

**“NEW GOVERNANCE” AND THE SOCIAL  
DIMENSION OF ENLARGEMENT**

*Brussels, 18 October 2000*

**SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND POVERTY  
IN SLOVENIA**

Andreja Kavar Vidmar

*University of Ljubljana, School of Social Work*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Some Facts About Slovenia

The Republic of Slovenia lies between Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. It has 20.273 km<sup>2</sup> and 1.982.603 inhabitants. (30. 6. 1998 - SORS) The capital is Ljubljana. In 1996 GNP per capita (USA) was 9240 and real GDP per capita (PPP USA) was 13.200. (HDR 1999: 109). In 1997 real GDP per capita in USD was 14.000 (HDR 1998: 106).

In the last century the territory of the present Republic of Slovenia successively formed a part of four different states: Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia; from 1991 on the Republic of Slovenia has been an independent state. In between there were two world wars and a brief war for Slovenian independence. The history influenced the development and the present social circumstances in the country.

Republic of Slovenia got its new social security legislation in 1992. It consists of health insurance, old age and invalidity insurance, unemployment insurance, protection of the family, and social assistance.

In the past ten years the transition in Slovenia was a double one: economic, from socialism to capitalism and political from being one of the republics in former Yugoslavia to an independent state. The war in Slovenia in the middle of 1991 lasted only ten days. Armed conflicts, political changes, a great number of refugees and a general humanitarian catastrophe in other parts of the former SFR Yugoslavia worsened the social and economic situation in Slovenia too.

Slovenia reached the 1990 pre-transition GDP level in 1996. The key elements of economic development were: reduced inflation in the 1992-1995 period; the relatively swift exit from the depression that followed transition; the successful re-orientation to foreign markets after the loss of the former Yugoslav markets; the maintenance of equilibrium in public finances; and the generally stable balance of payments. (Women in Slovenia: 10)

### 1.2 Researches of Poverty and Social Exclusion

A certain interest in what today we call poverty and social exclusion was already expressed in former Yugoslavia in political debate about social differences. The questions discussed were what level of social difference should be allowed in a socialist society and what kind of differences are morally acceptable.

Over a period of more than 30 years, the Centre for Public Opinion and Mass Communications Research at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, has been carrying out research named Slovenian Public Opinion, which involves the subjective perception of poverty.

In the past years, several authors and institutions have been engaged in analytical and research work in the field of poverty and social exclusion. In 1993, the Statistical Office of Slovenia performed its first measurement of poverty. In 1994 M. Novak published a book titled 'Halo, Poverty' in which she describes various approaches to the analysis of poverty. In 1995 T. Stanovnik and N. Stropnik from the Institute of Economic Research made an analysis of income levels of Slovenian households. The Statistical Office of Slovenia (SORS) published the internationally comparable analysis of poverty in 1998. (Poverty Analysis, 1996).

In contrast to poverty research, research of social exclusion in Slovenia has been undertaken only much more recently. M. Novak (1997) prepared the national report for the Council of Europe project "Human Dignity and Social Exclusion". In the study "Quality of Life in Slovenia" published by Faculty of Social Sciences, M. Trbanc described the concept, the scope and the characteristics of social exclusion. D. Zaviršek and J. Škerjanec (School of Social Work) are the authors of the

study "Analysis of Position of Excluded Social Groups in Slovenia and Proposals for Decreasing their Exclusion within the Social Assistance and services System".

Social protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia developed a unified information system of social protection in Slovenia.

### **1.3 Paper on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Slovenia**

The presentation on social exclusion and poverty in Slovenia in this paper is mainly based on the National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2000) prepared by Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, and Human Development Reports – Slovenia 1998 and 1999, prepared by Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development. These documents will be referred to as Programme, HDR 1998 and HDR 1999. Other relevant texts will also be taken into consideration. Different researches, analyses, and documents sometimes refer to each other, or they combine and interpret the same data.

Afore mentioned Programme summed up results and ideas from various sources. It uses objective – absolute and relative approach – and subjective approach in studies of poverty and social exclusion.

Absolute poverty means a want of basic commodities and services, indispensable for satisfaction of minimum needs (food, housing, clothes etc.). Relative poverty is a state of relative want as compared to a certain level of well-being in a community. Poverty is also subjectively experienced. The analyses of subjective poverty are based on the answers and opinions concerning people's financial standing and their requirements.

The Programme employed the definition of social exclusion as an accumulation of exclusions or restricted participation in the key resources, institutions and mechanisms that serve as means of civil, economic and interpersonal integration of groups and individuals into society. (15, 16)

During the nineties poverty and social exclusion varied considerably.

## **2. THE SITUATION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND POVERTY**

### **2.1 Statistics on Poverty and Social Exclusion**

#### **2.1.1 Poverty**

The measurement of poverty performed by the Statistical Office of Slovenia in 1993 applied the methodology of Eurostat. Data were acquired from household expenditure surveys. The analysis showed that in 1993, 13,6% of Slovenian households or 9,3% of the population were poor. A direct comparison between computations for Slovenia and computations of the then 12 EU countries was not possible since at the time only the results applicable to the years around 1988 were available. In spite of that these results provided an indicative basis for comparison. Slovenia was classified among the countries with a relatively low rate of poverty (Programme: 18).

**Table 1a: Poverty rates in EU member countries and in Slovenia, calculated on the basis of household expenditure from household consumption surveys (Programme: 19, table 3a)**

Country	Poverty rate in %
Portugal (1989)	26,5
Italy (1988)	22,0
Greece (1988)	20,8
Spain (1988)	17,5
Great Britain (1988)	17,0
Ireland (1987)	16,4
France (1989)	14,9
<b>Slovenia (1993)</b>	<b>13,6</b>
Germany (1988)	12,0
Luxembourg (1987)	9,2
Belgium (1988)	6,6
Netherlands (1988)	6,2
Denmark (1987)	4,2

Note: The rate of poverty denotes the proportion of household below the poverty line.

In its next - and last until now - poverty analysis for 1996, the Statistical Office of Slovenia used household income data obtained from administrative sources. The rate of poverty was 14,9%. The comparison of these data with the poverty rate in EU countries based on a survey on household income in 1993 is shown in the table below.

**Table 1b: Poverty rates in EU countries, computed on the basis of household income according to the 1993 European panel survey and in Slovenia computed on the basis of household income according to the 1996 administrative sources (Programme: 20, table 3b)**

Country	Poverty rate in %
Portugal	29
Greece	24
Great Britain	23
Ireland	21
Spain	19
Italy	18
France	16
<b>Slovenia (1996)</b>	<b>14,9</b>
Luxembourg	14
Netherlands	14
Belgium	13
Germany	13
Denmark	9
<b>EU 12 (1993)</b>	<b>17</b>

Note: The rate of poverty denotes the proportion of households below the poverty line.

Analysing the structure of financial resources available to households and their expenses (also monitored by the Statistical Office) reveals which households, within the 13,6% defined as poor, are most exposed to poverty. They are:

- households with no economically active members and with cash benefits as the main source of income, pensions excluded;
- one person households or those with one person above 65;
- tenants in privately-owned flats;
- households in which the head of the household has only primary school education (finished or unfinished).

Households in which the head is a woman dominate in total number of poor households. Poverty has been registered in 15,1% of such households; in those with male head poverty has been recorded in 11,7% of households. (HDR: 1998, 60, 61)

Poverty by household types is shown in the table below

**Table 2: Poverty by household types 1993 (HDR 1998: 61, table 5.1)**

Type of households	Relative equivalent expenses in %	Rate of poverty in %
Single person above 65 years	58	48,4
Single person below 65 years	80	27,1
Single parent with children below 16	111	6,9
Elderly couple without children	80	25,7
Couple without children	110	7,8
Couple with one child below 16	123	2,6
Couple with two children below 16	111	4,0
Couple with three children below 16	101	9,8
Single parent/couple with childr. above 16	106	8,0
Other	90	9,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>13,6</b>

**Source:** Erika nidarši , Analysis of poverty in Slovenian Households based on the Survey on the Expenditure of Households in 1993, SORS, Ljubljana, 1996.

Single-person households aged above 65 were the poorest in 1993, followed by households of elderly couples without children and single-person households below the age of 65. In households with both parents and children, poverty increases with the number of children.

The number of recipients of social assistance benefits also demonstrates the material circumstances of the population. In Slovenia, social assistance benefits include financial assistance as the recipient's only means of living and supplementary allowance. Beneficiaries of financial assistance as the only means of living are persons permanently incapable of working and persons over 60 years of age without any source of income. People who are temporary unable to secure funds of living because of reason beyond their control are entitled to supplementary allowance.

**Table 3 a: Social assistance as the only means of living – recipients (Programme: 126, table 27)**

Year	Average number of recipients monthly	Index 1993=100	Chain index
1993	1.664	100,0	-
1994	1.610	96,8	96,8
1995	1.558	93,6	96,8
1996	1.494	89,8	95,9
1997	1.402	84,3	93,8
1998	1.334	80,2	95,1

Previous year = 100

**Table 3 b: Supplementary allowance – recipients (Programme: 126, table 28)**

Year	Average number of recipients monthly	Index 1993=100	Chain index
1993	17.804	100	-
1994	20.788	116,8	116,8
1995	24.908	139,9	119,8
1996	29.988	168,4	120,4
1997	34.242	192,3	114,2
1998	33.017	185,4	96,4

From August 2000, the amount of social assistance as the only means of living is 25.477 SIT, that is about 106 USD. The highest supplementary allowance for one person is 22.077 SIT, that is about 92 USD. These amounts are considered too low. The changes are in preparation.

Subjective data serving to complement the picture of the poor are presented in the next table:

**Table 4: Households' opinions on the sufficiency of their income to cover living expenses (in 1993) (HDR 1998: 61, Table 5.2)**

	Relative equivalent expenses, in %	Structure of all households, in %	Rate of poverty, in %
Entirely sufficient	154	7,9	4,5
Mainly sufficient	104	56,8	8,5
Mainly not sufficient	83	26,4	20,5
Not sufficient	74	9,0	33,9
Total	100	100,0	13,6

**Source:** Erika nidarši, Analysis of poverty in Slovenian Households based on the Survey on the Expenditure of Households in 1993, SORS, Ljubljana, 1996

Answers to the question whether a household's income is sufficient to cover living expenses show that 64,7% of households have income that entirely or mainly covers expenses, and 35,4% of households do not have sufficient income. (HDR, 1998: 61, 62)

In the survey Slovene Public Opinion (1983-1993, 1997), carried out by the Centre for Research of Public Opinion and Mass Communications at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana, the subjective experience of poverty was measured in such a way that the persons surveyed (a representative sample included 1050 citizens of age) were asked to make their own assessment of their situation and the situation of their family. (Programme: 21)

**Table 5: Self-appraisal of material situation, in % (HDR 1999: 84, box 3.3)**

Would you say that you and your family (only one answer is possible):	1983	1987	1993	1997
Lacked nothing	7,7	6,5	9,5	16,9
Lived more economical, less luxury existence	44,5	41,1	33,6	40,1
Had to manage your money very carefully, limiting the purchase of clothes, furnishing etc.	41,2	46,4	45,7	37,1
Had to strongly limit purchase of food	3,1	3,3	6,7	2,8
Lived in want of basic commodities	0,6	1,1	2,2	1,0
Lived in poverty	0,6	0,4	0,9	0,6
Did not know, undecided	2,3	1,2	1,4	1,4

**Source:** Slovene Public Opinion 1983, 1987, 1993 and 1997, Centre for Research of Public Opinion and Mass Communications with the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana

Data for the years between 1993 and 1997 show a certain break in respondents' answers. The impact of the Social Agreement, passed in June 1995, and introduction of the instrument of the minimum wage can be felt. After that date, the percentage of people claiming that they live with a deprivation of basic consumer goods, i.e. in poverty, dropped (HDR 1999: 84)

N. Stropnik and T. Stanovnik completed in 1998 the study: Effects of Social Transfers on Poverty and Inequality of Income in Slovenia: a comparison between the pre-transitional and post-transitional period. The basic purpose of this research was to ascertain the extent of poverty and inequality, which would have existed in absence of social transfers. The study indicates that the period 1983-1993 saw major changes in structure of the financial sources of Slovenian households as a result of extensive shifts in the socio-economic structure of households. The most notable change in this period is the extraordinary decline of earnings out of regular employment (from 71,7% in 1983 to 57,4% in 1993) which up to the point reflects the reduction of share of the employed in the total number of members of households. The high growth of the share of the pensions in the overall income of households, from 14,6% in 1983 to 20,7% in 1993, reflects not only the increase of the retired population, but also an improvement of their income situation. The highest increase of the share of pensions in the entire household income took place in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> decile of income distribution and is a consequence of a shift of the retired population towards higher income deciles. Other social benefits grew as well, mainly due to major increase of unemployment and the extent of unemployment benefits. In 1983, unemployment hardly presented a noticeable share of the household income, while in 1993 they represented an average of 1,4% of the entire income of households in Slovenia. The significance of unemployment benefits was particularly great in the lower two deciles where they represented about 4,5% of the entire household income (Programme: 20, 21). Average registered unemployment rate grew from 1,5% in 1987 to 14,4 % in 1994. Then it began to stagnate and even to go down slightly. In 1999 it was 13,6 %. Surveyed-based unemployment is much lower. It was 7,4% in 1999. (ESS Report: 23,29)

Under the circumstances of economic restructuring, the system of social security has functioned relatively efficiently. The share of funds devoted to various cash benefits to the population has increased from a total of 15,9% of the GDP in 1992 to 17,7% of GDP in 1997. (Programme: 8)

**Table 6: Share in GDP in % (Programme: 8, Table 2)**

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Social transfers to inhabitants - Total	15,9	17,1	17,6	17,5	17,3	17,7	17,5
Employment	0,9	1,2	1,1	0,8	0,7	0,9	0,9
Family protection	1,2	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,6	1,6	1,5
Social assistance and services	0,2	0,2	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,4	0,3
Protection of war veterans	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,2	0,4	0,3
Other social transfers	0,5	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,7	0,6
Sickness benefits	0,5	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,6
Pension and invalidity insurance	12,2	12,7	13,1	13,3	13,2	13,1	13,1

**Source:** Human Development Report Slovenia 1998, Macroeconomic Analyses and Development Office, Ljubljana.

The importance of social transfers is evident. This is the result of a high level of social security in Slovenia that alleviates the consequences of the loss of earnings.

### **2.1.2 Social Exclusion**

The analysis of social exclusion in the study on Slovenian Public Opinion in 1998 was based on Allardt's theory of basic needs. According to him, the quality of life may be measured in three dimensions determined by the needs "to have", "to be" and "to love". Later the Estonian method of measurement of social exclusion modified the need "to love" into the need "to belong".

Such measurement of social exclusion represents measurement of shortages, which lead to a number of undesirable phenomena:

- a want felt in the field of "to have" results in deprivation,
- a want felt in the field "to belong" results in isolation,
- a want felt in the field of "to be" results in anomie.

Deprivation principally means a lack of financial means; isolation a lack of social contacts; and anomie a feeling of impotency.

Slovenia included the adequately adapted questionnaire from the Report on Human Development 1998 into the study on Slovene Public Opinion

The analysis of answers to this questionnaire (October 1998) shows that out of the three wants, the Slovenians feel the greatest want in the field "to belong" (that means lack of feeling of belonging to community, which is the consequence of unemployment, loneliness and fear of violence) which means that we feel isolated; anomie (feeling of impotency lack of purposeness and political apathy) is somewhat less notable, and deprivation is far behind. (Programme: 22)

On the basis of data of the Office for Macroeconomic Analyses and Development (Kersnik Bergant, April 1999) it can be established that 15,4% of respondents are exposed to high risk of social exclusion and that the feeling is stronger in women. Such a pattern of social exclusion is influenced by lack of regular employment and fear of violence as well as, to a large extent, a feeling of powerlessness and inability to take part in decision-making at the political level. (Programme: 22)

The data from the studies on social exclusion demonstrate the exclusion in different areas.

**Table 7: Exclusion/deprivation by individual areas (Programme: 83, Table 6)**

Area	Excluded/deprived by areas: absolute number	Proportion (%)
Housing deprivation	744	43,1
Spatial deprivation	489	27,2
Educational deprivation	806	45,1
Deprivation in consumption	516	28,8
Employment deprivation	486	27,8*
Social isolation	255	14,2

\*This number denotes the proportion of the interviewees with employment deprivation in the total number of interviewees and not only among those in paid employment.

Deprivation in one area can be surmounted. The problem is cumulation of exclusion in different areas. Cumulating of various types of exclusion and deprivation was analysed too.

**Table 8 : Cumulation of various types of exclusion and deprivation  
(Programme: 83, Table 7)**

Number of areas of exclusion or deprivation	Absolute number of interviewees	Proportion of interviewees (in %)
0	281	17,2
1	462	28,3
2	392	24,0
3	276	16,9
4	172	10,5
5	48	3,0
6	3	0,2
	N = 1634	100,0

From the viewpoint of cumulation of deprivations, the inhabitants of Slovenia are relatively vulnerable, since no more than 17% are unaffected in all the surveyed areas, while a sixth of the population suffers from at least three of the listed deprivations and isolations, the most frequent among them being lack of suitable education and housing. In contrast, social isolation is the least of the problem in this framework, since obviously the mechanisms of informal social networks act as a major compensation for other exclusions. The pattern of social exclusion in Slovenia is rather traditional, concentrating among persons living in small places, among elderly and uneducated persons, farmers, unemployed persons and persons with precarious jobs. (Programme, 83)

In 2000 the results of the international research on literacy were published. They were unexpectedly bad for the Slovenia. In the frame of learning society literacy is a serious problem. In comparative distribution of literacy levels Slovenia is on the 19<sup>th</sup> place among 22 states. (Literacy: 17)

Housing problem is well known in Slovenia from long ago, especially in bigger agglomerations. The number of housing units per 1000 inhabitants was 346 in 1996. There is a tendency among the Slovenians to own a house or an apartment, but the prices are very high. According to National Housing Programme the average price of 1 m<sup>2</sup> was 238.921 SIT in Ljubljana and 177.317 SIT in other settlements. In the present exchange rate it would be 995 and 739 USD. The possibilities to rent a suitable apartment are scarce. In spite of various attempts to alleviate the housing problem it remains to be one of the most persistent ones in Slovenia.

Though social isolation should be the least of a problem, it is expressed among some groups of the population, especially among the elderly living in institutions. Much has been done in this field lately, both by the administrations of the institutions themselves and by various NGO-s.

According to the survey "Quality of Life in Slovenia" from 1994 (1806 interviewees above the age of 17) the most underprivileged groups are:

- certain groups of young people,
- certain groups of women.
- persons with long-term mental disorders,
- persons with impaired mobility and disorders in mental development,
- relatives of persons with different handicaps (mental disorders, impaired mobility, disorders in mental development),
- the Roma of both gender,
- the elderly,
- persons without Slovenian citizenship.
- refugees living in refugee centres all over Slovenia.

Their social status is characterised by three types of discrimination and exclusion: economic, social and cultural. The research study has identified the indicators of exclusion and pointed out that they

intertwine; after some time, this fact makes it hardly possible to identify which type of deprivation contributed most to social exclusion of an individual. (Programme: 84)

Some more detailed analyses point to differences within the same group. M. Novak (1999: 140) tested the idea that the old age and retirement *per se* stopped to be the principal risk for this cohort. She concludes: The acquired education and occupation primarily determines the household's income while gender and age show no significant influence in this respect. In comparison to the employed, the retired might have worse level of living but the relation of the latter with retirement is either weak or absent. The level of living satisfaction lacks any relation to the level of living itself.

Poverty and social exclusion are a multidimensional problem that may and should be illuminated in various ways, using several different methods of poverty measurements. Objective hard data like GDP, distribution of households according to earnings etc. show only one facet of the problem. Even there it is possible that the value of products and services of undeclared work has greater or smaller influences on the results. The measurement of subjective approach is influenced by culture, history, values and similar factors. Slovenian National Programme (:16) states that the essential point is how individuals project their own position and how they conceive poverty and social exclusion. For this very reason, this subjective information and the analyses based on it have priority over other methods, which are derived from objective indicators (expenditures, income, and optional cross-sections). In any case statistics demonstrates that some citizens are much better off than others and that some of them can't enjoy decent living conditions and practise their fundamental rights and freedoms. Maybe statistics is not precise enough to measure all the circumstances that make people more or less poor and socially excluded. However, even if it is not perfect, it is indispensable.

### **3. POLICIES TO FIGHT AGAINST SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

#### **3.1 National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion**

Regulation in force in Slovenia includes numerous mechanisms for prevention and alleviation of poverty and social exclusion. The system of social security covers all the contingencies stated in ILO convention no. 102 on social security and also social assistance as a special field of social security. In 1999 European Social Charter was ratified. Slovenia also concluded or accepted a number of bilateral agreements on social insurance or social security, among others with following UE countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom.

Stanovnik's and Stropnik's study demonstrates the utmost importance of social security system to secure financial benefits and necessary social services to the beneficiaries. In spite of that, the problems of poverty and social exclusions persist.

A number of different measures for prevention and alleviation of poverty and social exclusion were proposed in Slovenian National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion. The measures can be divided in two groups: strategic documents and legal measures. Monitoring of the programme is planned too.

Strategic documents were adopted or are in the process of adoption in four important fields: employment, social assistance, housing and health. These documents are:

- The Strategic Objectives of Labour Market and Employment Development up to the Year 2006 and the National Programme of Employment for 2000 and 2001, Training and Employment Programme for Disabled Persons by 2002 (not yet published in the Official Journal Of the Republic of Slovenia – Ur. I. RS)
- National Social Assistance and Service Programme for the Period up to the Year 2005 (Ur. I. RS 31/00)
- National Housing Programme (Ur. I. RS, 43/00)

- National Health Programme up to the Year 2004 (Ur. I. RS 49/00)

Legal measures were adopted or are in the preparation. National Programme state the following:

- Measures to decrease the drop-out rate and increase the level of education,
- Social Assistance and Services Act,
- Housing Act,
- Parenthood and Family Benefits Act,
- Integration of Disabled Persons Act,
- Training and Employment of Disabled Persons act,
- Legal Aid Act, and
- Income Tax Act.

The great majority of these areas was legally regulated already before the adoption of the National Programme. New acts or proposals for new acts make the regulation more up to date and in accordance with the afore mentioned international standpoints and documents. EU legal documents – ‘hard’ as well as ‘soft’ law were taken into account. Every act/ law or other legal document of any importance is compared to EU regulation and the regulation in the member states before it is adopted.

The Law on Professional Education and Training was adopted in 1996 and changed in 2000 (Ur. I. RS, 12/96, 44/00). Social Assistance Act was adopted in 1992 and changed two times (Ur. I. RS, 54/92, 13/93, 41/99). Act on Family Benefits was adopted in 1993 and changed three times since then. (Ur. I. RS, 65/93, 71/94, 73/95, 26/99) The proposal for the new Act on Parenthood and Family Benefits is in the parliamentary procedure just now. There are two proposals of the Act on Legal Aid in the Parliament just now. The Income Tax act will be changed too to take into the consideration the position of the less good off part of the population. Housing Act was adopted in 1991 and has since then undergone three changes. (Ur. I. 18/91, 21/94, 23/96, 1/00). The Act on Orientation of Children with Special Needs were adopted recently (Ur. I. 54/00).

Other acts that should be mentioned include: the Act on Employment and Unemployment Insurance (Ur. I. RS, 5/91, 12/92, 71/93, 38/94, 69/98) the Act on Prohibition of Undeclared Labour and Employment (Ur. I. RS, 36/00) and the new Act on Pension and Invalidity Insurance (Ur. I. RS, 106/99)

Adoption of laws does not guarantee the situation of the poor and the socially excluded better, but it is an essential prerequisite for governmental action.

Some groups of women were found to be especially vulnerable and the National Programme planned the measures in their favour.

Further, there exists also a special governmental body whose task is to analyse and promote the position of women in Slovenia: Women’s Policy Office. In the past period it was also active in the field of social exclusion and poverty of women. It seems that the discrimination of women at work and employment is being perceived as particularly important. The rate of professionally active women in Slovenia has traditionally been very high. The majority of them work full time. It is a paradox that during the period of trends toward the elimination of discrimination of women in EU, in Slovenia the number of cases of discrimination increases. It is particularly problematic that it is a hidden, quiet discrimination that is very difficult to prove. Besides, in a small country like Slovenia it is very easy for a worker to get a reputation of someone who has the habit of going to court to protect her/ his rights. These persons have special difficulties to get employed.

### **3.2 Balance Between Passive and Active Measures**

Passive measures to combat poverty still prevail, but the situation is changing in favour of active measures. The balance is different in different fields of social security.

Health care is active by its own nature. Health Care and Health Insurance Act contains the measures that should promote health prevention, healthy style of life and responsibility for one's own health. Last year Slovenia got a new Safety and Health at Work Act. It is preventively and actively oriented and completely in accordance with EU directions. Sickness benefits in case of disease and injuries can be considered as passive measures.

The new Pension and Invalidity Insurance Act (Ur. l. RS, 106/99) stimulates the employees to postpone the retirement. Early retirement won't be possible any more. Benefits for invalids are professional rehabilitation, alternative employment, and part-time work, all including financial supplements. Invalidity pension is granted in case of total incapacity of work.

The most remarkable shift from passive to active measures is observed in the field of unemployment insurance. The duration of periods of unemployment benefits was generally shortened by half. New active employment policies were introduced: subsidies for employers to employ long-term unemployed and disabled people, stimulation for self-employment, public relief works accompanied by educational programmes for job-seekers. Action Programme on Employment in Slovenia for the years 2000 and 2001 is based on the directions of common European employment policy.

Benefits for family burden are passive ones.

In case of need benefits and services are provided. Social assistance services comprise: first social aid, personal assistance, family assistance, institutional care, guidance, care and employment under special conditions, assistance for workers employed in companies, institutes and by other employers. Services can be considered as active measures concerning social in-/exclusion. The leading principle of Social Assistance Act is social pluralism. Legal and physical persons, who can carry out social services on the basis of state's concession, are civilian associations and societies, charitable organisations (Red Cross, Karitas), organisations of invalids, foundations, other forms of non-governmental organisations registered for social activities and individuals and private organisations. There are approximately 2000 of such institutions in Slovenia. (Regvat, Valen i , 11) Many of these organisations develop and carry out various programs to satisfy special needs of some groups of clients. Programmes are financially supported by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. Every year the Ministry finances social assistance programmes chosen at the public competition.

Different kinds of voluntary work have been developed, especially the aid to the elderly and disabled people.

#### **4. INFLUENCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVELS ON POLICY-MAKING AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has joined the international commitments/ engagements/ efforts to solve the problems of poverty and social exclusion in the world. Two Human Development Reports for Slovenia – 1998 and 1999 were published so far. In co-operation with numerous other governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs prepared National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2000. The Programme is based on international findings, commitments and documents. The period between 1997 and 2006 was proclaimed as the decade of eradication of poverty. Slovenia participated in the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen where the Declaration and Action Programme were adopted. The documents of 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, the 1994 Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the 1995 World Conference of Women in Beijing and the UN Conference on Human Habitations – Habitat II were taken into consideration.

As it was stated before, the influence of both, international and European levels on Slovenian policy concerning poverty and social exclusion is very important. Slovenia is a candidate for the

membership in the European Union. The membership in the EU is a common aim of all parliamentary parties except one. It is obvious that all the governments that Slovenia had until now and surely the future one too, will do their best to comply with the conditions of EU. We could say that EU laws and other documents are still "more obligatory" for Slovenia (and supposedly for the other candidates) than for its present members. Slovenia respects not only 'hard law' but also 'soft law' (Schulte: 56) of the EU.

The contents of international documents has very important influence on Slovenian social policy. Government and civil society are interested in comparing the position and achievements of Slovenia to those of other comparable states. There is a tendency to accept good practices of other countries. Economical, political and social debates include the comparative view of the problems/ questions/ situation. In principle the information about and the acceptance of foreign/ other experiences are positive. The problems might arise if the solutions that proved to be good in one surroundings don't give equally good results in other circumstances. A traditional institute of one social security or social policy system might be strange, illogical or disturbing in another system.

The EU's "new governance" processes could present a solution to such problems. They enable a "tailor- made" social policy. The question of approximation among EU member states and the candidates is of qualitative as well of quantitative nature. The quality of life is a subtle matter. Culture, history, and values should be observed and respected. The wealth of Europe and its people lies also in their diversity.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

A number of competent institutions and researchers in Slovenia occupy themselves with the problems of poverty and social exclusion: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Institute of Macroeconomic Analyses and Development, Institute for Economic Research, Faculty of Social Sciences and others.

Slovenian Governments have adopted national programmes in various fields of social policy and the National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion to complete the social protection legislation. Social policy was an important issue in the pre-election period.

From Slovenian point of view the level of Slovenian social and labour standards shouldn't present a problem for EU and its member states. Social security and labour law began to develop on Slovenian territory as early as at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Due to self-government in the former SFR Yugoslavia social security was formally separated from the state and developed its own infrastructure. (Health Insurance Agency of Slovenia, Pension and Invalidity Insurance Agency of Slovenia, Employment Agency/ Service of Slovenia and a network of Centres of social work).

Slovenian employers affirm that Slovenian labour and social standards are higher than those in EU countries. Upon starting their business in Slovenia some foreign companies violated Slovenian labour and social security regulations seemingly because they didn't know about their existence. The exchange of accurate and thorough information is of utmost importance for abolishing prejudices and to be able to "promote economic and social progress and a high level of employment and to achieve balanced and sustainable development."

In its Constitution Slovenia is declared as a social state. Eradication of poverty and social exclusion of its people is one of its aims irrespective of the EU requirements. Yet the EU aims and actions in the social field are a welcome stimulation to carry them out as soon and as well as possible.

## REFERENCES

Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) (April 2000), Annual Report, Ljubljana

Human Development Report – Slovenia 1998 (1998), M. Hanšek (ed.), Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, Ljubljana

Human Development Report – Slovenia 1999 (2000), M. Hanšek (ed.), Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, Ljubljana

National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2000) Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Ljubljana

M. Novak (1999) The Old Age – an Element of Social Marginalisation? V *Kakovost življenja: stanja in spremembe*, S. Mandič (ed.) Fakulteta za družbene vede, Ljubljana, 125-144

Porocilo za leto 1996, Republiški zavod za zaposlovanje, Ljubljana, maja 1997

B. Schulte(1997) Juridical Instruments of the European Union and the European Communities, v W. Beck, L. van der Maesen, A. Walker (eds.): *The Social Quality of Europe*, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, 45-67

Women in Slovenia in the 1990s (1999), V. Neubauer (ed.), Women's Policy Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia

B. Regvat, J. Valenčič : Materials prepared at the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs