



caritas europa

COUNTRY
REPORT
FOR
SLOVAKIA



SHADOW
REPORT
2014

01

EU 2020 Strategy: general evaluation

In general terms, our assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy is positive. However, in terms of specific results in Slovakia, very little change can be observed. The situation in the country has not varied much in the past years. Compared to other EU countries, there is little ambition to reach results that are over and above the average.

In terms of the future, we strongly support the continuation of the Europe 2020 Strategy though it should strengthen its social perspective to avoid putting the emphasis only on economic and political interests. With regards to implementation tools, they should be more independent and output needs to be more pragmatic.

02

Poverty

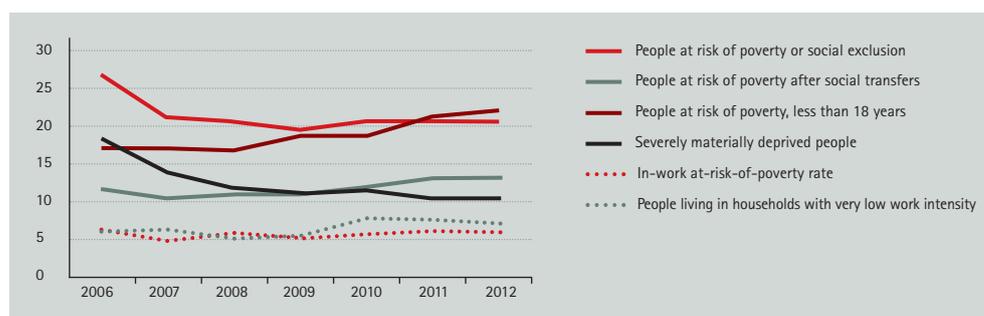
2.1

Recent trends

Development of poverty and social exclusion indicators in Slovakia (2009-2012) based on Eurostat:

- ➔ All poverty indicators have increased with the rate of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion reaching 20.5% in 2012. However, the rate of severely materially deprived people dropped to 10.5% in 2012, 0.6 p.p. less than in 2009.
- ➔ The highest relative increase occurred in the rate of people living in households with very low work intensity, which rose from 5.6% in 2009 to 7.2% in 2012; nevertheless, still below the EU-average (10.3% in 2012).
- ➔ Child poverty increased by a 3.1 p.p. to 21.9% in 2012, making children the age group at highest risk of poverty.

Eurostat (% of population)	2009			2010			2011			2012			EU average
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
Slovakia													
POVERTY													
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	-	-	19.6	-	-	20.6	-	-	20.6	-	-	20.5	24.8
People at risk of poverty after social transfers	10.1	11.8	11	10.1	11.8	11.0	12.8	13.1	13.0	13.2	13.3	13.2	17.0
People at risk of poverty, under 18 years of age	-	-	18.8	-	-	18.8	-	-	21.2	-	-	21.9	20.8
Severely materially deprived people	-	-	11.1	-	-	11.4	-	-	10.6	-	-	10.5	9.9
In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate	5.5	4.9	5.2	5.9	5.4	5.7	6.7	5.9	6.3	6.6	5.6	6.2	9.2
People living in households with very low work intensity	-	-	5.6	-	-	7.9	-	-	7.7	-	-	7.2	10.3



In addition to this data, it is worth highlighting the following issues:

- The experiences of Caritas throughout the country shows that there are many people living in very poor conditions. This we observe not only from the specific services offered by the network but also indirectly when providing other types of services, e.g. urgent aid during flood emergencies in some regions or food distribution. We are not in a position to provide statistics for the whole country, but through communication with various people and groups it is clear that many are living quietly, without any support and are very probably missing from the official statistics as well.
- Another worrying trend is the difficulties that many people have in their ability to afford health expenses: these are so high, that poor people are not able cope with them. We are receiving a growing number of requests for surgeries and medicines that are not covered by health insurance.

Testimony

Júlia was born in Bratislava. Her mother used to work in the kitchen of a state hospital; her father was the owner of a small shop. But in 1953 the shop was taken from them by the socialist state. As a child, Julia used play at being a small shop owner. Later her parents moved to live in the countryside, but Julia had problems living in a village. She continued to attend an accountancy school in Bratislava and wanted to pursue foreign trade studies at university, but due to her father's background she was refused admission.

She worked in several jobs within state-owned shops and when she was 21 she got married. Her parents were against this marriage and her parents-in-law were against Julia as well. But in the end they managed to achieve almost all they had planned - owning a house, 3 children, 2 cars and they were able to save some money as well. She remembers that they managed all this from zero.

But then their eldest son died and some time later her husband as well. Julia became ill herself and this was her breaking point. She started to have nerve-related problems and was not able to continue in her job. She started to live on pension benefits but that was not enough. Only caring for children was keeping her alive. During that time her youngest son planned to go to Spain to work, but before leaving a medical examination found cancer. He was treated in an army hospital in Pilsen and Julia spent all her savings on that. And this became the second breaking point in her life. Not able to earn money, having spent all her savings and living on social benefits, she was now starting to accumulate debt. Those to whom she had lent money were not able to give it back to her. Not able to pay rent any longer, she was evicted from the flat she lived in. She first moved to the Mea Culpa shelter in Bratislava for 2 months and then to her son for some time. After a worsening state of health she was admitted to hospital. A social sister from the hospital arranged for her to stay at the Shelter of St Luise.

Julia is 65 today She spent 3 months in shelter. She was almost immobile, suffering from rheumatism. In that time our social workers started to work with her on her transfer into permanent institutional care and renewed contact with her family.

2.2

Recent policy developments

The following policy developments have been observed:

- ➔ In 2013 an Act on Assistance in Material Need was accepted. It introduced a new system of social benefits (61.20 Euros) which is dependent on work activity (32 hours per month) to be implemented by the municipalities. However, this measure is under revision by the Constitutional Court (social benefit rights cannot be linked to compliance with certain conditions).
- ➔ In 2014 a National Strategy for child protection against violence was adopted. This is the first ever comprehensive material of its kind in Slovakia, which hopefully will change the perception of violence against children in the country and the way it is dealt with. The Strategy has set a number of goals for Slovakia, including the creation of special units for tackling violence, monitoring systems for child protection, violence prevention measures and public campaigns.
- ➔ An office responsible for Roma policies and strategies has also been created.¹ However, unfortunately the information regarding the implementation of the Recommendation on Effective Roma Integration Measures and outputs is very limited.

Social investment package: investing in children²

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

In general terms, the Recommendation is being taken into account (in legislation and at administration level). However, certain problems have arisen in the following areas:

- ➔ Collaboration with families: the current tools are not adequate to work with vulnerable or Roma families. A willingness to collaborate is limited.
- ➔ The situation of the Roma living in settlements is particularly worrying as they are normally located in areas with no infrastructure (e.g. no transportation, schools, healthcare, etc.). This has a negative impact, especially on children, as it makes it more difficult for them to attend school or receive support.
- ➔ Access to pre-school facilities by vulnerable groups and Roma families: this is extremely important to guarantee better results in primary and secondary education.
- ➔ More fieldwork is required with vulnerable families, especially with regards to their education and basic hygiene habits.

Assessment of Slovakia's Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) adopted in 2014:

Caritas welcomes the following CSRs which will most probably have a positive impact on the employment situation in Slovakia:

- ➔ CSR 3 on addressing more effective long-term unemployment through activation measures, second-chance education and tailored quality training.
- ➔ CSR 4 on taking measures to increase the quality of teaching in order to raise educational outcomes.

¹ <http://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/8308.pdf>

² European Commission, 2013, Recommendation *Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* 2013/112/EU approved under the Framework of the Social Investment Package

2.3

Recommendations

Given the above assessments, Caritas recommends the following policy measures be introduced in order to address the challenges related to poverty and social exclusion:

- ➔ Prepare an Act on socially excluded communities and ensure it is non-discriminatory.
- ➔ As a preventative measure to keep vulnerable people from falling into poverty, youth employment should be promoted (after school without any work experience) and action should be taken to tackle long-term unemployment, focusing on persons aged 50 and above without a job before reaching pension age, as well as on female unemployment.
- ➔ Introduce health care services for vulnerable and excluded people based on better coordination of health and social services (legislative separation of social services and healthcare for these groups is limiting their access to both services).

03

EMPLOYMENT

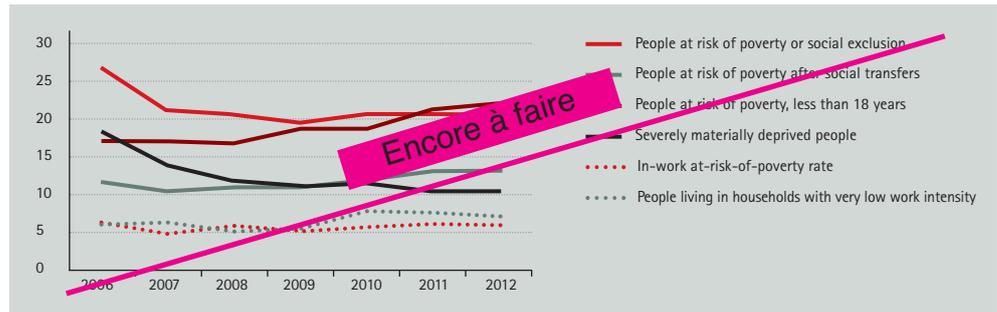
3.1

Recent trends

Development of employment indicators in Slovakia (2009-2013) based on Eurostat:

- ➔ Employment decreased by 1.4 p.p., from 66.4% in 2009 to 65% in 2013. It is worth noting that although the gender employment gap decreased in the observed period, 2013 registered a gap of 14.4 p.p.
- ➔ The overall unemployment rate rose from 12.1% in 2009 to 14.2% in 2013. **Young people were the age group most hit by unemployment** as youth unemployment rose by 6.1 p.p. to 33.7% in 2013 (0.3 p.p. less than in 2012).
- ➔ Long-term unemployment rose by 3.5 p.p. to 10% in 2013 – almost twice as high as the EU average (5.1%). Long-term unemployment increased more sharply among men (by 4.1 p.p.) than among women (by 2.5 p.p.), which now affects a similar share of women (9.9%) and men (10%).

Eurostat (% of population)	2009			2010			2011			2012			2013			EU average
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T				
Slovakia																
EMPLOYMENT																
Employment rate	74.6	58.2	66.4	71.9	57.4	64.6	72.5	57.4	65.0	72.8	57.3	65.1	72.2	57.8	65.0	68.3
Unemployment rate	11.5	12.9	12.1	14.3	14.7	14.5	13.7	13.7	13.7	13.5	14.5	14	14	14.5	14.2	10.8
Unemployment rate, under 25 years of age	-	-	27.6	-	-	33.9	-	-	33.7	-	-	34	-	-	33.7	23.4
Long-term unemployment rate	5.9	7.4	6.5	9	9.6	9.3	9.5	9.1	9.3	9.3	9.5	9.4	10	9.9	10	5.1



Regarding this data, it is worth highlighting that certain changes to the way statistical data is calculated sometimes hides the reality. In addition, national data does not always show regional disparities.

3.2

Recent policy developments

No significant new measures have been taken to address Slovakia's unemployment problem. The tax wedge, including all compulsory payments, remains relatively high for low-income workers and a high proportion of jobseekers have little incentive to move from social assistance to a low-paid job. Most programmes and initiatives in this field are highly influenced by the EU agenda and covered through EU funds, especially the ESF, managed by state agencies (the labour offices via local authorities) with little participation of NGOs, which are strongly under-financed from public resources in social and health care services in comparison to State institutions.

It is too soon to assess the progress being made on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Slovakia. From Caritas's perception, there are good intentions but the challenge will be implementation and its effectiveness.

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3.3

3.3. Recommendations

Given the above assessments, Caritas recommends the following policy measures be introduced in order to address the challenges related to the employment situation:

- Design adequate implementation, monitoring and evaluation tools aimed at the reintegration of adults into the labour market through activation measures and targeted employment services, second-chance education and short-cycle vocational training, especially for the Roma, young people, the long-term unemployed, and people from disadvantaged groups such as the homeless or disabled people.

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