coverage of good news

Easier access to resources and information about resources for people working in the field

Effective integration of academic research and field work

System solution reached by integration of good partial solutions to different problems

Inspiration

Allocation of assignments and powers

Room for communication

Rise of donations

Increase in the number of volunteers

Room for communication between those who work in the field and those who wish to share their previous experience

Concerted pressure on public opinion

Mapping of legislation and legislative initiative

Forum of Christian Institutions www.fki.sk

Forum of Christian Institutions is a platform for cooperation, coordination and promotion of positive initiatives in public, social and educational sphere, as well as in the field of international cooperation. It is a civil association with over 20 member organizations and a wealth of collaborative christian initiatives.

It is adequate to mention 4th annual **Trade Fair of Social Activities**, one of several events that were organized . Its aim was to address the Slovak public in order :

- to make it more sympathetic to people who found themselves in a problem of financial survival
- to point out the wealth of small and persistent striving for betterment of situation of the vulnerable and poor, as well as prevention and assistance on the path to independence and responsibility for oneself.
- to mobilize the public to look for possible solutions on how to help people who found themselves in distress.

The Trade Fair is an example of an effective cooperation of different social factions and an encouragement to all those who work to erase the poverty and social exclusion.

The initiative of joining the 3rd sector, the Church, the Self-governing Regions, the Civil Services, the academic community and the activists will go on in the year of 2010, mainly in the regions where these partnerships have the most content and impact on daily life.

ICUS, being part of FCHI and in close cooperation with the Slovak Conference of Bishops, consistently promotes importance of social principles in society.

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