

SLOVAKIA
Oral Statement to the CEDAW Committee

Presentation of the Shadow Report by the NGO Coalition for Slovakia
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Dear Madam Chair,
Distinguished Committee Members,

I represent the coalition of the eight non-governmental organizations, which have submitted the shadow report for Slovakia. The urgent issues that I address today are:

1. Legislative and institutional framework for the application of CEDAW;
2. Violence against women;
3. Sexual and reproductive health;
4. Discrimination against Romani women.

1. Legislative and institutional framework for the application of CEDAW

In the field of legal protection against discrimination, some progress has been made recently in terms of the amendment to the Antidiscrimination Act. Nevertheless, the amendment did not succeed in enforcing the adoption of the provision on temporary special measures that would set forth the grounds of sex, gender, and racial and ethnic origin as the legitimate reasons for adopting such measures, which then impedes effective elimination of the disadvantaged status of women in general, and Romani women in particular. Therefore, the government should embed in the law the possibility to adopt temporary special measures aimed at elimination of disadvantages on the mentioned grounds.

Other shortcomings in effective protection against discrimination consist mainly in the limited implementation of the Antidiscrimination Act. This is primarily due to high court fees, which discourage a lot of women, discriminated against, from legal actions. Therefore, the proceedings in cases related to violation of the equal treatment principle should be exempted from court fees.

The institutional framework of gender equality is inadequate in Slovakia. Even though there are divisions at several ministries having gender equality on their agenda, the overall approach to this issue is not being dealt with at both the program and system levels sufficiently.

2. Violence against women

Even though several positive changes have occurred in the field of combating violence against women, mainly in regard to legislation, it still remains one of the most critical areas of women's human rights violation. The effective prevention and elimination of violence is prevented mostly by problems in the implementation of existing legislation, the absence of systematic training of the individual professionals and the lack of relevant services reflecting the needs of survivors of violence. Therefore, the government should adopt measures leading to the elimination of these problems and the effective prevention of the violence against women.

3. Sexual and reproductive health

Access to sexual and reproductive health services is considerably limited due to health practitioners' refusals to perform them on the basis of the conscientious objection. The high price of the individual services, predominantly covered by the patient herself, is yet another obstacle in the effective access to sexual and reproductive health care. Therefore, the government should adopt legislative measures that will eliminate these barriers and ensure affordability and accessibility of this health care. In Slovakia there is no systematic and comprehensive sexuality education at schools. The students receive limited information on the topic during school subjects, such as the ethics, religious education and biology. Legally provision of medically assisted reproduction discriminates against single women and women living in lesbian partnerships. Forced and coerced sterilizations of Romani women in Slovakia have not been effectively investigated yet. This crucial issue will be addressed today by my colleagues.

4. Discrimination against Romani women

Apart from health care Romani women in Slovakia face multiple discrimination also in other areas such as the access to social security, employment and housing. Romani women are a particularly vulnerable group frequently living in extreme -- and predominantly rural -- circumstances. The housing situation of a marginalized segment of the Romani community in Slovakia has a number of particular gendered effects, including heightening vulnerability to violence, including domestic violence and other forms of inhuman and degrading treatment. Romani women and girls from marginalized communities are one of the most vulnerable groups to trafficking in human beings due to multiple disadvantages they face. Therefore, the government should adopt measures aimed at eliminating these disadvantages and that will reflect specific needs of Romani women and girls.

Thank you!