

Review theme: Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls

Slovakia

Legislative and institutional framework

Slovak Republic is a party to several international human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The *Constitution of the Slovak Republic* states that human rights are guaranteed to every individual regardless of sex, race, skin colour, language, belief, religion, political affiliation or conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, lineage or any other status. No person shall be denied their legal rights, discriminated against or favoured on any of these grounds. Serious offensive and discriminatory behaviour is outlawed separately by the Criminal Code.

In response to the need to implement the EU Employment and Racial Equality Directives, Slovakia adopted the [Anti-Discrimination Act](#) on 20 May 2004, the first in its history. Apart from the Anti-discrimination Act, several special laws were amended in the area of education, health care and employment. These amendments basically refer to the Anti-discrimination Act, sometimes extend the scope of grounds protected by it (sex, religion or belief, race, affiliation with nationality or an ethnic group, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status and family status, colour of skin, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, lineage or other status), and in some cases also contain special mechanisms for invoking the right to equal treatment.

The Act No. 365/2004 on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and Protection Against Discrimination and the Amendment of Certain Acts, A.K.A **the Anti-discrimination Act**, regulates the application of the principle of equal treatment and determines available remedies for legal protection.

The Antidiscrimination Act applies to the area of labour law, social security, and healthcare, provision of goods and services and education. The area of labour relations includes access to employment, occupation, or other for-profit activities or functions (hereinafter referred to as “employment”), including requirements for admission to employment and the conditions and method of selection for employment, employment and conditions of work, including employment remuneration, promotion and dismissal, access to vocational training, advanced vocational training and participation in active labour market measures, including access to job counselling services or membership and activity in employee organizations and organizations associating professionals in various fields, including the benefits that these organizations provide to their members.

The Antidiscrimination Act also regulates the use of temporary affirmative actions which are an exception from the principle of non-discrimination. The aim is to eliminate existing disadvantages imposed on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, association with a national minority or ethnic group, gender or sex, age or disability. Their objective is to ensure application of the equal

opportunities principle in practice. Such measures may be adopted by state authorities and local governments as well as all legal entities (citizens' associations, schools, companies, etc.).

An amendment to the *Labour Code*, effective as of 1 April 2011, extended the scope of the protected grounds to include sexual orientation and thus to get the list of protected grounds into compliance with the Anti-Discrimination Act. The amendment also included "genetic features" as a new protected ground, not covered by any piece of the Slovak legislation yet.

However, the enforcement of the rules established by the Anti-discrimination Act has not yet been fully effective in practice. Although there are already some court decisions (mainly in relation to racial discrimination in access to services and in relation to sex/gender discrimination in employment) and some more are pending, people in general do not recourse to courts to litigate for their right not to be discriminated against.

In accordance with the Antidiscrimination Act, a party to anti-discrimination case can be represented by a legal person, which is entitled by law. Pursuant to the *Act No. 308/1993 Coll. on the Establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human rights* — an equality body, the **Slovak National Centre for Human Rights** (the Centre) fulfils several tasks in the area of the protection of the principle of equal treatment. The Centre, among others, provides legal assistance to victims of discrimination and manifestations of intolerance, issues expert opinions concerning the observance of the principle of equal treatment (upon request of legal persons, individuals or on its own initiative) and undertakes independent investigations concerning discrimination, prepares and publishes reports and recommendations concerning discrimination.

National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Action Plan for Gender Equality 2014-2019

Government of the Slovak republic adopted on November 20th 2014 the new *National strategy for gender equality for years 2014-2019* ("the Strategy")¹ and a related *Action plan for gender equality for years 2014-2019* ("the action plan"). Specific activities and measures were prepared and discussed in cooperation with NGOs and the Government Council for Human Rights, Ethnic Minorities and Gender Equality. The strategy and the action plan are interconnected and represent a comprehensive conceptual framework for the promotion of gender equality into practice.

The documents address and propose measures in 6 areas of concern:

1. Economic empowerment and independence
2. Decision-making
3. Education
4. Dignity
5. Institutional mechanisms
6. International cooperation

¹ http://www.gender.gov.sk/en/files/2015/06/Strategy_EN.pdf

The Strategy and related action plan stem from the basic strategic documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe. These bind the member states to adopt positive measures aimed at reaching gender equality.² Both documents simultaneously reflect the recommendations made by relevant international monitoring bodies, particularly recommendations formulated in the *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Slovak Republic*³ as well as the commitments made by the Slovak republic itself as a response to these recommendations. Last but not least, the documents incorporate the tasks introduced in the *Partnership Agreement with Slovakia on using EU Structural and Investment Funds for growth and jobs in 2014* and the highlighted importance of equality between men and women as a horizontal principle, as well as the ex-ante conditionality for utilizing the ESIF. Eventually, the strategy reflects the recommendations of the Council of the European Union made for the national programme of reforms of the Slovak Republic addressing areas relevant to gender equality.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Since 2010, the agenda of gender equality has been discussed and covered in the framework of the Committee of the *National Council for Human rights and National Minorities* of the National Council. In 2011, the reconstruction process of the consultative bodies resulted in creation of a new institutional mechanism — the *Governmental Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality*.

According to the approved statute, the *Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality* is a permanent professional, advisory, coordinating and consultative body of the Government of the Slovak Republic, among other activities responsible for promoting of the principle of equal treatment and equality, including gender equality. It consists of several specific committees. The *Committee on Gender Equality* is one of them. It functions as an advisory body.

In September 2012 the National Council of the Slovak Republic approved the government bill amending and supplementing the Act No. 575/2001 Coll. on the Organization of the Activity of the Government, whereby the gender equality and equal opportunities agenda has become the competence of the MLSAF. Since then, MLSAF, specifically the Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities (the Department) has been responsible for coordination of national policy in the area. The Department plays a prominent role in coordinating the implementation of gender equality and non-discrimination horizontal principle across all operational programs of European structural funds. The Department has been very visible last year when implementing a media campaign on equal pay⁴ within the national project Institute of Gender Equality.

Since January 2015 the Department reports directly to the minister which has further strengthened its position. To date, the Department has currently employed 14 persons as full time employees and about further 5 to 10 temporary contracts. It also ensures the cross-departmental implementation of gender equality within ministry and beyond.

² A comprehensive list of documents can be found on the website www.gender.gov.sk.

³ [CEDAW/C/SVK/CO/4](http://www.cedaw.org/c/svk/co/4) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the forty-first session, 30. Jun-18 July 2008.

⁴ <http://www.gender.gov.sk/en/campaign-on-gender-pay-gap/>.

Gender equality and equal opportunities agenda has been further supported and facilitated in the framework of several projects in the reviewed period. We would particularly like to mention a very important project - the *National Project of Institute for Gender Equality* supported by the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion which took place from 2009 to 2014. The aim of the project was to establish efficient mechanisms, instruments and methods for the implementation of the gender equality principles into practice, raise awareness about gender equality, and reinforce expertise of relevant stakeholders who work in the area of prevention and elimination of gender inequality. A nation-wide awareness campaign focusing primarily on explaining the gender pay gap in the context of gender equality took place in 2014. The campaign's objective was to explain that gender stereotypes are present since the birth of a child and gender-stereotypical upbringing extensively influence the future position of women and men in the society at all levels, in public as well as in private life.

The support of equality between men and women and respecting equal opportunities and non-discrimination are applied as horizontal principles (HP) in the programming period 2014–2020 and will be implemented according to their relevance to the given areas of support subject to ESIF interventions.

In December 2014, the *Operational Program Human Resources* (OP HR) has been approved by the European Commission. The OP HR includes specific actions related to gender equality, in particular

Investment priority 2.3 Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work

Specific objective 2.3.1 To increase employment of persons with parental duties, especially women, by improving the conditions for reconciliation of work and family life

Specific objective 2.3.2 Reduce horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the labour market and vocational training.

Specific objective 3.1.2 Prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination

CEDAW

Slovakia has ratified Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. Convention has become a leading document when implementing gender equality in different areas of public and private life in Slovakia. SR has submitted 3 reports to CEDAW; the initial report in 1996, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th report in 2007 and the 5th and 6th periodic report in 2014. The last mentioned will be on CEDAW Committee program on the November 12 this year.

In November 2015, the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic report of Slovakia on its implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and presented concluding observations

Social policies in Slovakia

Since 2004 the principles the Anti-discrimination Act have been fully incorporated into *Act No. 461/2003 Coll. on **social insurance**, as amended* (hereinafter the “Social Insurance Act”). During the preparation of every amendment of the Social Insurance Act care is taken to ensure that these principles are consistently applied.

The Social Insurance Act lays down **special measures for the protection of pregnant women**. It stipulates that an insured women who is pregnant or who is caring for a new-born child is entitled to maternity benefit if she was insured for at least 270 days in the two years before giving birth. The period of 270 days includes periods during which an employee’s mandatory sickness insurance is suspended due to use of parental leave in accordance with applicable legislation and periods of suspension of a self-employed person’s sickness insurance if she was entitled to a parental allowance pursuant to applicable legislation and did not perform activities of a self-employed person for which sickness insurance and pension insurance are mandatory. This provision means that if a woman has another child, the period for which sickness insurance was suspended will be counted with period of sickness insurance for the purposes of calculating entitlement to maternity benefit. Another step that has improved the standing of pregnant working women is the extension of the protective period from 6 months to 8 months, which means in practice that if their sickness insurance ends during pregnancy they are entitled to maternity benefit because the protective period lasts until the start of maternity leave.

In accordance with the Social Insurance Act, **a female employee is entitled to an equalisation benefit** if she is assigned to other work during pregnancy because the work that she previously performed is prohibited for pregnant women under applicable legislation or because a medical opinion finds that it would put her pregnancy at risk, and she has a lower income in the work to which she is assigned without any fault on her part. The same applies to women up to the end of the ninth month after birth. Equalisation benefit is paid by the Social Insurance Agency. These provisions protect working women against loss of income by reason of pregnancy or maternity.

In order to improve the social status of persons (who in our conditions are most often women) who care for a child under the age of six years and, in the case of a child with a long-term adverse health condition, after the child’s sixth birthday at longest until the child’s 18th birthday, the law requires that these persons must have pension insurance and that the state must pay the pension contributions. In practice, this means that certain pension entitlements are recognised for a period of due care for a child and therefore the period is included in the period of pension insurance and contributes to the amount of the calculation of the pension according to the relevant procedure.

Pursuant to *Act No. 43/2004 Coll. on old-age pension saving*, the state pays mandatory contributions to the fully-funded pillar for persons enrolled in old-age pension savings during the period of due care for a child under the age of six years and, in the case of a child with a long-term adverse health condition, after the child’s sixth birthday (at longest until the child’s 18th birthday), likewise during receipt of a carer’s allowance and likewise for a saver for whom, as an employee or self-employed person, the state pays pension insurance contributions during the provision of maternity benefit. The saver must also satisfy the conditions laid down by Act No 461/2003 Coll. on social insurance, as amended.

In accordance with the Social Insurance Act, the period of unemployment insurance for entitlement to unemployment benefit includes the period in which an employee’s mandatory

unemployment insurance is suspended due to **use of parental leave**. This provision means that persons who have taken parental leave pursuant to applicable law are entitled to unemployment benefit if they cannot find work after the end of their parental leave.

Since January 2017, an improved condition for women on maternity leave was an increase in maternity benefit to 75% of the daily assessment base. With effect from 01 January 2011 there was also an extension of the period for which maternity benefit is paid — from the original 28 weeks to 34 weeks. In the case of women who give birth to two or more children and care for at least two of them, the duration of maternity benefit was extended from 37 weeks to 43 weeks. A single mother is entitled to maternity benefit until the end of the 37th week from the start of entitlement to maternity benefit.

Father's involvement in a child care

Entitlement to a maternity allowance may also be used by the father of a child if the mother returns to the labour market and does not receive any maternity or parental allowance. However, the father may not request the maternity benefit before six weeks from the day of delivery (this time is fully dedicated to a mother) and must end until the child is 3 years old. The maternity allowance paid for the father is the same as for the mother, e.g. 75% of income before taking maternity leave (maximum height in 2017 following a change in the law in the 31-day calendar month will be 1,260 euros, whereas previously in 2016 it was 945 euros).

Thanks to these measures, the trend of increasing number of Slovak women on maternity leave is rather significant. While in September 2014 there were 292 male parents using it, in September 2015 the number rose to 733 and in the same month 2017 the maternity benefit has been used by 1,341 men.

Work – life balance

Regarding the reconciliation of **family and working life**, we would like to point out that the Labour Code includes provision for flexible forms of employment which can have a positive effect on the employment of women who wish to balance family and work duties. The following flexible forms of employment are defined:

- employment with shorter working time (part-time work) — the employer can agree with the employee in the employment contract on shorter working time than the set weekly working time. The reason why this form of employment is not used more often, for example by employees returning from parental leave, is that a part-time worker is entitled only to pay corresponding to the agreed shorter working time;
- a labour-law relationship based on an agreement on the performance of work or agreement on work activity;
- job sharing — this option allows an employer to create a shared job for part-time employees, in which the employees agree with each other on the scheduling of working time and work tasks assigned to the job (**added to the Labour Code by Act No. 257/2011 Coll. with effect from 01 September 2011**);
- flexible working time — more adaptable rules on flexible working time — cancellation of the requirement to define optional working time. This could lead to greater work efficiency. Each employee chooses the working hours that are most convenient for him/her (**Change introduced by Act No.**

257/2011 Coll. amending Act No. 311/2001 Coll. the Labour Code, as amended, with effect from 01 September 2011);

- homework and telework — this form of work is used mainly for the transition from parental leave to employment, for parents with young children.

These **atypical forms of employment including variable forms of working time** increase employees' satisfaction, increase job quality, increase the efficiency of work processes and help employees to reconcile their work and family duties. Each of the above-mentioned flexible forms of employment has its own special characteristics and the employer and employee have the option to choose any of the methods in the current legal framework and the agreed type of labour relationship. Employees in Slovakia make less use of these options than is typical in western European countries. However, their use in practice is very rare.

In this case the problem is not on the side of the law, because the **Slovak Republic has an adequate number of instruments for the reconciliation of work and family life**, but more of a question of the will, motivation and space to use alternative forms. Flexible options that the employer and employee can agree on, such as work with reduced working time, are not always beneficial for employees caring for a child. In an environment with relatively low wages, employees are afraid, primarily for economic reasons, to accept a job where they will earn a lower wage. For this reason there is stronger motivation for an employee not to leave the labour market and continue working alongside care for a child than there is to take a job with shorter working time alongside child care (after leaving the labour market).

Supervision of compliance with an employer's duty to respect the principle of equal treatment and condition for working parents in relations with employees is included in **labour inspections** concerning compliance with Labour act. The purpose of such inspection includes monitoring the situation relating to discrimination and the detection of workplace discrimination.

Risk of poverty

In terms of efforts to solve the **problem of poverty and social exclusion**, gender is a factor that increases the risk of poverty. In general, women are at greater risk of poverty than men. This means that gender equality is an important cross-cutting issue when designing and adopting instruments to support solutions for poverty and social exclusion. At the same time, it should be noted that the EU SILC 2012 findings indicate almost the same risk of poverty for both sexes. For women it was 13.3% and for men it was 13.2%. In terms of economic activity, gender disparities are most pronounced in the categories of inactive persons and retired persons. Women who were inactive were the most exposed to the risk of poverty — 20.3% whereas for such men the percentage was 15.0%. Amongst retired persons, 8.8% of women were at risk of poverty compared to 5.8% of men, which is 1.5 time more often. The smallest gender gap was for employed persons, where 6.6% of men were at risk of poverty compared to 5.6% of employed women.⁶

Regarding the implementation of state policy for the support of especially vulnerable population groups from marginalised Roma communities (hereinafter "MRC"), the *Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities* (OGPRC), which is an advisory body to the government of the Slovak Republic, deals with issues affecting Roma communities and to implement systematic measures to improve their standing and social integration, to implement and coordinate more

⁶ Source — EU SILC 2012, SO SR, 2013.

effective policies and to implement systematic measures aimed at preventing the social exclusion of Roma communities and supporting their social integration.

Government Resolution No. 1 of 11 January 2012 approved the *Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma integration to 2020* (hereinafter the “Roma Strategy”) and at the same time made the revised national action plan for the Decade the Slovak Republic’s action plan for Roma integration to 2020 in the areas of education, employment, health and housing. The adopted material also established policies for financial integration, non-discrimination and approaches to majority society — the Initiative for Roma Integration through Communication. The strategy itself is based on the principles of a comprehensive solution, destigmatisation, desegregation and deghettoisation. The implementation principles have been defined on a basis of solidarity, legality, partnership, comprehensiveness, conceptuality, a systematic approach and sustainability, respect for regional and subjective characteristics, gender equality, responsibility and predictability.

One of the global objectives of the Roma Strategy is to focus on the elimination of the multiple discrimination of women and the reduction of gender inequality in the private and public life of marginalised Roma communities and to support the economic independence of Roma women by means of gender equality outreach activities in cooperation with NGOs concerned with gender equality. The Roma Strategy also includes multiple objectives for increasing gender equality in all areas that it covers. Indicators of gender status are specified for the monitoring of task performance for individual objectives in the strategy. The strategy sets special measures, particularly in the recommended areas — i.e. health, employment, housing and education, and also includes measures to increase Roma participation, including women’s participation, in public and political life.

To support the promotion of gender equality and mitigation of the effects of multiple disadvantage and discrimination long faced by Roma women and girls, especially those from marginalised Roma communities, the OGPRC provides grants from the public administration budgets that contribute to improved access to healthcare and support the area of employment and employability.

Gender pay gap and employment

The principle of equal pay for men and women is generally guaranteed under the Slovak Constitution. According to Section 36, all employees have the right to fair and satisfactory conditions at work, in particular the right to remuneration for the work performed and the right of collective bargaining.

The principle of equal pay can also be deduced from Article 6 Section 2b of the Antidiscrimination Act. It provides that the principle of equal treatment applies to employment relationships, including remuneration.

The general principle of equal pay for equal work is laid down in the Labour Code. The principle of equal pay covers employees, part-time workers (including job sharing), and workers who perform home-work or telework.

The gender pay gap has long been above the average for the EU-27 but it continues to show a favourable, falling trend. In 2012 the unadjusted form of the gender pay gap in hourly earnings

between men and women was 21.5% and in 2016 it fell to 18%.⁷ In the private sector in Slovakia the pay gap is in the range 19-21% and in the public sector it is 10-16%. There are significant differences in the gender structure of the two sectors, with women making up 68% of workers in the non-business sector and 42% in the business sector.

A number of factors contribute to the maintenance of the gender pay gap, including the **horizontal segregation of the labour market**; women are most likely to be employed in sectors of the economy that are considered to be typical for women and have low pay levels, and sectoral segregation especially in the private sector. Another factor is vertical segregation — the “glass ceiling effect”, which limits the number of women reaching the highest (and best paid) positions in fields where women are otherwise strongly represented.

Gender segregation at the labour market is closely linked to the overall lower income of women, as there continues to be a large gender gap between women’s and men’s pay. Women are found more often in low-paid groups of employees, i.e. those whose hourly pay is lower than 2/3 of the median hourly wage in the Slovak economy. Despite women’s very good level of education (in Slovakia in fact higher than men’s) women do not achieve comparable earnings to men because education in “typically female areas” is less valued.

Labour market

Long-term period of idleness of women in labour process, unavailability of facilities providing child care in some areas or lack of working experience of women as a result of maternal and parental leave cause increased unemployment of women, as well as gender differences in economic activity of women and income.

The presence of children younger than six years in the family significantly reduces the employment rate of women, and it rather increases employment rate of men. The employment rate of women aged 25-49 years with a child younger than 6 years of age is less than 40%, while the employment of men in the same age category and in the same stage of parenthood is, however, more than 83%. The gap between the remuneration for work between men and women widens more and more after the birth of every child.

In employment practice in Slovakia it is also very common for there to be **unequal treatment owing to parenthood, especially maternity**. A change of an employee’s family status and the birth of children often leads to a change in employers’ behaviour. A large percentage of them monitor the family situation of their employees, make problems after their return from parental leave or have prejudices against employees who are mothers.⁸ One of the effects of the above (although it also has other causes) is low representation of women in senior and top management, which means that women have limited opportunities to participate in decision-making. It is the same with women’s participation in public life and politics. Low participation of women leads to

⁷ All data on the gender pay is drawn from the Average Earnings Information System, Trexima, Bratislava.

⁸ Filadelfiová, J.: Podkladová analýza prioritných oblastí pre prípravu Národnej stratégie rodovej rovnosti (Supporting analysis of priority areas for the preparation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality). MLSAF, Bratislava, 2008. <http://www.gender.gov.sk/index.php?id=566>.

a situation in which women are unable to influence strategic decision-making and planning and in the final result it also has effects on their living situation.⁹

In 2015, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the Slovak republic started with implementation of the **project titled 'Family and Work'** using affirmative action to support employment or entrepreneurship of mothers of small children. The aim was to help women sustain their work skills and competitiveness while helping them back into the labour market. The follow-up of the project is expected soon, particularly focusing on building up private child care services as an opportunity for female entrepreneurs.

Within the project, a creation of various forms of child care via refunding personal costs of nursemaids has been supported. Furthermore, flexible work arrangements as short-time work contracts, telecommuting or home office, shared work place and others, while those workplaces at which the employer hires a woman with pre-school children or a parent returning from parental leave, received support via incentives where a significant portion of labour costs is being covered by the project.

Within the pilot project, nearly 1 500 jobs with a flexible working arrangements have been created to support an employment of mothers (and few fathers) of small children. Furthermore, 33 new flexible child care facilities have been created either by employers (10 cases) or in NGOs – mother centres - and private care institutions.

An annual competition '**Family, gender equality and equal opportunities — friendly employer**' organized by MLSAF is an example of good practice of awareness-raising for the employers. The primary aim of the competition is to motivate employers to create conditions that are sensitive to the family and other personal responsibilities of the employees as well as to the creation of equal opportunities for women and men.

Promoting women's entrepreneurship

Another strategic area dedicated to increase entrepreneurship of women addresses the issue of **horizontal segregation** by placing the focus on mainstreaming women into areas typically known as male with an emphasis on private sector. One of the operational objectives is then to promote women's entrepreneurship by creating systematic measures, including the support for reconciliation of work and family life.

Eventually, **the strategic area of science and research** aims to address women and girls and support the use of their talents and skills as well as ambitions in the field of science, technologies and IT with related START-UP support. The following are some of the relevant operational objectives:

- 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;
- Elimination of 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;

⁹ Ibid.

- 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.

Women in IT and R&D

Already young girls are targeted with the aim to help them make informed choices regarding their future studies and careers. Interestingly enough, this particular strategic area received mixed and emotionally-charged feedback. Negative responses were received mainly from catholic based organizations claiming that active motivation of women and girls in favour of entering science, technologies and IT is artificial and unnatural.

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.

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.

Projects to Support Female Entrepreneurship in Slovakia

Several initiatives and activities in favour of mainstreaming women and girls into entrepreneurship, technologies and IT are in the process of implementation. The initiative has a track of successful events, education activities and courses reaching out to many girls and young women. As mentioned earlier, 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.

Slovak Business Agency Projects

An another incentive to launch this activity is the **EU Network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors project** implemented by the SBA in 2009–2011 which created a network of female ambassadors – mentors for women launching business.

The project **Guardian Angels for Female Entrepreneurs** has been established as a reaction of the Slovak Business Agency and RAIC Presov on a call of the European Commission, known as “European Network of mentors for Women Entrepreneurs” which had been targeted at the additional support of businesswomen.

An another project was **“Boosting the female entrepreneurship in Slovakia”** which had been established to inspire potential entrepreneurs, mainly through business stories and practical advices of ambassadors to embark women on the path of self-employment. At this stage enters a

new project and its main actors - mentors or "the guardian angels" for female entrepreneurs, whose mission is to lead the start-up female entrepreneurs.

The aim of the Project "**Guardian Angels for Female Entrepreneurs**" is to promote and support women's entrepreneurship in Slovakia and in the EU, through creation of a network of mentors for start-up entrepreneurs. From the successful businesswomen/businessmen will be selected the best ones who through the personal consultations and meetings will give hand to women – start-up entrepreneurs - to overcome the initial problems related to their business careers.

Project fulfills the principle number 1 of the Small Business Act: Create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded.