

## **Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/32/20 on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl – Response of Slovakia**

### **Question No. 1**

With respect to the principles of legislation, the prohibition of gender discrimination is guaranteed in the education system in the Slovak Republic. Detailed information was provided in the previous report. The **Anti-discrimination Act** establishes the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination in education and makes reference to specific acts.<sup>1</sup>

The area of education is supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MSERS), in particular in sections 3 and 4 of the **Schools Act**,<sup>2</sup> which set out the fundamental principles and aims of upbringing and education. These include the **principles of the equality of men and women and education leading to respect for human rights**. The day-to-day implementation of these principles and aims in processes for the education of children and pupils is established in school education programmes, which must be prepared in accordance with set principles.

The aim of education on human rights and gender equality in schools is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to the strengthening of human dignity, awareness and independent participation in the development of a democratic society in accordance with values such as human rights, equality, diversity and justice.

In January 2012 the government of the Slovak Republic approved the **National Strategy on Global Education 2012-2016**, whose objectives are based on principles of social justice and equality and respect for human rights and equal opportunities for all. Relevant state institutions and non-governmental organisations participate in the implementation of such education; methodological materials and recommendations will be prepared for schools implementing such education and training will be provided for teaching staff.

The formulation of section 55 of the **Higher Education Act**<sup>3</sup> has been amended. It prohibits all forms of discrimination within the higher education institutions. In accordance with the principle of equal treatment discrimination is prohibited on grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, race, skin colour, disability, language, political or other views, membership of a national minority, religious belief or faith, trade union activity, national or social origin, property, gender or other status. The exercise and performance of rights and duties established by this act must be in accordance with accepted principles of morality

Under the Schools Act, **elementary and secondary schools** are required to incorporate state education programmes into their school education programmes and to incorporate gender equality and human rights topics into syllabuses.

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<sup>1</sup> Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on higher education institutions and amending certain acts, as amended, Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on continuing education and amending Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 387/1996 Coll. on employment, as amended by Act No. 70/1997. Coll., as amended by Act No. 567/2001 Coll.

<sup>2</sup> Act No 245/2008 on upbringing and education (the Schools Act) and amending certain acts, as amended (section 3, section 145, section 7 and section 8 in relation to the State School Inspection).

<sup>3</sup> Act No. 131/2002. Coll. on higher education institutions and amending certain acts, as amended.

## Question No. 2

Our recommendation to improve gender equality in education, science and research are following:

- Improving the level of knowledge in the field of women's human rights and gender equality by ensuring continuous and comprehensive education in the framework of lifelong learning;
- Eliminating negative gender stereotypes in education;
- Creating a suitable environment and effective mechanisms for the implementation of gender equality in the field of science, research and higher education;
- Enhancing the knowledge on existing forms of inequalities between women and men by strengthening the research in this area as well as up-to-date gender statistics.

## Question No. 3

Several studies have shown that vertical and horizontal segregation persists in the field of science and research and similarly in academic institutions - both in Europe as well as in the domestic context. Horizontal segregation already manifests at the level of university studies when it comes to decisions regarding one's field of study. Such tendencies are most apparent in technically oriented degrees that are considered to be typically male areas. Significant vertical gender segregation also reflects in the management of scientific, research and academic institutions.

Available statistical data confirms the presence of gender disparities in academic careers, thus proving the existence of gender imbalances in terms of academic careers as well as in management and decision-making. The proportion of women and men at different stages of a typical academic career in a public university shows that the higher the degree, the lower the percentage of women. Having said that, it is apparent that the higher the level of academic ranking, the lower the women's representation. A metaphor of the "leaky pipeline" presents a rather accurate portrayal of the situation. This pattern also applies to the higher management positions predominantly occupied by men, the position of the principal having the lowest women's representation.

Equal opportunities for women and men and gender equality in the field of science and research have a fundamental influence on the development of scientific knowledge and scientific institutions, including institutions of higher education. Achieving gender equality and taking full advantage of the creative potential of women and men without limitations imposed by gender roles is the key to ensuring competitiveness in science and research. Moreover, it is an important prerequisite for the Slovak republic's integration into the European Research Area. Not to mention that the application of the principle of equal opportunities and gender equality contributes significantly to the quality of research and to the development and strengthening of scientific and technological innovations. Equal opportunities are associated with excellence - as well as with wider applicability of the results<sup>4</sup>.

Although current legislation, particularly the *Education Act*, declares gender equality as one of the values promoted at schools, systemic education on the essence of gender equality, human rights as well as abuse and gender-based violence prevention is still overlooked. Many **stereotypical images and attitudes towards men and women** were identified in the education process and textbooks.

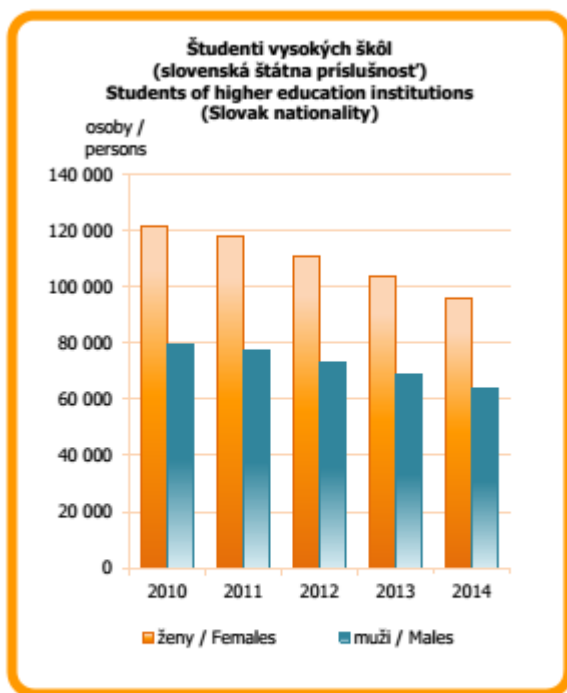
The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport works with IUVENTA — the Slovak Youth Institute to support the establishment and effective operation of

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. the paper of the European Commission Women and Science. Excellence and Innovation

student councils in schools and youth parliaments. Their purpose is to further disseminate know-how and information on human rights education, to create networks of actors in human rights education and youth work, to supervise ongoing local projects and promote the use of the “living library” method. In 2011 IUVENTA continued to distribute Slovak language version of COMPASS a manual for human rights education with young people published by the Council of Europe as part of its activities supporting young people’s education on human rights.

Among other areas, the adopted *Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Slovak Republic 2014-2019* promotes elimination of gender segregation when it comes to the choice of subjects; there is an underlying objective to make science and technical subjects attractive to girls. Already young girls are targeted with the aim to help them make informed choices regarding their future studies and careers. As the issue is being discussed in the public, the society is becoming more open and used to the ideas. More media positive images have already penetrated the mainstream culture. One of the most successful projects in terms awareness raising aiming to provide all relevant and available information to girls and young women regarding information technologies is the ‘*You too in IT*’ (<http://www.ajtyvit.sk/>). The initiative has a track of successful events, education activities and courses reaching out to many girls and young women. Recently, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak republic launched a comprehensive campaign promoting science to both girls and boys (<http://www.veda-technika.sk/>). The campaign is inclusive and as of its launch, it has been providing positive examples and images of girls in science and technologies. Along with other smaller-scale initiatives and campaigns, these are rather new, thus it is too early to conclude regarding their impact.



1) Data of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR

#### Question No. 4

Having said that, we can conclude that there are no major (or any) obstacles for girls in Slovakia which would hinder them to fully enjoy their right to access all form and stages of the educational system. In fact, there are significantly more girls and women in higher education and this trend is persisting during the years. Regarding the structure of students of secondary schools, we can report that there is a persistent higher number of female students in Grammar schools (about 58% in last 5 years) while the specialised secondary schools are slightly dominated by male students (46% of female students).

Regarding the **question No. 5** we can report extensive experience in gender sensitive monitoring of the system of education.

Significant steps have been made in terms of building the knowledge base and research on gender equality recently. These will further serve as building blocks for future measures. Based on the government resolution, starting with 2008, the *Summary Report on the State of Gender Equality in the Slovak Republic* is compiled annually. Surely an important positive development is the publication of data on gender inequalities by the

*Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic* and the related launching of its website with up-to-date statistical data on gender equality issues. The abovementioned accomplishments should be viewed as fundamentals for designing a systematic approach to understanding the mechanisms and displays of inequalities and discrimination in both public and private life.

All the quantitative indicators are being broken down by sex and reflected in different annual reports mentioned above.