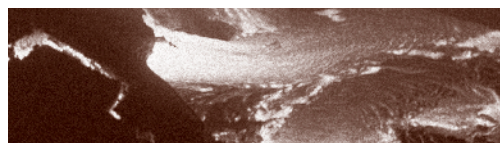




Millennium
**Development
Goals** Reducing Poverty
and Social Exclusion



Slovak Republic

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FOREWORD

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, the member states of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to work toward a world in which sustaining development and eliminating poverty would have the highest priorities. The Millennium Development Goals are based on the agreements and resolutions of UN-organized and sponsored world conferences during the previous decade. The MDGs have been agreed upon by UN member governments as the commonly accepted framework for measuring development progress.

The goals focus the world community's attention on achieving significant, measurable improvements in people's lives. They establish benchmarks for measuring results, not just for developing countries, but also for rich countries – to help them fund development programmes – and for the multilateral institutions that help countries implement them. The first seven goals are mutually reinforcing and are directed at reducing poverty in all its forms. The last goal – global partnerships for development – is about the means to achieve the first seven.

This baseline report is part of a first attempt to assess the progress of four countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia – in achieving the Millennium Development Goals at the national level. It does so by focusing on the linkages between global targets and national priorities – in this case, in the Slovak Republic. The report seeks to raise public awareness about the Millennium initiative, renew political commitment to poverty reduction, and to focus attention on specific development issues.

As new member states in the European Union (EU), these countries enjoy unique opportunities to adapt the targets to their national contexts. Through this process of adaptation, this report provides a nuanced picture of poverty in these countries on the eve of EU accession, and stresses the need for social inclusion policies that are consistent with the EU's Social Charter. The report also emphasises the countries' obligations as members of the developed world to provide development assistance to poorer countries. Wherever possible, the MDG targets in this report have drawn on the reporting framework for EU member states pertaining to issues of access and inequality (particularly the EU's Social Inclusion Agenda), as well as other national policies and frameworks. The depth and length of the report reflect the development level of the countries and the need for thorough analysis of their complex development issues.

This report was prepared by a team of independent authors with substantial support from experts representing statistical and research institutes. The production of the report is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and coordinated by the Centre for Economic Development (CPHR). It is the result of several rounds of national consultation and inputs. Similar reports are being produced in all member states.

As the country's accession to the European Union shows, the Slovak Republic has made significant progress in putting in place policies and institutions for poverty eradication and sustainable development. UNDP hopes that this report will help policy makers in the Slovak Republic to finish the task.

Ben Slay
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List of Abbreviations

- AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- APEL – Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning
- CEE – Central and Eastern Europe
- CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
- EC – European Commission
- EU – European Union
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- HDI – Human Development Index
- IALS – International Adult Literacy Survey
- ICT – Information and Communication Technology
- ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education
- JIM – Joint Inclusion Memorandum
- MDGs – Millennium Development Goals
- NAP – National Action Plan
- NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
- NHDR – National Human Development Report
- NSI – National Statistical Institute
- NUTS – Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
- OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- ODA – Official Development Assistance
- PISA – Program for International Student Assessment
- PPP\$ – Purchasing Power Parity (expressed in US dollars)
- PRSP – Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
- RBEC – Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS of the United Nations Development Programme
- SMEs – Small and Medium Enterprises
- TIMSS – Third International Mathematics and Science Survey
- UN – United Nations
- UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
- WB – The World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, 189 member states of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to work toward a world in which sustaining development and eliminating poverty would have the highest priority. The signing of the Millennium Declaration has led to the adoption of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 18 specific targets, and 48 indicators, which are understood as a common framework for measuring the development progress.

This national baseline report is the first attempt to monitor the progress in achieving the MDGs in Slovakia. Given the predominant focus of the goals and targets on developing countries, the report also adapts the global tasks to the national priorities and local conditions in the respective areas.

The MDGs are to be implemented by each member country by 2015. As the report suggests, Slovakia is on track in meeting most of the globally agreed targets. However, the overall positive assessment is accompanied by a critical evaluation of specific areas and population groups, which are facing serious problems to participate in the progress. The linking of the global and national targets is thus crucial to achieve relevance and applicability of MDGs for Slovakia.

Goal 1 may be considered the main mission of the Millennium initiative. It relates to the reduction of extreme poverty as a consequence of insufficient income. The goal is closely related to the other seven Millennium Development Goals, which focus on different manifestations of poverty. Available data indicate a relatively low incidence of income poverty in Slovakia. A considerable share of the population, however, escapes the poverty risk just with the help of social transfers from the State. At the same time, visible areas of deep poverty, the Roma settlements, suggest that a high share of the population is living in extremely deteriorated conditions. Long-term unemployment and insufficient education are the main indigenous drivers

of poverty. The national priorities include a halving of the proportion of people living on less than USD 2.15 per day, i.e., under extreme low incomes. This target is linked mainly to the task of reducing the proportion of Roma living in segregated colonies. An important target is the gradual lowering of unemployment to one-digit values (currently at 17 percent) by 2015. Fighting poverty and social exclusion will require the adoption of a clear definition of these phenomena and a substantial improvement of mainly cross-sectoral cooperation in dealing with poverty. This requirement is relevant already for the preparation of the first National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2004, which should materialise Slovakia's efforts to participate in EU's open method of coordination of social inclusion strategies.

Goal 2 aims at improving the access of the young generation to primary education. In Slovakia, access to education is guaranteed by the Constitution and primary education is regulated by mandatory 10-year school attendance. In spite of improving educational attainment of the population, the share of population in post-secondary and tertiary education remains very low in comparison with the EU and other accession countries. Half of the Slovak adult population has only obtained a certificate of apprenticeship. In light of the demands of a knowledge-based economy, such an educational structure is a reason for special concern. The main national target is therefore the improvement of educational attainment, so that by 2011 the majority of the population has at least a completed post-secondary education. The number of university graduates among the adult population over 25 years shall double by 2011. Along with the quantitative targets, it will be crucial to implement a quality management system in educational establishments and introduce a model of funding from several sources, guaranteeing an adequate educational environment and a decent technological standard. The current low GDP spending on education and on science & research should be raised to the level of OECD average as a minimum.

Goal 3 responds to the unequal position of men and women in society, which leads to a global feminisation of poverty. In Slovakia, gender differences apply particularly to the participation of women and men in economic and political decision-making, and to labour market segregation associated with income inequality. The average level of achieved education is comparable for both genders. In spite of this, the labour market is affected by gender inequalities. Women prevail in the economic sectors with lower average wages and also in lower positions in the different occupations. The gender pay gap has been increasing in recent years to reach almost 30 percent in 2002. The main national target is the elimination of barriers preventing equality of opportunities of men and women in all areas of life. More specifically, gender equality must be promoted a) through elimination of discrimination and violence in society, family, labour market, b) through a more simple harmonisation of family and working obligations by means of family policy and flexible labour organisation.

Goal 4 focuses on reduction of child mortality, which is perceived as one of the most significant indicators of the cultural and economic situation in a country. Its level increases with poverty and social exclusion, which reduce access to health care. The overall assessment of child mortality data is positive for the Slovak Republic. Infant mortality in western Slovakia reaches the level of EU countries. A higher share of the segregated part of the Roma population is likely the reason for higher values of infant mortality in the eastern districts of the country. The same applies to mortality of children between zero and five years of age. The national target of achieving EU levels will thus depend not only on overall improvement of the living and educational standard, but also on the ability to address the isolation of Roma communities.

Goal 5 strives to improve maternal and reproductive health. The general assessment of maternal mortality is favourable for Slovakia. Maternal mortality rates are equivalent to average values of EU countries. Despite the

clearly decreasing trend, the number of abortions remains significantly higher than in the EU, pointing to reserves in sexual education and use of contraceptives. The national target is defined broadly as an ongoing improvement of conditions for reproductive health of mothers. A subordinated target is the decrease of teenage pregnancies, which remain relatively high in eastern regions of Slovakia.

Goal 6 reacts to the critical spread of infectious diseases in many parts of the world. Most of the global threats, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, are not urgent in present-day Slovakia. HIV/AIDS occurrence is significantly lower than in EU countries. Nevertheless, the HIV/AIDS threat is expected to grow due to higher mobility of Slovak citizens within the enlarged EU and the geographical proximity of highly infected regions in Russia and Ukraine. Tuberculosis incidence has been decreasing markedly over the past decade and is now comparable with EU levels. The Slovak population is much more threatened by chronic diseases, mainly diseases of the circulatory system and cancers. The high incidence and mortality rates from cancer, particularly for men, are of highest concern. The national target thus focuses on decreasing the spread of cancers to EU levels.

Goal 7 aims to enforce the principles of sustainable use of natural resources and the diminishing of pollution, and to achieve improvements in the quality of the environment where people live, work and spend their leisure time. Environmental and housing indicators in Slovakia suggest a relatively decent standard and positive trends. A considerable part of population, however, continues to live in a disturbed environment with a direct negative impact on their quality of life. This statement applies chiefly to isolated Roma settlements, but is not limited solely to them. The national targets focus on ensuring sufficient supplies of drinking water and enlarging the sewerage and waste water treatment systems throughout the country. To upgrade environmental infrastructure to EU levels, it will be also necessary to introduce a more

efficient waste disposal system. Other targets include the reduction of undesirable consequences of climate change and ozone layer depletion, improvement of air quality to admissible levels to comply with health requirements, and the preservation of biological and landscape diversity.

Goal 8 calls upon the rich countries in the world to cooperate and commit to helping poor countries achieve the other seven goals. The Slovak Republic could adopt the target to develop and implement strategies for jobs for youth. The reason is straightforward – only young people who find decent employment are able to participate on and take full advantage from future wealth. More than a decade of experience with fighting high unemployment makes Slovakia a valuable

source of learning and examples to help distinguish between successful and damaging labour market policies. Developing countries could benefit from Slovakia's lessons learned in this area.

The aim of the report is to raise public awareness about the Millennium Development Goals, renew political commitment and contribute to the discussion about specific development issues. The report shall serve as a baseline document for the future assessment of progress towards meeting the MDGs. The production of the report was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and coordinated by the Centre for Economic Development (CPHR).

