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LIFE QUALITY VERSUS SOCIAL QUALITY IN SLOVAKIA¹

Abstract: *The current level of quality of life in Slovakia is the result of the process of changes in the socio-economic, social, political, and other conditions of our society in the past two decades. According to selected indicators of quality of life Slovakia is comparable to V-4 countries, but lags behind the developed countries of the EU. In Slovakia, there is a certain group of the population that does not participate sufficiently in social and economic life of society, or more precisely, is excluded from this life due to lack of funds because of low income or his party. In 2011 13% of the population faced the risk of poverty for low income, while the most vulnerable groups are households with two adults and three or more dependent children.*

Keywords: *quality of life, social quality, HDI, IHDI, GII, income inequality, rate of risk of poverty, material deprivation, long-term unemployment*

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Introduction

Quality of Life depicts a very wide range of living conditions in which people live and are involved in self-realization, including subjective perception of these conditions by individuals. In a simplified form, the quality of life is about good life. It is the result of objective conditions of the life inherent in meeting the social and cultural needs, depending on the material sufficiency, societal acceptance of oneself and one's physical health and subjective perception of one's own situation, and the level of satisfaction and happiness. [7]

Social quality is formed in the social space, which is defined by the formal and informal spheres, and these, in turn, are divided horizontally and vertically on the micro and macro-areas. The focus of social quality observed on the micro level, is the individual and their existence within the social system. The macro-level focuses on

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social groups, associations, institutions, organizations, communities, and nationwide. The rate of social quality with which one is confronted in their life, depends on socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion, and empowerment. [1]

1 Quality of Life versus Social Quality

The EU currently draws much attention to the quality of life and social quality, because they are considered as important criteria for assessing the success of economic and social policies of the countries concerned. A growing interest in the application of quality of life and social quality into practice evoked a scientific debate on the merits, competitive relationship, and the degree of overlapping of these categories.

The diverse spectrum of opinion has revealed several findings that support the importance of using the concept of social quality, because it reflects the importance of the social dimension in people's lives. Practical reasonableness is particularly highlighted by the fact that the social quality penetrates into microspheres social life deeper than the quality of life, and has an adequate terminology at its disposal. Another importance lies in the fact that the social quality has direct deliverables, the critical and corrective aspect. Also important is the fact that the social quality has legislation anchored in the EU agenda, as it allows the transmission output to decision makers. [4]

The very emergence of the concept of social quality is an expression of the fact that the quality of life in its wide range of areas and different definition did not meet the definition of all expectations especially in the social sphere. All the possibilities and potential of this concept was not captured the socio-economic movement in society. Despite the above mentioned, it is clear that the quality of life retains its meaning in particular that it deals with perception, subjective perception of life, provides broader methodical approach, and a broader understanding of the structure and value orientation needs of the population. We consider it important for understanding the finding that the social quality and the quality of life do not overlap.

A common feature of social quality and quality of life is the fact that the source of information is the individual entities. The social quality as opposed to the quality of life deals with the distribution of income and social relations, thus with the state of the society. The social quality measures the quality of social space of everyday life is an expression of social reality of the given society.

The rate of social quality depends on the development and an individual's ability to enter into society, to navigate in it, and build the necessary relationships. It depends on the participation of individuals in social networks and in the informal system of mutual solidarity, as well as the resources of the society and opportunities of individuals to effectively use these resources.

The concept of social quality implies that a person is provided with necessary information, endowed with the ability and confidence to participate in community life, which affect people and get their recognition. Part of the concept of social quality is also an assumption that an individual accepts environment created by the state and formal institutions, by which individuals are guaranteed participation in their lives

and active influence.

We can therefore conclude that the quality of life deals with the good and satisfactory aspects in people's lives, and the social quality relates to the nature of society through established social systems that support human wellbeing.

2 Quality of Life in Slovakia

To evaluate the quality of life there is quite a large number of indicators, which have different explanatory power. Measuring the quality of life of inhabitants of the Slovak Republic, we have established the use of well-known indicators that allowed us to create a picture of shaping the quality of life in Slovakia and enable us to compare it with the international level.

The basis of our analysis is the **Human Development Index – HDI**, which is among the best known and most widely used indicators of quality of life in the social scale. It is a combination of economic indicators (high economic growth does not automatically improve the quality of life) and social indicators. This enables us to express the quality of life in a broader context.

Development of HDI in Selected Countries in the Years 1990-2011

Table 1

Country	Ranking of countries – 2011	HDI in year				
		1990	1995	2000	2005	2011
Norway	1.	0,844	0,876	0,913	0,938	0,943
Australia	2.	0,873	0,889	0,906	0,918	0,929
Netherlands	3.	0,835	0,866	0,882	0,890	0,910
Ireland	7.	0,782	0,813	0,869	0,898	0,908
Germany	9.	0,795	0,835	0,864	0,896	0,905
Sweden	10.	0,816	0,855	0,894	0,896	0,904
Finland	22.	0,794	0,822	0,837	0,875	0,882
Spain	23.	0,749	0,801	0,839	0,857	0,878
Czech Republic	27.	-	0,788	0,816	0,854	0,865
Greece	29.	0,766	0,776	0,802	0,856	0,861
Slovakia	35.	0,747	0,752	0,779	0,810	0,834
Romania	50.	0,700	0,687	0,704	0,748	0,781
Bulgaria	55.	0,698	0,698	0,715	0,749	0,771
Niger	186.	0,193	0,208	0,229	0,265	0,295
Democratic Republic of The Congo	187.	0,289	0,254	0,224	0,260	0,286

Source: UNDP: Human Development Report 2012

The statistics of UNDP in 2011 shows that out of 187 countries compared, the highest quality of life is in Norway, followed by the Australia, Netherlands, and the USA. The first group with the highest level of human development (HDI value is in the range of 1.0 to 0.801) contains 44 countries, including Slovakia, which is ranked in the 35th place. [14]

Each country has its own specifics, because for the assessment of the country merely the amount of achieved HDI may not be sufficient. In assessing the country's

development, it is more important to take into account more indicators than it is in case of HDI, which involves only three basic attributes of life (health, education and standard of living), which is considered as its major weakness. In order to alleviate this weakness, in 2010 HDI was accompanied with three indices: the Human Development Index adjusted for inequality (IHDI), gender inequality index (GII), and multidimensional poverty index (MPI).

An alternative indicator, which is designated as IHDI (Inequality Human Development Index), is used mainly as an additional indicator of HDI. HDI is seen as a potential index of human development and IHDI as an index of the real level of human development. Differences between HDI and IHDI reflect the loss in human development, which arises due to incomplete utilisation of existing capacities of human development and resources in the economy.

Table 2

HDI and IHDI in Selected Countries, year 2011

Country	HDI	IHDI	difference in %
Norway	0,943	0,890	5.6
Germany	0,905	0,842	6.9
OECD	0,871	0,787	9.6
Czech Republic	0,865	0,821	5.0
Greece	0,861	0,756	12.20
Slovakia	0,834	0,787	5.7
Hungary	0,816	0,759	7.0
Poland	0,813	0,734	9.7
Ukraine	0,729	0,662	9.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	0,731	0,540	26.10
South Asia	0,548	0,393	28.40
Sub-Saharan Africa	0,452	0,292	35.40

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2012

Data in Table 2 indicate that the economies and groups achieve lower human development than their full potential. The smallest difference between the HDI and IHDI is recorded in the Czech Republic, and this means that the country has the lowest loss consisting of existing inequalities in the country. Slovakia has a loss of 5.7% and is better-off than Hungary and Poland. The greatest inequality of all countries was recorded in Namibia (43.5%). Sub-Saharan Africa recorded a loss of 35.4%, 28.4% South Asia and Latin America 26.1%. [14] These data demonstrate that countries with low human development are characteristic of higher levels of inequality and achieve greater losses in human development.

Gender inequality index – GII reflects inequality in outcomes between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, strengthening and labour market. GII can take values from 0 (no gender differences) to 1 (pronounced differences in all categories). Health is measured by maternal mortality and fertility of teenage girls. Strengthening is measured by the proportion of women in parliament and the share of secondary and higher levels of educational attainment. The labour market is assessed by participation of women in the labour force. GII reveals the extent to which human development at the national level is undermined by inequality between

women and men.

Table 3

GII Selected Countries, 2011

State	Norway	Germany	Austria	France	Czech	Greece	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland
GII	0,075	0,085	0,131	0,106	0,136	0,162	0,194	0,237	0,164

Source: UNDP: Human Development Report 2012

In 2011, by GII, the Slovak Republic ranked in the 31st place out of 146 countries studied, with 80.8% of women (87.1% men) who have secondary education; in the parliament women represented 16.0%; and representation in the government amounts to 14.3%, 51.2% of women (68.5% of men) working-age population paid labour. The highest gender equality was achieved in Sweden, followed by the Netherlands and Denmark. Countries with the highest gender inequality are Yemen, Chad and Nigeria. [18]

The Multidimensional Poverty Index – MPI focuses on the health, education, and living standards. It addresses the issues of family and its access to health services, clean water, and fuel for food preparation and to other essential goods and things for the household. It expresses number of losses that affect people over time and thereby allows them to create a picture of poverty. The Human Development Report of 2011 provides data for 109 countries, home to 5.5 billion people, representing 79% of the World population. Of these, about 1.7 billion people live in multidimensional poverty. SR has a zero GII; CZR has GII 0.010 and Hungary 0.16. The largest share of the multi-dimensionally poor people is in Nigeria, namely 92% of the population. In the last but one place ended Ethiopia, where 89% of the population is affected by the multidimensional poverty. It was preceded by Mali with 87% share of the poor. [17]

Another possibility for measuring quality of life is offered by **Mercer's index**, according to which the Mercer organisation annually evaluates the quality of life on the basis of criteria grouped into 10 areas: political and social environment, economic environment, socio-cultural environment, health and health care, education and training, natural conditions, public services, recreation, consumer goods, and housing. In 2011 it rated 221 cities of which the inhabitants of Vienna enjoyed the best quality of life, followed by cities Zurich, Auckland, Munich, Dusseldorf, Vancouver, Frankfurt, Geneva, while Bratislava was placed in the second fifty; Prague got 69th place and Warsaw 84th place. The worst quality of life of the inhabitants is in Chad and Baghdad. [15]

The quality of life is also evaluated by the International Living organisation, which compiles **International Living's Quality of Life Index** and evaluates the states in terms of attractiveness for life. In 2011 as many as 192 countries were involved in comparing, and they were evaluated on the basis of the 9 areas: cost of living, culture and leisure, economy, environment, freedom, health, infrastructure, safety, and climate conditions. Slovakia is ranked at 41st place with the score of 67, while the sub-criteria it achieved the fewest points in the evaluation of infrastructure

(29 points), followed by the economy (49 points) and the environment (69 points). Full points (100 points) were obtained in the evaluation of freedom, which implies the rights and freedoms of citizens. The best place to live is the USA (86 points), followed by New Zealand (76 points), France (75 points) and Germany (74 points). [16]

On the basis of the data from international comparisons of quality of life through selected indicators, we can conclude that although Slovakia is placed in the first fifty among the countries compared, it is comparable with the V-4 countries, but is lagging behind developed countries of the EU.

3 Social Quality in Slovakia

The social quality is used to express the state of socio-economic environment in which people live and realise themselves, but it also serves to capture people's opportunities to participate in this space. Quantitative grasp of the factors of social quality is due to their wide image rather problematic, because neither quality of life nor social quality can be measured directly but only through selected indicators. Objective measuring of the social quality depends on the proper selection of a sufficient number of relevant indicators.

An integrated approach to assessing the social quality that is widely accepted and binding for the EU does not exist yet. The broad set of structural indicators, which were to assess social cohesion at the national level, was adopted by EU member states in 2006; we have chosen those indicators that we consider the most important for Slovak households for identifying the formation of social quality. The terms of inequality include: income distribution, poverty risk rate, rate of material deprivation, low degree of completion of education, long-term unemployment, and children in jobless households.

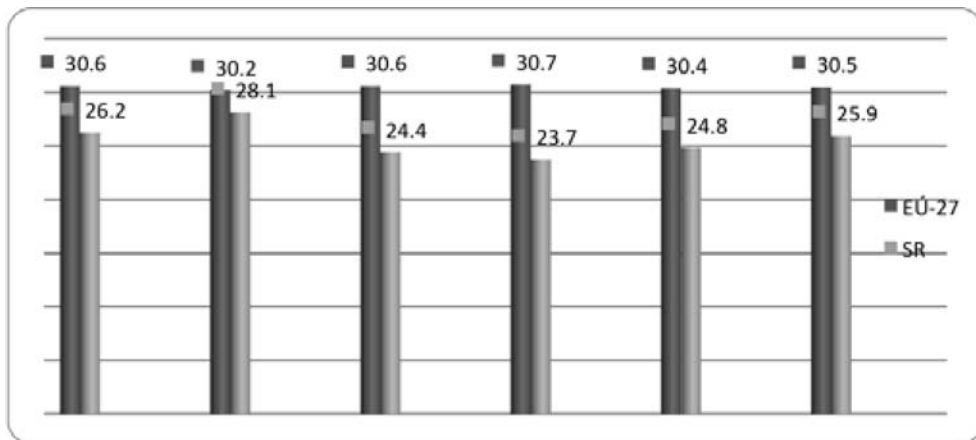
3. 1 Inequality of Income Distribution

Polarisation of society in terms of income is a specific type of vertical inequality is a result of various factors. It may be given by the social position, but may appear as inequality, which is determined by ethnicity, gender, age, education, profession, and the ability to adapt to new working conditions, health status, etc.

According to the Gini coefficient, Slovakia is not among the countries with high income inequality, in 2010 Slovakia reached 25.9 %, the EU-27 30.5 %. Within Europe the lowest income inequality is found in Norway (23.6 %) and highest in Latvia (36.9 %). [19]

Figure 1

Gini Coefficient in the EU-27 and SR



Source: [19]

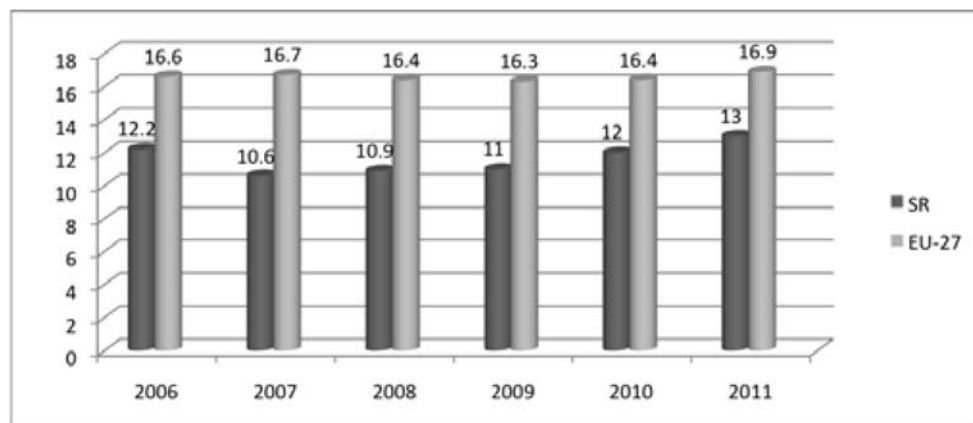
Although Slovakia ranked in the 9th place between EU countries, we see a problem in rising income inequality. Income disparity is one of the most visible forms of inequality in Slovakia and is the result of serious economic and social processes, which in the past two decades occurred, for example adverse demographic trends, rising unemployment, changing principles of state social policy, increasing number of people in deprivation, or growing demands for quality of economic growth.

3. 2 The Risk of Poverty

Poverty is a manifestation of an extreme inequality, which currently represents a serious socio-economic problem in many countries, including Slovakia. The basic indicator of poverty is the poverty rate, according to which 16.9 % of the population in the EU is at risk of poverty for. According to this indicator, Slovakia is a country with a relatively low risk of poverty. In Slovakia in 2010 12% of the population faced the risk of poverty for low income, which is about 1% more than in 2009. In 2011 13 % of Slovaks were at risk of poverty, representing 700,000 people. Within the Europe, lower ratios of this index were recorded in the Czech Republic (9.8 %), Norway (10.5 %), and Austria (12.6 %); the countries with low risk of poverty include Finland (13.7 %), Hungary (13.8 %) and Sweden (14.0 %).

Figure 2

Risk of Poverty in Slovakia and the EU-27 in %



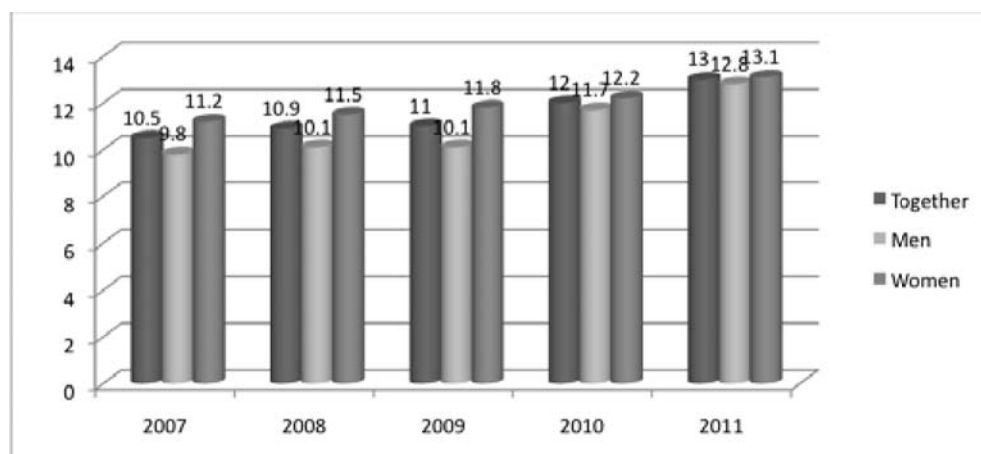
Source: SILC 2005-2007, 2011

With the use of rate of the risk of poverty it is important to establish a poverty line which is defined as 60 % of the national median equivalent disposable income. The value of line of risk of poverty is calculated according to EU SILC 2011; a one-person household to set to the amount of €315 per month; the annual increase compared to 2010 in absolute terms was 9€ per month.

The risk of poverty is also influenced by age and gender. An overview of development in risk of poverty according to gender is given in Figure 3. Based on the results of EU SILC 2011 it was women who were the most risk of poverty. A gender gap in favour of men was in Slovakia during the entire selected period.

Figure 3

Rate of Risk of Poverty by Gender in %

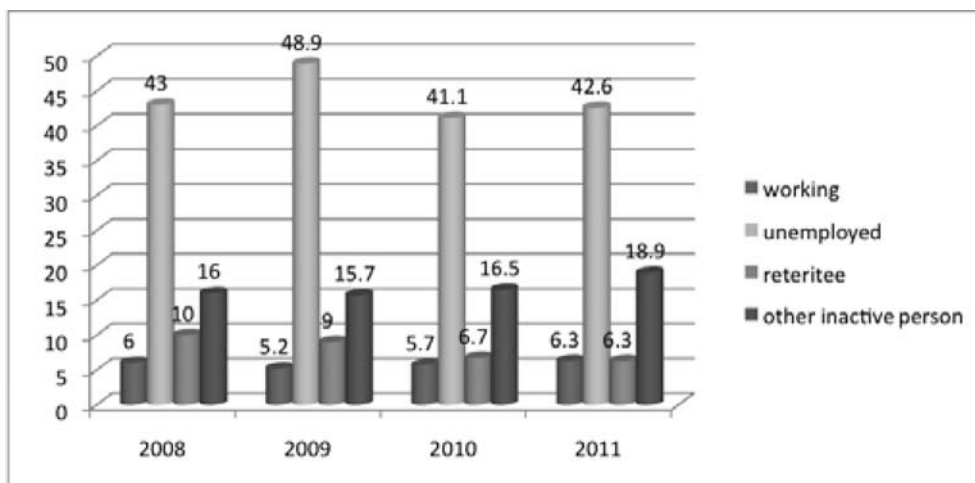


Source: EU SILC 2007-2011

In terms of age the most vulnerable group are children from 0-17 years; in 2010 this group accounted for 18.8 %, in 2011 it increased to 21.2 %. The least at risk were people in the age group of 65 years and older (6.3 %). The gender difference was most felt in the age group 65 years and above, where at the risk of poverty much more exposed are women (8.2 %) than men (3.4 %).

Figure 4

Poverty Risk by Household type in %

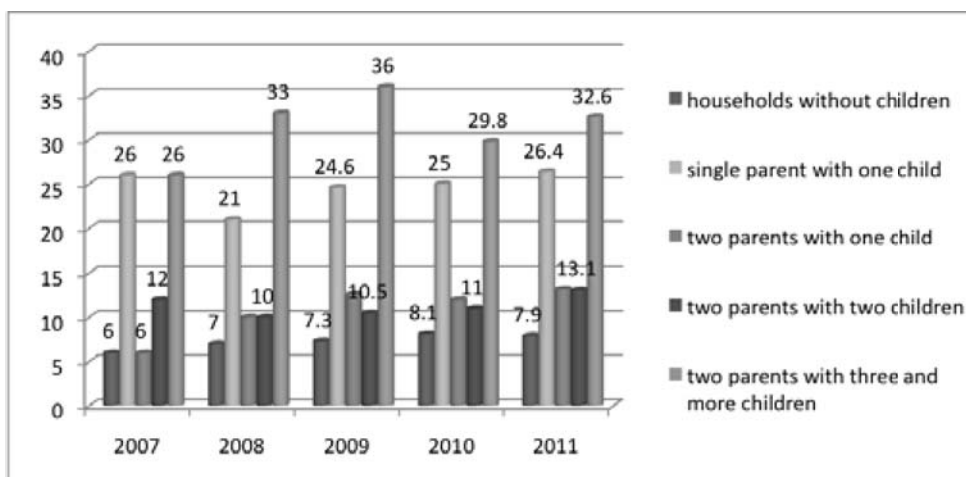


Source: EU SILC 2008-2011

According to household type most vulnerable to the risk of poverty are jobless households; in 2011 these households accounted for 42.6 %, and the least vulnerable were households of employed (6.3 %) and households of retirees (6.3 %).

Figure 5

Poverty Risk by Household Members in %



Source: EU SILC 2007-2011

The highest poverty rate surveyed according to the number of members in the household in the long term remains within households of two adult with three or more dependent children and single-parent households with at least one child. It turns out that the higher number of dependent children in the household as well as the absence of another adult member in single-parent household leads to situation that these types of households are more strongly at the risk of poverty long term than households without children.

3. 3 The Rate of Material Deprivation

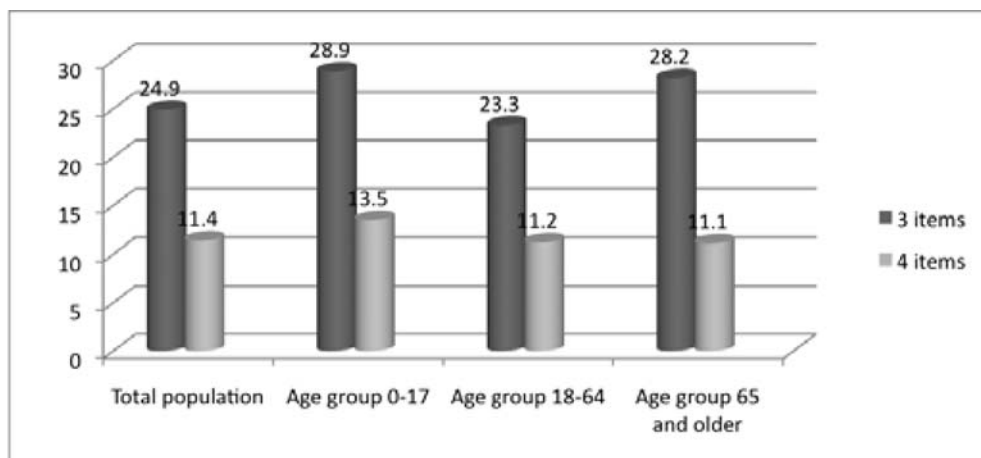
Deprivation is involuntary insufficient meeting of the needs due to lack of resources in relation to the level and way of meeting the needs that are in the society commonly available and widely accepted.

Material deprivation rate expresses the proportion of the population (in %), which is facing an enforced lack of at least three, or four of the nine deprivation items within the financial burden of households.

Figure 6 provides an overview of material deprivation by age and number of items identified by the EU SILC 2010. Among the total population, 24.9 % of it faced a forced shortage of at least three items and 11.4 % at least four items. To forced lack of the three items the most vulnerable were children aged 0-17 year-olds (28.9 %) and people older than 65 years (28.2 %). In terms of gender differentiation were in all age groups more at risk women than men.

Figure 6

Material Deprivation by age and Number of Items in %



Source: EU SILC 2010

Problems of deepening income inequality and poverty have now exceeded the limits of the national economy, and have become a common concern of the EU. Therefore the strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, referred as Europe

2020 in the area of social exclusion is exempt until 2020 from the risk of poverty and social exclusion 20 million of people. For the purpose of evaluating this objective, an aggregate indicator of poverty and social exclusion was established, which is based on a multidimensional approach to measuring poverty. Aggregate indicator is a combination of three sub-indicators such as rates of risk of poverty, material deprivation and low labour intensity. Their values for SR are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Development of the Risk of Poverty Rate or Social Exclusion in the SR in %

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The risk of poverty rate or social exclusion	32,0	26,7	21,4	20,6	19,6	20,6	20,6
The risk of poverty rate	13,3	11,6	10,5	10,9	11,0	12,0	13,0
Material deprivation	22,1	18,2	13,7	11,8	11,1	11,4	10,6
Low intensity of work	6,5	6,2	6,4	5,2	5,6	7,9	6,1

Source: [11]

The risk of poverty or social exclusion in Slovakia affects 20.6 % of the population. Compared with the previous year, there was no change in this indicator. Indicator of low intensity work expresses the proportion of people aged 0-59 years living in households where the adults work less than 20 % of the time during the previous year. According to this indicator, 6.1 % of people live in households where nobody works or works only occasionally. Compared with the previous year, the situation has improved.

3. 4 The Low Level of Completed Education

In Slovakia, the highest unemployment rate – in 2011 –amounted to 100% in the case of people with no schooling; the lowest unemployment rate occurs in people with higher education.

Table 5

Unemployment Rate in Slovakia by Education in %

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Without school education	-	100	100	75	50	36	100
Primary education	53	48	45	39	42	44	42
Vocational school with school leaving exam	19	15	12	11	14	18	17
Vocational school without school leaving exam	15	13	8	8	15	19	12
Secondary school, general	13	10	9	8	13	13	15
Secondary school, vocational	10	8	6	6	9	10	10
College education – 1st degree	7	5	4	5	8	11	8
College education – 2nd degree	5	3	4	3	4	5	6
College education – 3rd degree	-	-	4	2	2	3	4

Source: [10]

On the basis of the data in Table 5, we can conclude that the more is education higher, the lower is the unemployment rate. Higher education expands the range

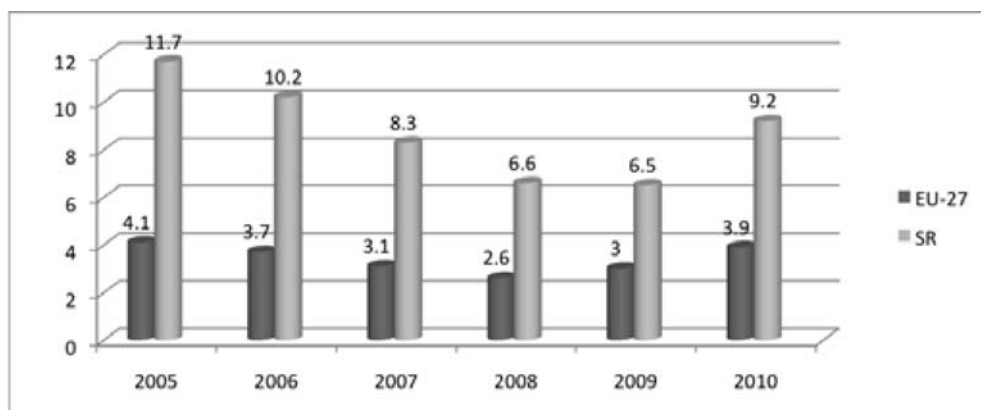
of possibilities to people entering the labour market and participation in the labour process. People with higher education are able to cope with different types of employment barriers better and with the change of working orientation; they are able to get new jobs on their own initiative, to overcome the complications and pitfalls of the new jobs. This is confirmed by the experience of our offices of labour.

3.5 Long-term Unemployment Rate

Unemployment in addition to economic loss also brings a number of negative social impacts in the form of a decline in living standard of the unemployed and their families, stress and fear of the future, disruption of living certainties, alcoholism, crime, and so on. The scope of the social impacts of unemployment on the individual and society largely depends on its duration. Long-term unemployment, lasting more than 12 months, is a key source of social inequality in society.

Figure 7

Long-term Unemployment in Slovakia and the EU-27 in %



Source: [19]

Long-term unemployment in Slovakia compared to the EU-27 has long been high; in 2005 in the EU-27 amounted to 4.1 % and in Slovakia it was 11.7 %. Although gradually reduced annually up to 6.5 % in 2009 (EU-27 amounted to 3.0 %), in 2010 it was increased to 9.2 %, and thus we were among the countries with the highest level of long-term unemployment. In 2010 there were 230,800 long-term unemployed people.

Sign of the long-term unemployment is poverty and exclusion from social networks. A long-term unemployed person loses after some time acquired skills and abilities, their re-integration into the labour force is very problematic. The cause of long-term unemployment is often low qualifications or lack of qualification and work experience. For Slovakia, long-term unemployment is one of the most serious socio-economic problems, which causes significant reduction of the quality of life of the unemployed and their families.

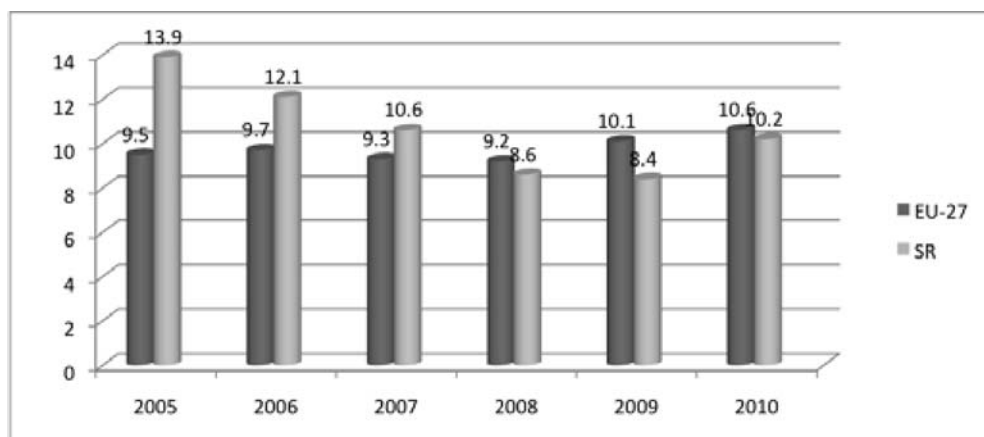
3. 6 Children in Jobless Households

Unemployment negatively affects not only the individual but the entire family system. Children are very sensitive to unemployment of the unemployed. The most commonly observed adverse effects in children of the unemployed are stress due to lack of finance, reduced self-respect and other emotional problems, aggressive behavior, increased risk of injury, and increased alcohol consumption among children of different age groups.

In Slovakia, in 2005 the proportion of people aged 0-17 years living in households where no one worked was 13.9 %. Within the EU-27 the share was significantly lower, 9.5 %. Since 2008, Slovakia has a lower level of this share than the EU27. In 2010 the lowest proportion showed Luxembourg (2.8 %) and highest Ireland (19.6 %), Slovakia reached 10.2 %.

Figure 8

Proportion of People (0-17 years) living in Jobless Households in %



Source: Eurostat

The reduction and loss of financial capacity of households due to unemployment of parents often leads to social isolation of adolescents, change in family relationships, to increased conflict in the family, at school and among peers and to various emotional and health problems. Children in families of unemployed often suffer from unemployment poverty, and have significantly reduced chance to create a healthy, meaningful and quality life.

Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis of selected indicators, we can conclude that Slovakia does not ensure social quality for all citizens. Quality of life most of the Slovak population is a compromise between a relatively small real possibilities, which are mainly determined by the material conditions, a large living aspirations and needs.

In Slovakia, there is a certain group of the population that does not participate sufficiently in social and economic life of society, or is excluded from this life mainly due to lack of funds because of low income or its loss. Although Slovakia is among the EU countries least vulnerable to poverty, this situation did not rule out the fact that in 2011 it faced the risk of poverty for low incomes 13 % of the population, which is about 1 % more than in 2010. The most vulnerable groups are households with two adults and three or more dependent children (32.6 %).

It is the long-term unemployment that has to be considered as the economic problem in terms of achieving social quality for all residents; in 2010 amounted to 9.2 % (in the EU-27 it was 3.9 %), and thus we have ranked among the countries with the highest long-term unemployment. The percentage refers to the fact that 230,800 long-term unemployed people are endangered by poverty; these people have limited access to health care, social services, and so. Long-term unemployment is the most threatening to young people who have not built any work habits, and so they are at risk of not being able to find adequate work and remain in it. Long-term unemployment is a major source of social inequality, which causes various tensions in society; as a result of this, reducing long-term unemployment should be a priority for Slovakia's economic policy.

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