

Slovenia

# Trends, Recent Developments, Active Inclusion and Minimum Resources

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## Introduction

Slovene National Action plan against poverty in social exclusion was submitted to the European Commission in July 2004 and was written for the period 2004 – 2006. At the beginning of 2006 the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs wrote first report on the implementation. The report is published and accessible on the internet.

In 2004 we have written 3 reports in which we analyzed the document, assessed the implementation plan and also presented our independent view on what problems and which groups of people should be considered and paid attention when speaking about social exclusion. There was a significant difference between governmental and our assessment of the exclusion, but there were also some overlaps that offered a good ground for cooperation. Our main criticism on the Slovene NAP/inclusion was about the insufficient recognition of the needs of the most vulnerable. Few groups should be included into the list of the most vulnerable: single parent families, older single persons, single households with low or without income, asylum seekers and migrants, people exposed to precarious work. Problems of the most vulnerable are insufficiently addressed when coming to priorities and measures. Housing needs were not sufficiently addressed (no priorities and specific goals were set) and this is one of the major problems in the country. Homelessness is not considered at all and the problem of evictions should be addressed. The fact that around 25 000 people<sup>1</sup> are at any moment without health care is not addressed when coming to concrete goals and priorities.

The biggest difference between our and governmental assessment of the exclusion concerned gender differences. We claimed that NAP/inclusion insufficiently recognised gender gap and as a consequence there are almost no measures to reduce gender differences and encourage women to enter public sphere.

In 2005 we wrote two reports, the most important was on the local implementation of the NAP. We defined weaknesses and strengths of the implementation and gave some suggestions for improvement.

In recent report we will focus on developments in the last year when the new government introduced very different views on society and with that also different understanding of the welfare state.

## 1. Key trends

Slovenia became a member of the EU in May 2005. It will join a monetary union in 2007 as the first from the 10 new member states. That is the consequence of good economic situation in the country. GDP in 2005 was 3,9% (4,2% in 2004) and inflation was 2,5% (3,6% in 2004)<sup>2</sup>. Population in Slovenia at the end of 2005 was 2 003 358 (981 465 men). From that there were 1 954 390 citizens of the Republic of Slovenia (947 056 men), 24 345 foreigners with permanent residence in Slovenia (15 926 men) and 24 623 foreigners with temporary residence in Slovenia (18 483 men)<sup>3</sup>.

A decline in population stopped. In mid-2005, population of Slovenia exceeded 2 000 000 for the second time (1991). This growth was mainly due to the migrant increment. The population growth is also due to prolonged life expectancy. In Slovenia life expectancy prolonged in last 40 years by approximately 8,5 years – men born in 2003/2004 can expect to reach the age 73,5 and women 81,1. Not only the number but also the age structure of population undergoes substantial changes. A

<sup>1</sup> Source: NAP/incl. 2004-2006, page 11, point 2.2.3, end of the first paragraph.

<sup>2</sup> Slovenian Economic Mirror, No. 3/2006, Statistical appendix.

<sup>3</sup> Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia.

coefficient of age dependence of the young decreased by 38,7% in last 20 years, while the coefficient of age dependence of the elderly increased by almost 47,0%<sup>4</sup>. The Insurance against the long term care Act and a strategy for the protection of elderly by 2010 are in preparation. In 2004 provision of general practitioners improved. As regards health, groups most at risk in Slovenia include: young, certain groups of disabled persons and Roma.

### 1.1. Unemployment

Standardised rate of unemployment (ILO) in 2005 was 6,5% (6,3% in 2004). In December 2005 a total of 92.575 people were registered as unemployed in Slovenia. The average registered unemployment rate was slightly lower than a year ago. The reason why unemployment stopped falling further in 2005 was the significantly fewer deletions from unemployment records that were not related to employment. Together with transfers to other registers there were 16,9% fewer such deletions in 2005 than in 2004.

From 1999 onwards, these deletions significantly reduced the number of registered unemployed. This type of deletion increased notably after the enforcement of the amended Employment and Insurance Against Unemployment Act of 1998 Official Gazette No. 69/98. The new Article 70 of this law introduced by this amendment stipulated in which cases The Employment Service is no longer obliged to record an unemployed person in the unemployment register.

Other main reasons beside people became hired or self-employed can be classified in three groups: inactivity, neglecting duties and other reasons which are more or less status related nature<sup>5</sup>. Apart from the main register of unemployed there is also a separate register. In January 2006 a total of 15.213 unemployed were registered, most of them working disabled, foreigners and redundant from work<sup>6</sup>. Unemployed people from this register are not included into the statistics on unemployment rate in Slovenia. They are long term unemployed, most of them longer than 2 years.

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<sup>4</sup> First annual report on the implementation of the NAP/inclusion 2004-2006. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. February, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Delo, 4. march, 2006, pp. 9.

**Table 1: Characteristic groups of registered unemployment**

Year/month	Average number of registered unemployed persons	Average shares of characteristic groups of registered unemployed (%)					
		Aged under 26	First job seekers	Women	Unemployed for over 1 year	Without vocational qualifications	Aged over 40
1995	121.483	32,2	19,7	46,7	61,9	46,6	34,0
1996	119.799	31,4	19,4	48,1	56,1	47,0	36,6
1997	125.189	29,1	18,3	48,8	57,4	47,1	40,8
1998	126.080	26,3	18,1	49,9	61,7	46,9	46,0
1999	118.951	25,8	18,7	50,6	63,7	47,5	48,5
2000	106.601	23,4	17,9	50,7	62,9	47,2	51,7
2001	101.857	24,1	18,8	50,8	58,9	47,0	50,5
2002	102.635	24,0	19,6	51,2	54,4	47,0	49,4
2003	97.674	26,1	23,2	52,8	48,6	44,2	44,1
2004	92.826	26,2	25,2	53,1	46,2	41,6	42,8
2005	91.889	24,2	24,3	53,8	47,3	40,8	43,6
I-III 2006	93.566	23,2	23,1	53,7	46,6	40,0	44,5

Source: Employment Service of Republic of Slovenia

In the period 2000-2004 the level of registered unemployment decreased in most of the statistical regions. The lowest level of registered unemployment is still recorded in Goriška statistical region. For the period in question, the registered unemployment rate decreased most substantially in Podravje statistical region (by 4.1%). The highest unemployment rate persists in Pomurje statistical region. A comparison between years 2003 and 2004 reveals that the registered unemployment rate decreased most significantly in Spodnje Posavje statistical region, a considerable decrease was also registered in Zasavje statistical region<sup>7</sup>. Eastern parts of Slovenia have a higher unemployment rate than western parts; Zasavje has an above-average youth unemployment; Dolenjska has an above-average share of unskilled unemployment and Gorenjska of those aged 40 and over. The above-average unemployment rate is typical of the regions that used to be important industrial and mining centres. Regions with higher unemployment rates are also the ones with the highest poverty rate. Eastern parts of Slovenia and some parts in the southeast of the country are the poorest parts. There is no data on regional income inequality, while in general inequality in wage distribution increased in the private sector. There is a

<sup>7 7</sup> First annual report on the implementation of the NAP/inclusion 2004-2006. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. February, 2005.

rapid rise in high wages determined by individual contracts and the difference between the lowest and the highest wages is growing (ibid.: 20).

**Table 2: Registered unemployment rates (%) by regional offices in 2004 and 2005**

Regional office	Nov. 04	Dec.04	Jan.05	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July 05	Avg.	Sept.	Okt.	Nov. 05
Celje	13,5	13,5	13,4	13,3	13,3	13,2	13,1	13,1	13,3	13,1	13,0	13,4	13,2
Koper	8,0	7,9	8,3	8,3	8,0	7,8	7,4	7,4	7,4	7,4	7,5	7,9	7,9
Kranj	7,2	7,5	7,5	7,3	7,2	7,2	7,0	6,9	7,2	7,3	7,3	7,6	7,6
Ljubljana	7,4	7,1	7,3	7,3	7,4	7,5	7,4	7,3	7,5	7,6	7,7	7,8	7,8
Maribor	14,0	14,0	14,7	14,5	14,4	14,2	14,0	13,8	14,2	14,1	13,8	14,1	14,1
Murska Sobota	17,0	18,8	18,5	18,4	17,9	17,3	16,7	16,3	16,6	16,5	16,3	16,5	16,7
Nova Gorica	7,5	7,3	7,3	7,2	7,0	7,1	6,9	6,7	7,0	7,2	7,3	7,7	7,6
Novo mesto	7,4	7,5	7,7	7,6	7,5	7,5	7,5	7,5	7,9	7,8	8,3	8,6	8,6
Ptuj	11,4	11,9	12,3	12,9	12,5	12,2	11,7	11,5	11,7	11,4	11,2	11,7	11,8
Sevnica	11,4	11,4	11,9	11,8	11,6	11,2	11,0	10,8	10,9	11,2	11,5	12,1	12,1
Trbovlje	12,9	12,6	13,2	13,3	13,2	13,0	12,8	12,4	12,8	12,8	12,2	12,9	12,4
Velenje	10,6	10,6	10,9	10,9	11,0	10,9	10,8	10,8	10,9	10,6	10,6	10,7	10,6
<b>Slovenia</b>													
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,1</b>	<b>10,1</b>	<b>10,4</b>	<b>10,3</b>	<b>10,2</b>	<b>10,1</b>	<b>9,9</b>	<b>9,8</b>	<b>10,1</b>	<b>10,0</b>	<b>10,0</b>	<b>10,3</b>	<b>10,3</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>8,6</b>	<b>8,7</b>	<b>9,0</b>	<b>9,0</b>	<b>8,8</b>	<b>8,6</b>	<b>8,4</b>	<b>8,2</b>	<b>8,3</b>	<b>8,3</b>	<b>8,3</b>	<b>8,6</b>	<b>8,6</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>11,8</b>	<b>11,8</b>	<b>12,0</b>	<b>12,0</b>	<b>12,0</b>	<b>12,0</b>	<b>11,8</b>	<b>11,8</b>	<b>12,2</b>	<b>12,2</b>	<b>12,1</b>	<b>12,5</b>	<b>12,4</b>

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

### 1.1.1. Unemployment of women

An the average women live 8,5 years longer than men and are better educated. In the study year 2004/2005 there were 57% women amongst all students. 61% of all graduated students are women and 545 on the post gradual level (MA, MSc). On the doctoral level there are 44% of women that successfully finished their study in 2004.

**Table 3: Unemployment rate by gender**

Year/ Quarter	Unemployment rate (in %)		
	Total	Women	Men
1993	9,1	8,3	9,9
1994	9,0	8,4	9,5
1995	7,4	7,0	7,7
1996	7,3	7,0	7,5
1997	7,4	7,6	7,1
1998	7,9	8,1	7,7
1999	7,6	7,9	7,3
2000	7,0	7,3	6,8
2001	6,4	7,0	5,9
2002	6,4	6,8	5,9
2003	6,7	7,1	6,4
2004	6,3	6,9	5,9
2005			
Q1	6,9	7,7	6,1
Q2	5,8	6,1	5,5
Q3	6,3	6,6	6,1

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Women represent 44% of active labour force in Slovenia. The rate of self-employed women is just 28% of all self-employed. The rate of registered unemployment is much higher for women and it was 54,2% in November 2005. There are more women amongst long term unemployed than men. Slovenian society is traditional patriarchal society therefore women are still carrying majority of the responsibilities for household and family. They more often take sick leave for the child, they do less over-time work and they are not promoted to the extent men are. They receive 93% of the gross wage of the men. The biggest differences between men and women are in service branches, where women receive 77% of the salary of the men. Women civil servants receive 94% of the salary of the men<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia – Women's day, 7. 3. 2006.

## 1.2. Poverty

There is a growth in the number of social assistance recipients (see next chapter). A percentage of social assistance recipients increased from 4,4% in 2003 to 4,7% in 2004. Groups the most in risk-of-poverty are women, single parent families (89% of them are mothers with children), elderly women and unemployed men.

**Table 4: Social Cohesion indicators (at-risk-of-poverty rate) for Slovenia (Laeken indicators)**

	Income, excluding income in kind				Income, including income in kind			
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2000	2001	2002	2003
At-risk-of-poverty rate	13,0	12,9	11,9	11,7	11,3	10,6	9,9	10,0
At-risk-of-poverty rate by gender								
Men	12,5	12,4	11,1	10,7	10,5	9,6	8,5	8,6
Women	13,5	13,3	12,6	12,6	12,0	11,6	11,2	11,4
At risk of poverty rate by most common activity status and gender								
Employed	5,0	5,0	4,2	3,9	4,4	4,1	3,2	3,0
Men	5,3	5,4	4,8	4,5	4,6	4,4	3,6	3,2
Women	4,5	4,5	3,5	3,2	4,2	3,7	2,8	2,8
Unemployed	39,5	40,3	39,1	39,2	42,1	40,8	38,4	38,4
Men	41,5	38,8	41,7	40,5	41,6	36,9	39,3	38,8
Women	37,1	42,3	36,2	38,0	42,8	45,8	37,5	38,1
Retired	15,8	15,4	15,7	15,3	15,0	14,5	15,3	14,4
Men	15,3	16,1	15,6	13,9	12,3	11,7	12,1	11,3
Women	16,2	14,9	15,7	16,2	16,9	16,4	17,4	16,4
At-risk-of-poverty rate by household type								
Single household	34,4	33,3	35,7	35,5	36,2	35,2	36,1	35,3
Men	29,9	34,2	38,4	34,3	28,5	27,7	30,5	29,8
Women	36,2	32,9	34,5	36,0	39,3	38,6	38,7	38,0
Single parent household with at list one dependent child	17,5	18,0	14,8	14,3	21,1	19,8	17,2	14,5
At-risk-of-poverty rate by accommodation tenure status								
Owner or rent-free	12,8	12,8	11,5	11,0	10,9	10,2	9,2	9,2
tenant	16,6	14,6	17,6	21,8	16,8	16,2	19,9	23,5
Poverty risk threshold in EURO (Eurostat exchange rate)	3.759	3.978	4.204	4.395	4.148	4.359	4.582	4.724
Relative at-risk-of-poverty gap	21,8	21,6	20,1	19,9	18,52	18,7	18,9	19,7
Inequality of income distribution – Gini coefficient	24,7	24,3	24,0	24,0	22,3	22,0	21,9	22,1

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

**Table 5: Working time needed to buy goods in minutes in 1975, 1983 and 2006**

	1975	1983	2006
1kg of white bread	14min	17min	23min
1kg of beef	1h 56min	2h 22min	52min
1kg of pork	2h 17min	3h 24min	1h 14min
1l milk	15min	17min	6min
1kg of sugar	42min	31min	11min
refrigerator	151h	105h	62h
Television	247h	201h	76h
Car (Zastava 750)	2000h	1959h	1700h
100kw of electricity	3h 50min	4h 20min	1h 54min
1t of coal	22h 50min	38h 20min	38h
rent of flat (60m <sup>2</sup> )	12h 53min	7h 25min	66h 32min

Source: Večer online, Friday 12. May 2006

Time is calculated on the bases of the average monthly wage that was in February 2006 176.757 (737 EURO). Although we live much cheaper in most respects than in 1975, the striking difference is in housing expenses. Although social transfers have significant impact on the lowering of social inequality, the monthly sum of social assistance is still below the at-risk-of-poverty rate. For the single member household where the person is unemployed, social assistance is the only source of income. The person also has the right to subsidised housing, but the rest of expenses has to be paid from social assistance. With the changes in housing policy, payment for the accommodation is much higher than it was before and also other expenses are higher. Although a lot of research has been done on poverty and inequality in Slovenia,<sup>9</sup> there is a lack of research that will go beyond the statistics on poverty. We don't know anything about the actual living of poor or their strategies for surviving, about the impact of poverty on education and similar. Such research would contribute to more adequate strategies on inclusion.

One of the most significant features of the transition in Slovenia was social stratification and an increase in social inequalities. The differences increased and the process is still underway. At least three processes had the major influence on stratification: denationalisation, privatisation and increasing intolerance. While the first two processes caused inequality, the third strengthened it and legitimised it (Dragoš, Leskošek 2003). The distribution of income in 1983 was very different from that in 1997-1999.

**Table 6. The effect of denationalisation on the increasing income inequality**

Decile	Income 1983		Income 1993		Income 1997-1999	
	from employment	in kind	from employment	in kind	from employment	in kind
10% poorest	2.2	2.2	1.9	1.4	1.8	0.3
10% reaches	17.5	17.6	21.2	67.6	21.3	62.5

Source: Silva Čeh: The decade of stratification. Delo, 5 June, 2001: 16.

In Slovenia in 1998, 60% of total household income was generated by employment, 6% by self-employment, 25% came from pensions, and 6% from social benefits. The share of social benefits increased by 1.5 percentage points from 1993. The income position of households with unemployed members worsened between 1993 and 1998 and the same happened to the families with children up to 18 years of age (Human development report 2002/03: 30).

<sup>9</sup> The main research study was done by Tine Stanovnik and Nada Stropnik from the Faculty of the Economics. Their research is the main source for most of the governmental documents on the issue of poverty and inequality.

## 2. Recent developments

### 2.1. Economic and social reforms

Recent conservative government is conducting extended reforms that will fundamentally change the society although reforms are most often presented as economic. They will also have an influence on the welfare system. Some of the Slovene scientists and researchers are claiming that reforms are revolutionary because of their fundamentally different basic orientations about society, values and the perception of equality, solidarity and social justice<sup>10</sup>.

To carry out the reform government established a new Office for Growth and named the minister Jože P. Damjan, which resigned after being three months on the position. Dr. Jože P. Damjan is a representative of a group of Slovene neo-liberal economists and was very involved into creation of the basic ideas and documents on the reforms.

Office for Growth has two departments: Department for economic reforms and development and Department for social reforms and development. Basic documents for the reforms are Slovenia's Development Strategy, Structural reforms in Slovenia, The framework of social and economic reforms for increasing the welfare in Slovenia, Priorities in the field of economic and social reforms in Slovenia, Reform program for achieving the Lisbon strategy goals and The National Development Plan 2007-2013<sup>11</sup>. All document are presented as adopting to the EU standards and as the process of modernisation.

The most controversial ideas that triggered massive<sup>12</sup> resistance in public are following:

- Flat tax
- Labour market flexibility
- Lowering the level of social security
- Privatisation of public services

#### 2.1.1. Flat tax

The basic idea of the flat tax (for VAT, personal income tax and profit tax) is that it is more just or fair than progressive taxation. Progressive taxation forces those who are successful, educated and willing to work to pay for those who are not and are often avoiding employment. They enjoy advantages of the welfare state and do not contribute to the common wealth.

According to Joze P. Damijan, former minister for growth, a 20% rate is the most optimal. Flat tax rate should be introduced after Slovenia adopts the euro, expectedly at the beginning of 2007, in order to avoid major economic shocks that could derail the adoption process." The government should be aware that the tax reform would require that other reforms be undertaken: social security payments, health care, etc," said Damijan. The study shows that the state stands to lose around SIT 200bn (EUR 834m)

<sup>10</sup> Tonči Kuzmanič, Zoran Kanduč, Round table on the reforms, Cankarjev dom, 30. 1. 2006.

<sup>11</sup> All documents are published on the web page of the Office for Growth: [www.svr.gov.si/index.php?id=908&L=1](http://www.svr.gov.si/index.php?id=908&L=1)

<sup>12</sup> In November 2005 trade Unions organized demonstrations against some of the ideas of the reforms, in April 2006, Student organization organized demonstrations against some of the aspects of reforms, different associations, faculties, institutes and other organizations are organizing round tables and forums on negative effects of reforms etc.

in income tax and payroll tax as a consequences of the lower tax rate. However, some of this can be made up with greater tax revenues from VAT, while the state will also save on taxes it has to pay for public sector employees. According to head of the Council for Strategic Development Mičo Mrkaić, the flat tax rate would prove conducive for economic growth<sup>13</sup>.

One of the leading Slovene economist Jože Menciger proves those arguments as misleading. He says that the idea of progressive income tax is consistent with vertical equity principle (un-equal tax for un-equals), the ability to-pay principle (decreasing marginal utility of money) and it is also in accordance with the benefit principle (assuming that most pure public goods benefit reach people more than they benefit poor people). What, however is an appropriate level of progressiveness is a matter of society-specific value system. Flat rate on VAT and personal income tax will increase inequalities because it redistributes wealth<sup>14</sup>. The argument of the reformists on inequality is, that it will be reduced with social transfers, but in the strategy the expenditure for welfare benefits is planned to be lower.

Equality is one of the fundamental principles of the welfare state. Edward Bradbent<sup>15</sup> states that equality has always been seen as the core democratic value, and for a brief period in the twentieth century it actually became the guiding principle for many governments. North Atlantic democracies consciously adopted policies that were radically different from those of the pre-war years. They politicized the distributional struggle of the market place. In the post-war decades, politicians from a variety of ideological backgrounds were no longer willing to accept the inequality and instability inherent to a market economy. They did not accept market to rule the state. Market has to be regulated if social stability and the rhetoric of equal citizenship were to have real meaning.

Welfare state is therefore not just a package of welfare benefits, but is the way how democracy is constructed. Introduction of the flat tax brings another set of values, where inequality is presented as just. The idea behind is, that each individual has choices and one has to accept consequence of taking them. In this sense flat tax is typical neo-liberal idea. A resistance to the idea can also be interpreted as a support to the welfare state.

### 2.1.2. Labour market flexibility

Labour market flexibility has different meanings and not all of them are targeted by the opponents. Most of the criticism is on the flexibility that means less labour rights, weaker protection of workers and greater precariousness. The debate on labour flexibility is the European debate and there are numerous different initiatives across Europe to support or to oppose to the concept. One of them is also French demonstrations when employment of the first time job seekers is in question.

Slovene trade unions<sup>16</sup> are emphasising that labour rights are results of long and hard negotiations between social partners. Negotiations for the last collective agreement lasted for three years and the final result was a compromise of all sides. They oppose to following proposed changes of the labour legislation:

- Abolition of the bonus on long working period and long time employment in one organisation
- The attempt to maximise indemnity money in case of dismissal
- Shorter time to give notice (1 month)
- Less regulated collective dismissal
- Greater freedom of employers to determine work conditions, including length of employment

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<sup>13</sup> Public relation and media office of the republic of Slovenia, <http://www.uvi.si/eng/slovenia/publications/slovenia-news/2098/2118/> 11. 5. 2006

<sup>14</sup> Jože Menciger, *Can a Flat Tax rate Contribute to Growth and Welfare?* IB revija, 2/2006: 81-89.

<sup>15</sup> Bradbent Edward (ed.) (2001), *Democratic Equality: What Went Wrong*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

<sup>16</sup> Trade Union Pergam: [www.sindikrat-pergam.si/doc/pergamova\\_stalisca.doc](http://www.sindikrat-pergam.si/doc/pergamova_stalisca.doc)

- Equalisation of working years of men and women
- Restrictions for the sick leave (in case of longer sick leave, worker can lose the job)

Slovene Statistical office did a survey on labour market flexibility<sup>17</sup>. Majority of employed persons included into the survey were employed full time. Only 9% of them would rather work part time. A shorter working time is more convenient for women and for those with higher level of education. Among those who already work part time, 59% would rather work full time.

If employed persons had the possibility to choose between shorter working time with the same salary and same working time with a higher salary 69% would decide for the second option. Shorter working time for the same salary is more popular among young persons and especially among those with higher education. In the last 12 months 38% of employed were involved in additional education programme. For 71% employer paid for the additional training. Simple and more routine work prevails in the case of women.

As a rule employed persons work longer than they are supposed to work in line with their employment contract. Quarter of the respondents work more than 45 hours a week. 32% of employed work in shifts and 7% work on Sunday on regular bases. If an employer offered workers different time schedule, majority (58%) would prefer not to change existing working time.

### *2.1 3. Lowering the level of social security*

Ministry of labour, Family and Social Affairs in the Draft version of the National social protection strategy 2006-2010 states that they will lower percentage of the GDP for social transfers from 0,88 in 2006 to 0,73 in 2010<sup>18</sup>. Having in mind governmental plans on flat tax and as a result greater inequalities it is clear that the government will not balance them with social transfers. In the contrary, inequalities will be interpreted as a personal failure of those on the margins. The government stated in the document "Priorities in the field of economic and social reforms in Slovenia in 2006" that: "Each individual should bear in mind that the more one invests in one's own education and learning, the highest will be the return, the highest the wages and social security"<sup>19</sup>. This is a moral statement that actually misses the right address. Those, who are on the margins, are there because of the social exclusion, less choices and opportunities, as a result of discriminations or other reasons that they can not influence. Social exclusion itself is a social and not psychological concept.

In the same document we can read that the plan for 2006 is to set up more equitable and motivating system of social transfers. If the measures that will be undertaken in 2006 will prove to be effective, the number of unemployed will have declined significantly. There is also a warning that social rights will not be impaired with those changes but merely relocate.

First changes of the social assistance are already being undertaken and they are lowering the level of social rights. In the case of employment the social assistance recipient will immediately lose the right to it; when the person has a permanent residency or lives with someone who is not his/her relative and has an income, will lose the benefits or will get appropriate lower amount of money; social assistance recipients will have the obligation to accept any kind of activity as a working occupation to preserve working habits, be in touch with the community, get new skills what will increase his/her choices for

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<sup>17</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. Rapid reports, 15. September 2004, No. 246. The statistical survey was co-financed by the European Commission.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Social Protection Bulletin, 2006, no. 25, pp. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Priorities in the field of economic and social reforms in Slovenia in 2006. Office for Growth, 2005.

employment. That will increase inclusion into society and they will contribute to the common wealth<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand there is an increase in social assistance for large families.

#### 2.1.4. *Privatisation of public services*

Private-public partnership is strongly emphasised. This partnership applies to sectors like railways, roads, bridges, power supply, public transport and services like education, health-care, residential care for elderly, cultural centres, sport facilities, prisons, etc<sup>21</sup>. The government is also planning to introduce fees for studying at the undergraduate level (post gradual level has to be paid already).

One of the service sector that already introduced privatisation is health care and there is quite a lot of debate on efficiency and effectiveness. One of the arguments for the privatisation is greater quality but there is no data that will prove that. Minister for health is claiming that privatisation will increase patient satisfaction, opportunities to choose services and will improve accessibility of health care. One of the economists that cooperated in creation of the governmental documents on reforms Mičo Mrkaić claims, that health care system will be more successful only in case it will be well regulated and controlled what is not a case in recent privatisation.

The debate on privatisation is complex and we think that it will still develop in near future - probably when the first results or evaluations on the privatisation of the health-care system will be available in public. We do not know how far is the privatisation of other sectors and services.

#### 2.1.5. *Conclusion*

We will conclude with quotation of the prof. dr. Jože Mencinger: "The proposed Reforms was introduced to carry out Strategy for Development, a national counterpart of the renewed Lisbon Strategy. In addition reform should put an end on gradualism, which has dominated the transition and development of Slovenia since its independence and should replace it with a new "paradigm of development" rooted in neo-liberalism and supply side economy. The most often utilized argument for the Reform, which is accepted also by those who object to most of its content, is its urgency. While admitting that Slovenia was very successful with high and most stable levels of growth accompanied by internal and external balance, low unemployment rate and decreasing inflation, reformers assert that such development is not sustainable due to the slow restructuring process and bad development policy."<sup>22</sup> He continues to prove that economic reforms are not needed at all and we can assume that the real target of the reforms is not the economy but the society.

Neo-liberalism is a set of believes, values and norms about the society that can be reached with free market. To establish conditions for it, it is necessary to destroy welfare state. It is true that it has to be destroyed because to reach the goal of the state withdrawal from the regulations of the market, but it is even more important to destroy basic values and principles of the welfare state – social justice, solidarity and equality. Those are the collective principles of the care for the other, regardless who the other is. Neo-liberalism can not be implemented in such systems, because it needs the environment of the pure individualism and competitiveness. Because of that we can have serious doubts about the further intentions of the government in the field of social inclusion, especially because of the intensive process

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<sup>20</sup> Web page of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs:

[http://www.gov.si/mddszi/index.php?&i1=MDDSZ&i2=slo&i3=1&i4=spj&i5=ter\\_lst\\_021&i10=artic&i12=58B827863296DA80C125703C005BDEF5&i15=on\\_Gnovica&j1=iso-8859-2&j2=content&j3=gids&j4=](http://www.gov.si/mddszi/index.php?&i1=MDDSZ&i2=slo&i3=1&i4=spj&i5=ter_lst_021&i10=artic&i12=58B827863296DA80C125703C005BDEF5&i15=on_Gnovica&j1=iso-8859-2&j2=content&j3=gids&j4=)

<sup>21</sup> Reform Program for Achieving the Lisbon Strategy Goals. Republic of Slovenia, October 2005, pp. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Jože Mencinger, *Can a Flat Tax Rate Contribute to Growth and Welfare?* IB revija, 2/2006: 82.

of reaching a new political consensus on reforms. New consensus (or new social contract) is in public the most often interpreted as an agreement on destroying the welfare state and introducing neo-liberalism.

## 2.2 Main groups at risk

### 2.2.1. Erased (*Ex-Yugoslavs and Roma*)

Erased is the term that is used to denote 18,305 people that were erased from the register of permanent residents of Slovenia, because they didn't apply for Slovenian citizenship. Almost all of them were from the former Yugoslavia. They should have the right to continue living in the country as foreigners with all the rights that arise from the permanent resident status. But they were erased without any official notice or legal document, without any information on that act, and without any legal ground for such an act. They lost all of their rights literary overnight; many of them lost jobs, pensions and other allowances; their documents were destroyed and many of them remained in Slovenia without any legal document, because they couldn't return to their county of origins either because of the war or other reasons.<sup>23</sup>

The Slovene Constitutional Court brought two decisions in which it was stated that the act of erasing people from the register of permanent residence was illegal, had no ground in Slovenian legislation and was unconstitutional. Therefore all the erased residents should be recognized their rights in retrospect, from the date the illegal act of erasure took place. In the 1995 report, the Slovene Ombudsman wrote that the act was illegal and caused injustices that had to be repaired immediately because the consequences were fatal for most of the erased residents. The erased residents were included in all subsequent reports as well. In 2002 the Association of the Erased Residents was founded and since then hundreds of stories have been told about their lives after 1992 when they lost all their rights. They started to raise awareness and claimed their rights back. With their voice now heard in the public sphere, they also provoked a broad and vigorous campaign against them that was again run by some right wing political parties and some civil society groups. These groups collected a sufficient number of signatures to realize the referendum<sup>24</sup> on the rights of the erased residents, and they won. The vast majority of people voted against recognizing the rights of the erased people. 31,45% of residents voted and 94,68% were against the rights of the erased<sup>25</sup>. The whole campaign drew on nationalism and on the equation of the whole group of erased residents with the Yugoslav army that attacked Slovenia in 1991.

The lives of the erased residents were very difficult. This was the group that was exposed to precarious work because they didn't have the right to social benefits, they lost pensions, they could not participate in the non-profit housing schemes etc. There is no research on their social and economic status and they are not included in the statistics on poverty, because many of them still don't have any status or have the status of foreigners with permanent residence.

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<sup>23</sup> Krivic M. "Post scriptum". In: Dedić J., Jalušič V., Zorn J. (2003) *Erased: organised innocence and the politics of exclusion*. Ljubljana: Peace Institute.

<sup>24</sup> For the referendum in Slovenia 40 000 signatures have to be collected. At the municipality level 5% of the residents with the right to vote have to sign the demand for the referendum. Also 30 signatures of the members of the parliament are enough for the referendum.

<sup>25</sup> [www.rvk.si](http://www.rvk.si) 23. 8. 2004

### 2.2.2. Muslims (first and second generation migrants)

Muslims are a minority in Slovenia. There are 2.4% of people who declare themselves according to the religious affiliation as Muslims.<sup>26</sup> It is also very rare to see a Muslim woman dressed according to the religious rules. Muslims were in the past an invisible ethnic group with no voice heard in the public arena. In Slovenia they don't have any religious building. When they celebrate the important religious days, they have to hire a place large enough for the ritual and usually that is a sports centre. The struggle for the mosque is 30 years old and it intensified in the last two years. If we take a look at the history of the efforts to build the mosque we can see that the major argument against it was the city planning of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. During the 30 years there were at least 6 locations in the city designated for the building of the mosque, but all were eventually ruled out as improper for such a building. In 2001 the debate was restarted, because a new location was found but the decision had to be taken by the city council. Despite strong opposition, the plan was adopted. As a result, some of the city councillors together with civil society groups organised the collection of signatures for a referendum. They collected 11 898 signatures within a very short time and the prevailing public opinion was against the mosque. The referendum, however, did not take place because the Constitutional Court decided that it was unconstitutional. But the debate influenced the attitude towards the Muslims that is now very negative and denies them equality with the Catholic majority. Muslims are one of the groups that are denied the place and voice in the public arena. They experience exclusion not just because they are denied the right to exercise their religion but also because they are denied the right to organise and to be active in society.

### 2.2.3. Roma

There is no exact data on the number of Roma living in Slovenia. The Romani Union Slovenia claims that there are 82 small communities of Roma throughout Slovenia<sup>27</sup> of whom there are between 7000 and 10000<sup>28</sup>. The government adopted *The Program of the measures to support inclusion of Roma in 1995* that focused mainly on education, basic infrastructure (water supply and electricity), employment and social assistance.<sup>29</sup> In the Annual report of the European Commission 2000 there were some suggestions on an improvement of the status of Roma in the country. The main focus should be on the law that will encourage inclusion of Roma into society. As a result of that Slovenia changed the Local Government Law (Official Gazette RS, no. 51/2002) and gave the legal grounds for Roma representatives in the local governments of the 19 municipalities. The major changes are made in the field of education where special program was recently adopted on the inclusion of Roma into the primary education<sup>30</sup>.

Despite all the efforts of the government xenophobia, intolerance and hatred against the Roma population has been increasing year by year, especially in the region of Dolenjska (south-east of Slovenia). People in that region have organised to guard their villages and weekend cottages, because they claim they are afraid of the Roma. Recently there has been a vigilante attack on one of the Roma community, because people believe that they have right to "protect themselves"<sup>31</sup>. In the bomb attack two Roma women were killed. The main argument against Roma is their abuse of social assistance (they don't want to work, because the state supports them for nothing), criminal activity (driving cars

<sup>26</sup> [www.stat.si/popis2002/gradivo/2-169.pdf](http://www.stat.si/popis2002/gradivo/2-169.pdf) 23. 8. 2004

<sup>27</sup> [http://24ur.com/naslovnica/slovenija/2004523\\_2040751.php?Acl=p4](http://24ur.com/naslovnica/slovenija/2004523_2040751.php?Acl=p4) 23. 8. 2004

<sup>28</sup> Joint Inclusion memorandum Slovenia 2003, pg. 12

<sup>29</sup> <http://evropa.gov.si/evropomocnik/question/809-168/> 23. 8. 2004

<sup>30</sup> [www.mszs/slo/solstvo/razvoj-solstva/enake-moznosti/romi.asp](http://www.mszs/slo/solstvo/razvoj-solstva/enake-moznosti/romi.asp) 23. 8. 2004

<sup>31</sup> [http://24ur.com/naslovnica/slovenija/20040518\\_204534.php?Acl=p6](http://24ur.com/naslovnica/slovenija/20040518_204534.php?Acl=p6)

without the driving licence and without respecting safety regulations; stealing, robbing and threatening; carrying weapons and shooting), laziness and dirtiness (they ruin the clean environment, they burn things and they don't wash themselves) and many others.

We also have to emphasise that in last two years the efforts of the state to improve position of Roma in Slovenia strengthened and in the last chapter we are using some of those efforts as an example of good practice.

#### *2.2.4. Older people*

The households of single elderly people have the highest poverty rate. In 1999, 23.5% of single persons aged 65 and more lived in poverty.<sup>32</sup> The percentage of older women living in poverty is higher than that of men. Because of the ageing society, there is a need for a new and long-term services for the elderly. In the last ten years, these services changed and were adapted to the changed needs of the elderly. But at the same time various associations of the elderly are stating that as a group they feel "used and abused and discriminated".<sup>33</sup> There is also inequality between the elderly in the residential homes and those that stay at home and receive services according to their individual needs. While the health care costs for the former are covered from the health insurance, this is not the case with the latter. Although they receive the same health services, they have to pay for them (Delo, 19. 6. 2004). In the same article published in Delo, we can read that the state is preparing a plan for a special, long term social and health care insurance for the people who live alone and need a long term care in their old age.

The new Law on long term care insurance is now at its final stage and it will help to improve the position of the elderly. There is also an increasing number of residential homes supported by the state.

#### *2.2.5. People with disabilities, learning difficulties and mental health problems*

These three groups are put together because they experience similar exclusions and most of them need long-term care or assistance. A common feature is inclusion in different non-profit associations that are more or less powerful and also create tensions between themselves. The major source of money for some of them is the Lottery: 40 % of the money from the Lottery goes to some of the associations for disability and some humanitarian organisations. These organisations are also in control of the foundation (FIHO) that takes care of the flow of money – from tendering to monitoring.<sup>34</sup> Organisations that are excluded from that circle are in a constant struggle for survival although many of them are very innovative, have very good programmes on inclusion and also provoke broad public debate on the status and the role of the disabled in society.

Recently a draft version of the report "Accessibility of Education and Employment for the People with Intellectual Disability" was issued.<sup>35</sup> The report is a very good overview of the field. It focuses on legislation and its impact on the lives of the people concerned and their choices for the participation in society. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> *Human development report: 2002/03*. Ljubljana: Institute for macroeconomic Analysis and Development.

<sup>33</sup> Round table »Intolerance«. Women's Forum: Šestica, 6. 7. 2004.

<sup>34</sup> The Court of Auditors, as a result of the inspection at FIHO, found that there were some major irregularities. The list of these was similar to what some of the nongovernmental organisations have been repeating for years when advocating for equal opportunities and inclusion of the disabled (STA, 16. 4. 2004).

<sup>35</sup> EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) in cooperation with the Mental Disability Advocacy Program. Open Society Institute, Budapest. Slovene partner: Dr. Darja Zaviršek. Results are used with the permission of the author.

- The terminology has to be changed – the current one has negative connotations. Terms like “mentally disturbed” or “mentally retarded” have no place in the contemporary understanding of the human rights and human dignity. Also the term “child” has to be replaced with the term “person” in the Law on the Social Protection of Children with Mental and Physical Disability.
- The number of beds in institutional care has to be reduced and the number of community based settings have to grow
- Committees for the assessment of children have to change: assessment can only be done by the people who have known the child for a longer time and parents should have the equal position in power as professionals.
- The practice of recruiting ethnic minorities children to the separate schools with an adopted program<sup>36</sup> has to be stopped. This applies especially to Roma children.
- The process of de-categorisation has to be possible. If someone can acquire it, it must be possible to lose it as well.
- An independent advocate has to be introduced that will stand for the interests of the person towards all others involved, including parents or relatives.
- Special support has to be offered to disabled youths for the transition from education to labour.

The same can also apply to people with mental health problems. Psychiatric diagnoses prevent them from being employed and once they are retired because of an illness, it is not possible to go back to work even if they feel capable of doing so. Different associations are also claiming that a law on community mental health is needed. It has been in the process of drafting for almost ten years now and it is still not in the parliamentary procedure. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.

#### 2.2.6. *Women and single mothers*

The statistics show that women are more at risk of poverty than men. Before social transfers were effected in 1999, 19.7% of men and 21.3% of women were at risk of poverty. After the social transfers of 1999, 13.0 of men and 14.0 of women were at risk of poverty. The poverty rate according to the household type in 1999 was the highest among the single persons aged 65 and over - it was 23.5%. In the second place are the households with one parent and children over 16 years of age. The poverty rate here is 19.9%.<sup>37</sup> Single women households account for slightly less than 90% of all single parent households. Single mothers are therefore the group that is most exposed to poverty. Part of the reason for their marginal position is discrimination they experience as single parents. That can be illustrated with the public discourse that developed few years ago and influenced the status of single mothers and also lesbian parents.

In the year 2000 referendum was held on the Law on Medical Treatment of Sterility and Biomedical Fertilisation.<sup>38</sup> This law included an article that specifically referred to the right of the single women to receive this treatment, which was the point opposed by many. Despite the campaign against the referendum on the rights of the minority (single women in this case), the referendum was held and single women were denied the right with the vast majority of votes. 35,6% of residents voted and 72,36 were against the right of single women to receive the treatment<sup>39</sup>. The debate influenced the status of

<sup>36</sup> Previously known as special schools for the children with mental disability.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Human development report 2002/03, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> In the old law, single women could get medical help if they had problems with sterility and wanted a child; in the changed version of the same law these kinds of treatment are meant just for married couples or couples living together for a longer time.

<sup>39</sup> [www.rvk.si](http://www.rvk.si) 23. 8. 2004

single women and single mothers in society. Single mothers are seen as not being proper parents and, as we will see later in the text, they are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society.

One of the most dangerous impacts of these ideologies is the one that they experience in connection with access to housing. In the Regulations of the criteria for solidarity housing<sup>40</sup> from 1992 there was a section on the so called “young families” who were granted additional points because they had less choice to buy their own flat. This measure was aimed at promoting and supporting family life among other things. Single parent families were not eligible to get them because they were not regarded as families.<sup>41</sup>

The results of a small-scale research cannot be generalised, but they provide at least partial information showing that homelessness and poverty are the biggest problems of women with children after they get divorced.<sup>42</sup> 42% of all women left all their property and possessions to their husbands and departed taking just some essential things, like school books for children, cloths and similar. 38% of women told that their financial situation deteriorated after they divorced. Problems with employment were reported by 13% of women; 35% of them were without accommodation and stayed with their parents or friends for a while.

We still don't have a law on violence against women<sup>43</sup>. Domestic violence is the main reason for women to break the relationship. They have very poor choices when they decide to do so. They don't have easy access to housing; they can only go to a shelter or to an emergency accommodation, which usually means a room for a single parent family.

### 2.2.7. Children and youth

15.3% of all unemployed are youths and the majority of them are waiting for the first employment.<sup>44</sup> There is a gender difference; the share of young women is higher than the share of young men. Because of the lack of education and vocational training, many of them turn into the long-term unemployed. The most critical group is the one that experiences the “second generation” deprivation. These are youths that live in the families where one or both parents are long term unemployed. They grow up in poverty, which is a situation that influences the choice of education and employment available to them. They should be accorded special attention and support.

There are also insufficient job opportunities for low educated people, especially youths. Paid work provides safety and comfort and gives opportunities for proper accommodation, and once people reach that stage they more easily return to education. There are some very good models of short-term vocational training in some European countries, for example in Finland, Netherlands and elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> The employment market is now too narrow and doesn't allow much choice for people without education.

The protection of children from being mistreated by their parents is insufficient. Children that experience domestic violence experience the same types of deprivation as their mothers. They live in poor housing, usually shelters, or they experience hidden homelessness. They also live in poverty and exclusion. It

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<sup>40</sup> Current legislation no longer includes such form of housing, but some of the criteria are still valid.

<sup>41</sup> Leskošek V. (1997), Discrimination of »unmarried«. *Mladina*, 28/29.

<sup>42</sup> Tanko, Turk (2003), Razveza zakonske zveze in kakovost urejanja posledic v občini Ribnica. (Divorce and the quality of life) Diplomaska naloga, Fakulteta za socialno delo.

<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs is preparing national guidelines for prevention of family/domestic violence which should be adopted by the Government of RS until the end of year 2006.

<sup>44</sup> *Joint memorandum on social inclusion of Slovenia*. Brussels, 18 December 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Jobs like motorbikes or bicycles repair and similar.

should be recognised that for the single mothers the struggle for survival is much harder than for the families with two parents; therefore, special attention should be paid to them. This refers especially to housing, employment, childcare and social assistance. Children and youths from single parent families should get support for education.

Special attention should be paid to ethnic minorities and asylum seekers' children. There were cases in Ljubljana when parents didn't allow their children to visit the same class in a primary school attended by ethnic minorities children. Some schools are therefore "ethnically clean" schools. There has been no research done on the discrimination against ethnic minorities children in education, but there were some articles dealing with the issue (Zaviršek, Škerjanc 2000).

The childcare system is still of high quality with a broad network of easily accessible kindergartens that are subsidised for parents with low income. There is certain pressure on the mothers to leave their jobs and stay at home<sup>46</sup>. The public construction of motherhood differentiates between the good and bad mothers and it contributes to the domestication of women.

### *2.2.8 Asylum seekers, migrants, people without papers*

Slovenia experienced a wave of illegal migrants a few years ago. Before that there were nearly 60,000 refugees from the Balkan wars in Slovenia, and the number of asylum seekers and people without papers has been increasing recently. Many of them don't want to stay in the country because Slovenia is not so highly economically developed to be attractive for migrants. Slovenia first created asylum policy in 1995 and adopted the Law on Asylum in 1999 (Official Gazette RS, 61-291/1999). From 1995 till 2003 there were 13.655 requests for the asylum and just 74 were solved positively<sup>47</sup>. In the year 2002 there were 6.926 people treated because of the illegal crossing the border and in 2003 there were 5.018 such cases<sup>48</sup>. There is no data how many of them are still living in the country.

The attitude towards all three groups is the same as in the case of the erased residents. There were different civil initiatives that were fighting against all three groups. There were suggestions to "close" the border, to immediately return them to their countries of origins; they were accused of being criminals, and even the term "cultural pollution" was used.<sup>49</sup> There were several research studies on the lives of those people and on how they were treated by the state. Some of these research studies have been published; round tables were organised and there were some protests to protect human rights of the asylum seekers and people without papers.

It is important to regulate legal status and the rights of immigrants. This should comprise measures aimed at regulating their residence permits, securing of equal opportunities and legal protection against discrimination, clear definition of the procedure and possibilities of acquiring citizenship. This should enable immigrants to feel safe in a new country. Employment is one of the main elements of integration, since it enables economic independence and creates more possibilities for interaction with members of the majority society. In addition, ensuring adequate housing for immigrants, meaning non-discriminatory access to apartments, is another area that should be regulated by integration policy. Integration policy must also ensure non-discriminatory access to medical services. Similarly, integration policy should enable immigrants to preserve and develop their own cultural, religious and linguistic identity (Bešter in Pajnik, Zimic 2003: 262)

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<sup>46</sup> Major of the local community Lenart wanted to limit the access to kindergarten for those children whose parents are unemployed.

<sup>47</sup> [www.sigov.si/mnz/si/13334.php](http://www.sigov.si/mnz/si/13334.php) 23. 8. 2004

<sup>48</sup> [www.policija.si](http://www.policija.si) 23. 8. 2004

<sup>49</sup> Detention centres for the people without papers were named »Centre for the removal of foreigners«.

### 2.2. 9. Housing

In 2001/02, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Department for Research of Social Welfare, and the Urban Planning Institute conducted the survey "Housing policy – generating or mitigating social problems" for the municipality of Ljubljana. They did the comparison between the NGOs definition of vulnerable groups regarding their need for adequate housing, and ones that are defined in different governmental documents. NGOs definition is the following (Boškić, Filipović 2002):

- Ill people, people with mental health problems.
- Homeless people.
- Unemployed people or with an unemployed family member.
- Single parent families.
- Disabled people or families with a disabled member.
- People without citizenship, without papers, without permanent residence permit, ethnic minorities.
- Young families.
- Some groups of youth.
- Pregnant single women.
- The poor without income or with low income.
- Single people.
- Single elderly retired people.
- Convicts after they come from prison.
- Women who are experiencing violence and abuse.
- Single mothers after they divorce.
- People on drugs.

The most vulnerable are ethnic minorities, the poor, single parent families, elderly, women victims of violence, disabled people and people with mental health problems. The main reasons for housing problems are:

- Evictions.
- Privatisation and the lack of legal protection from the new owners.
- Problems with paying rent because of low income.
- Landlords abusing tenants.
- Generational conflict when living in the same or a too small flat etc.

The research also showed that all the vulnerable groups have very weak access to proper housing. New housing capacities are very low; almost all are built for profit and for owners. People who can't buy a flat or rent it on the market virtually have no chance of obtaining it. Therefore a special attention to that issue has to be paid because, as we know, housing is a basic condition for decent and human life. It gives people safety and security; it is the basis or the starting point for the fulfilment of other human needs.<sup>50</sup>

### 2.2.10. Health

There are four leading causes of deaths in Slovenia: cardiovascular diseases, neoplasms, respiratory diseases and physical injuries. Slovenia also has one of the highest suicide rates among European countries. Over the last thirty years, the number of suicides per 100,000 people has oscillated around 30. Males are 3.5 times more likely than females to commit suicide. The suicide rate is higher in the

<sup>50</sup> Mandič S. (ed.)(1999), *Housing Rights: Homelessness and other housing risks of the vulnerable groups*. Ljubljana: VŠSD.

regions with higher unemployment. There is also less trust in medical services than a decade ago. The satisfaction with medical service was the highest in 1981 and then declined. Uncertainty increases with education. There is a 53% level of trust among people with only basic education, and merely 39 percent among people with the university degree (Human development report "2002/03: 60-64).

The health system enormously changed during the last decade. From the public health system we came to the mixed private-public system that is still "in transition." There are two types of health insurance: one is compulsory and goes directly from the salary and the other part is voluntary and is paid separately. There is no clear information for the general public what is covered from the compulsory part and what from the voluntary. Sometimes there are additional payments needed for the services or for medications. People that are unemployed are insured as individuals in the municipality where they have permanent residence but only if they have Slovenian citizenship. Foreigners must have permanent residence and they have to be employed to get the right to health care. They can't insure themselves in the case of unemployment.

In 2002, a special medical service was opened in Ljubljana for the persons without medical insurance. In the year 2003 there were 8,101 visits of this service (in the year 2004 8,262 visits), among them 32 pregnant women (Ljubljana has 270,000 habitants). This is a very serious sign for the state to start questioning the health care system. Careful analyses should be done to answer the basic questions of why all these people don't have medical insurance, why they are not involved in the regular medical services and how to include them in the system? It is also necessary to know how many people are excluded from the health system in the rest of the country.

#### *2.2.11. Education*

The education system in Slovenia was one of the rare that didn't change fundamentally as regards access to education. All the basic rights to education have been preserved although some of these were slightly changed in the last ten years. But the school system itself went through major changes. In July 2004 the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport introduced a new program on the integration of Roma that was promoted in collaboration with the Association of Roma.

There are several problems that need further examination:

1. Several research projects on drop-out in education are currently underway. The results are still not available, but drop out is a recognised problem that influences the future life careers of youths.
2. Not enough is known about the accessibility of education for the inhabitants of rural areas and for ethnic minorities.
3. The third issue that should be more carefully examined is the case of students that have to pay for their study; in Slovenia university education is free of charge for all who have reached certain number of points in the secondary schools. The students that are not in this quota have to pay for the study. Head of the University of Ljubljana, Prof. Dr. Mencinger, strongly opposes such system and argues that it is unjust. In his opinion the paying students come from poorer environments and have fewer chances than the ones that are included in the regular study. His claims must be researched and system changed if found wrong.

Also, anti-discrimination policy has to be adopted, implemented and monitored<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> The Republic of Slovenia has adopted:

- Act in Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (OJ RS 59/2002)
- Act Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment (OJ RS 50/2004)
- Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2005 – 2013, October 2005 (OJ RS 100/2005)

### 3. Active inclusion and minimum resources

#### 3.1 Minimum income schemes to help people escape extreme poverty

Minimum income<sup>52</sup> is regulated with Social protection act. Basic amount of the minimum income is decided once a year according to the index of growth of living expenditure in the last 12 months. The amount of money that was decided for 2006 is 48.062<sup>53</sup> sit. Amounts of the minimum income from which one can receive financial social assistance are from the 1. of February 2006 following:

- Single adult and the first adult in the family: 48.062 sit
- Each next adult person in the family: 33.643
- Child: 14.419
- Raise for the single parent family: 14.419

There are four kinds of financial social assistance:

- Temporary social assistance according to circumstances of the applicant.
- Permanent social assistance – for people over 60 years of age, can not provide for themselves, that have no-one to take care of them and are without any income.
- Extraordinary financial social assistance – in emergency cases in which the income can be slightly higher than minimum income. It can be given for not longer than two months.
- Extraordinary financial social assistance that can be given just once.

Recipients of social assistance are also entitled to housing benefits but only up to 25% of minimum income. Other kinds of social assistance are: children benefits, parental benefits, child birth aid (in money or in kind), child care benefits, fathers leave, large family benefits, payment for the lost income and insurance for part time work.

#### 3.2 The extent and adequacy of income support schemes and the presence of financial and non financial incentives to increase labour market participation of welfare recipients of working age

Table 1: Social assistance by gender of an applicant<sup>54</sup>

Gender	Number		
	July 2002	June 2003	July 2004
male	20.142	25.358	26.986
female	19.082	26.373	31.089
Total	39.224	51.731	58.075

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

- A council for implementing the principle of Equal Treatment was established in 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Source: Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs ([www.sigov.si/mddsz/index.php?CID=28&ID=825](http://www.sigov.si/mddsz/index.php?CID=28&ID=825))

<sup>53</sup> The exchange rate for the EURO is: 1EURO = 239,64 sit. Average monthly gross salary in February 2006 was 277.403 sit and monthly net earning was 177.856 sit. (Source: Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia).

<sup>54</sup> Slovene population in December 2005 was 1.996.773.

Table 2: Social assistance by age of an applicant

Age	Number		
	July 2002	June 2003	July 2004
-18	53	68	40
18-21	7.875	10.005	9.983
22-26	9.429	12.759	15.061
27-45	13.385	17.627	20.309
46-59	6.896	9.002	10.213
60-64	809	1.016	1.128
65-79	647	1.013	1.059
80+	130	241	282
Total	39.224	51.731	50.075

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

Table 3: Social assistance by education of an applicant

Education	Number		
	July 2002	June 2003	July 2004
Pre or in education	158	169	157
Without education	4.574	5.071	4.921
Primary	13.150	17.512	19.387
Vocational	10.412	13.730	14.141
High school	9.631	13.144	16.499
Diploma +	1.299	2.105	2.970
Total	39.224	51.731	58.075

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

According to the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs majority of recipients of financial social assistance are unemployed and registered at the employment office (July 2004 – 48.005). The second largest group are those still included into education (July 2004 – 2.240), the third group are elderly not capable to work (July 2004 – 1.846) and the fourth largest group are employed but entitled to benefits (July 2004 – 1.519).

In December 2005 the number of social assistances paid to all recipients was 63.302 and the average amount was 46.037 sit. In 2005 the total amount of money for welfare benefits was 34.532.212.622<sup>55</sup>.

Active labour market policy is focused on increasing choices of unemployed (majority of them are recipients of social benefits) for entering labour market. There are various programs to do that and all of them are listed in a programme for Active Employment Policy created each year by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs in cooperation with other governmental sectors. Program is published in an official Gazette and accepted by the government. On the grounds of the programme the Catalogue of measures for Active employment policy is created and the Program of Training and Education for Unemployed is adopted.

The number of people involved into those programmes depends on available resources. Each year the budget is decided and the contribution from the European Social Fund is very important.

<sup>55</sup> Source: Ministry of labour, Family and Social Affairs.

### 3.3 A review of existing social assistance and active labour market policies targeted to the social activation of individuals furthest from the labour market

Financial social assistance is defined as a resource that is sufficient to satisfy minimum needs for surviving (minimum income). Recipients of the financial social assistance are:

- Person without any income
- Person with an income that is lower than the minimum income
- Families whose income all together is lower than the minimum income for a member of the family
- Foreigners that have permanent residency or a permit for the permanent residency in Slovenia
- Property is also considered as a potential income. Individuals or families are not entitled to social assistance in case they have savings or owe property in value of 24 minimum wages.
- The person is also not entitled to social assistance if he/she is in need due to his/her own fault.

A recipient of the financial social assistance can lose the right in cases of refusing, avoiding or is not active enough to find the job or to find other ways to improve social position for her/himself and for the children. Financial social assistance is temporary and can be prolonged if the circumstances did not change. The first time is given for three months and then for six months. It can also be given for one year but just to the people over 60 years of age in cases of illness, disability or other circumstances that prevent a person to provide for her/himself.

Measures of the active labour market policy are directed to unemployed and welfare recipients. On the grounds of the individual employment plan, a person is included into different programs. Not all unemployed are included into those programs because there are not enough resources available.

Measures are:

1. Vocational orientation and help with employment: information, advice and counselling
2. Training and education: inclusion in education and re-training (public works)
3. Incentives for employment: to employers or for self-employment
4. Creation of new working places: subventions for employment of the long term or hard to employ people – money directed into the non-profit organisations and services
5. Experimental programs: Pilot projects for long term unemployed, like elderly.

Target groups are:

- Unemployed with education or training that is not needed
- Unemployed without vocational training
- Unemployed young people before 26 years of age and without working experiences
- Unemployed youth before first employment
- Welfare recipients
- Other groups excluded from the labour market, especially Roma and disabled
- Unemployed older than 55
- Long term unemployed, especially women

### 3.4 A description of the providers of services implementing these policies, of the financial resources used and of the role of social partners and NGOs

Social services (in Slovenia Centres of social work) are responsible for the welfare benefits. Centres of social work are major welfare institutions that are working with different client groups from the youth, families and elderly, disabled and also poor. Social assistance is one of the tasks they are conducting by the law. The procedure and criteria for deciding who is eligible is prescribed and regulated. It is the same for the whole country, so all the inhabitants can receive the same level of the service. Centres of

social work are not responsible for employment and have no responsibility or influence on the labour policy. They have good insight into the local situation. They are dealing also with the impacts of the poverty on families and individuals.

Major institutions that are responsible for the implementation of employment policies are Employment offices. Basic aims are to increase employment, to enable individuals' successful vocational development, to ensure social security to those entitled and to ensure equal service quality in Slovenia. These aims are achieved by the offices, organized in separate activity areas<sup>56</sup>:

- *Placement services and vocational guidance:*
  - receiving, registering and providing information to the unemployed;
  - formulating employment plans;
  - monitoring, counselling and placing clients into active employment policy programmes;
  - placing clients in jobs and cooperating with employers;
  - issuing work permits for foreign workers.
- *Vocational guidance and scholarships*
- *Active employment policy programmes:* After the new Employment and Unemployment Insurance Act active employment policy programmes were given a new dimension, which is shown in the increased importance of active employment policy measures to **co-ordinate discrepancies in the labour market**. On the basis of the new law, active employment policy measures can now be implemented by employers, authorised organizations and labour funds, in addition to ESS and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The following active employment policy measures are being carried out by ESS:
  - training and education;
  - public works;
  - training and employment for disabled people and medical services;
  - support for the self-employment;
  - refunds and repayment of contributions;
  - shared funding of regional projects;
- *Unemployment insurance activity:* Within the unemployment insurance activity ESS resolves the entitlements arising from unemployment insurance, it apportions them and pays out money to those entitled. The entitlements arising from unemployment insurance are as follows:
  - unemployment benefit;
  - unemployment assistance;
  - reimbursement of travel expenses;
  - entitlements to health, pension and disability insurance.
- *Legal affairs, etc.*

Each year the budget for those activities is decided. Allocated money for the active employment policy for 2006 is 20.653.575.457 sit<sup>57</sup>. Money will be ensured from different sources: Ministry of labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA) (11. 210.000.000 sit), European Social Fund and MLFSA (7.109.559.449

<sup>56</sup> Source: Employment service of the Republic of Slovenia (ESS)

<sup>57</sup> Official Gazette, 26/2006 (10. 3. 2006).

sit), EQUAL (704.440.615 sit), PHARE and MLFSA (896.346.343 sit) and from the integral budget, European Asocial Fund and MLFSA (731.790.925 sit).

The role of social partners is important in negotiations about the new social agreement that includes also developing new jobs for unemployed people. They are not involved into creation of the annual plans for active employment policy.

The role of NGOs is mostly reduced to services offered to unemployed people. Slovene NGOs still did not establish the network to join EAPN. There are some initiatives and the meeting with the representatives of EAPN is planned for June 2006. There is also a limited number of NGOs working in the field of poverty, homelessness and unemployment.

### **3.5 The degree to which such policies are aimed at empowering individuals by improving their life conditions and increasing their opportunities through *ad hoc* designed accompanying measures**

It is not possible to assess the impact of policies on individuals, because of lack of data, research or evaluation of the programmes. There is a research form 2003 that can be taken into consideration. The title is "*Social and Economic Inclusion of Deprived Groups – Possible Measures to Increase Employability of the Most Vulnerable Categories of Long-term Unemployed and Inactive People*"<sup>58</sup>. The research emphasised some problems, which needs to be addressed when speaking about the most excluded groups and long term unemployed:

1. The consequences of the long-term duration of certain problems and the associated lifestyles can lead to permanent health problems and handicaps. Despite the different employment policy measures, individuals with limited work abilities and handicaps do not receive sufficient support.
2. Low education levels are a problem in most of the observed vulnerable groups (with the exception of people with mental health problems) which indicates their poor starting position in the job market and their secondary (marginal) job options of unattractive, badly paid and often physically difficult jobs.
3. Due to the problems individuals face and/or try to resolve (i.e. longer periods of dependencies, periods of rehabilitation, periods spent in prison, periods of homelessness etc.) and the consequences of these problems, individuals are not only absent from employment for a longer period but also from participation in different spheres of life. These absence periods make it difficult for individuals to quickly take over normal and expected life patterns and roles.
4. Low job searching and employment motivation (or even a negative attitude to work and employment) can be a consequence of bad experiences connected to work, a low level of trust in personal abilities and labour market opportunities, and/or the result of the lifestyles individuals developed around their problems and which are not very compatible with (more or less) regular employment types.
5. Long term unemployed face the problem of attributed stigma, except where they manage to hide their problems and the (potential) employer does not know about them. In general, employers are very hesitant to employ people with different problems (not only in the case of acute, evident

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<sup>58</sup> Head of the team was Martina Trbanc, Faculty of Social Sciences, Members of the team were: Ružica Boškić, Barbara Kobal and Liljana Rihter. The report is published on the web page of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

problems but even where there merely are slight indications of possible problems), since they assume this could influence the work abilities and motivation of individual workers and, in turn, the whole work process.

There is a need for flexible types of jobs and work places such as co-operatives, which are a very successful form of self-employment. It is necessary to support and finance longer and more complex programmes for the social reintegration of individuals from the vulnerable groups to increase and sustain their motivation for change in their problematic situations, assist them in their social and economic participation and help them raise their self-confidence. Such programmes can be carried out more easily by non-governmental organisations, in co-operation with public institutions. Motivation for education and training participation should be encouraged through such programmes. The self-organisation of vulnerable groups, advocacy and initiatives of clients should also be supported.

### **3.6 Any recent developments in the national legislation**

As already stated in the first part of the report, the recent government made an extensive programme of reforms that will have an impact on changes in the welfare regime. This involves also changes in plans and legislation. We are not able to summarise all the changes because they are still in the phase of preparation and are discussed inside the governmental bodies. We can only focus on information that are publicly available.

There is a new Social protection Resolution written for the period 2006-2010 and there is a plan to lower the share of GDP for social protection from 0,88 in 2006 to 0,73 in 2010<sup>59</sup>. In the discussion is also a Draft Law on Changes of the Social Protection Act that is introducing changes in social assistance. It is based on conviction that current system of social benefits produces dependency of recipients what has an impact on their exclusion from the labour market<sup>60</sup>. They get used to their passive position through the long term dependency on social assistance. Active employment policy is not proved to be effective enough to involve them into the labour market. It is worrying that almost 43% of all recipients of welfare benefits in December 2004 were younger than 27 years of age. Slightly less that 50% of them received assistance more than 24 months.

Criteria for social assistance will therefore be more specific and will include grater responsibilities of recipients for their own welfare. One of the proposed measures is that recipients of welfare benefits will be involved into community and charity work and they will have to accept a job, even though the level of education needed for it is lower than the one of the job seeker. If the person refuses community, charity or other kind of job is not any more entitled to social assistance.

There are also some changes in legislation on the family and family benefits. Parents that are self-employed will have right to part time work till the child is 3 years old (social contributions will be covered by the state). The amount of money for large family (more than 4 children) will be higher. Now it is 81.000 sit and will raise to 100.000 sit.

There are also some changes in labour legislation. Employment offices will have to improve effectiveness, to do so they will have to change data base system<sup>61</sup> and will have to offer recipient of

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<sup>59</sup> Source: Social Protection Bulletin, 2006, no. 25, pp. 2.

<sup>60</sup> [www.sigov.si/mddsz/doc/zsv\\_vlada\\_mar06\\_pdf](http://www.sigov.si/mddsz/doc/zsv_vlada_mar06_pdf)

<sup>61</sup> In the major daily newspaper Delo they published an article on separate evidence of unemployed that was established in 2002. In this separate evidence we can find people that are excluded form a registered unemployment and are either disabled, foreigners or redundant and are long term unemployed. In January 2006 there were 95.204 registered

social assistance any kind of work, also charity and community work (but not more than 56 hours per month).

There are also some changes for persons included into the public works. Their wages will be decided according to the minimum wage and not minimum income.

Employers will receive some benefits in cases they will employ persons under 26 years of age or over 55. They will not need to pay insurance and other contribution for workers.

### **3.7 A panorama of the recent policy debate at national level on active inclusion policies as previously defined and on basic requirements**

Public debate on recent policy is very intensive and broad. Most of the debates are about the new neo-liberal policy of the government that aims at lowering the level of welfare state in the name of the higher economic growth. There are different civil society initiatives created to oppose to such attempts. Trade unions organised one of the largest protests in November 2005, students organised demonstrations against the government measures in April 2006, there were protest organised at 1. May, called Euromayday and they protested against new labour legislation. Quite a lot of forums, round tables and other kind of debates were organised in past year.

Concerning social assistance and employment the arguments are following:

- Minimum income is lower than poverty threshold, so recipients of social assistance still live in poverty. Social assistance is enough for survival, but does not increasing life opportunities. The assumption that people do not want to work because they enjoy living on social assistance is false and ignorant<sup>62</sup>.
- Dependency on financial social assistance is also interpreted as laziness and people on welfare benefits are seen as abusers of those, who are willing to work. Such interpretations are lowering consensus on welfare state and are contributing to the further exclusion of unemployed and people on benefits from the society and labour market. Roma people for example can not find the job, because they are presented as abusers of social assistance, as being lazy and thieves.
- There is a significant difference between growing number of the recipients of financial social assistance and statistic on unemployment that is showing reverse process. This difference has to become an issue for further investigation.
- The Association of Unemployed is opposing to changes of the employment legislation because the government want to enable employment with lowering the level of rights. They think that the new legislation will contribute to exploitation of workers<sup>63</sup>.
- It is very difficult for youth without working experiences to enter the labour market. It is a question if active employment policy is targeting this problem adequately and sufficiently. First employment is not just a problem for those without education but more and more for those with high level of education. For the employment they need working experiences and they have to

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unemployed people and 15.213 in separate evidence. On this list we can find people that are unemployed more than 2 years. (Delo, 4. March, 2006, pp. 9).

<sup>62</sup> The discussion on values and governmental reforms, organised by Forum 21, Cankarjev dom, 26. 1. 2006. Discussion available on the web page of the organisation: [www.forum21.si/23/](http://www.forum21.si/23/)

<sup>63</sup> Social Protection Bulletin 2006, no. 39, pp. 1.

do the preparation period for getting the professional licence (exams after 9 – 12 months of preparation period, when they are working under the supervision of the mentor). Employment subsidies should be directed to support them during this period<sup>64</sup>.

- Changes in labour legislation aim to lower the rights from work and contributes to greater precariousness. Precarious work does not apply just to people with lower level of education but also to those with higher level. Unemployment can not be reduced with lowering the level of the labour rights.

### **3.8 One or two cases or examples of best practice at the local level in terms of the implementation of active inclusion policies**

#### *Case 1. Inclusion of the Roma into the education and labour*

In recent years there were different projects developed to include Roma into the education and labour. The efforts are not just national but international in as a result of such cooperation new concept of support for Roma was developed. It contains different level of operation and tries to include children as well as adults into the education what would increase their employability. The project introduces new professions and new organisations.

#### *2. 8. 1 Roma assistant<sup>65</sup>*

In 2004 the new Strategy of Education of Roma was adopted. It introduces new profession that will contribute to greater inclusion of Roma into society. Although the idea on Roma assistant is not specific for our country but was introduced in most countries with Roma minority, it is something that Roma people themselves are defining as positive. We will focus more on the model than on practical arrangements, because of the lack of evaluation.

Roma assistant is a person employed in a kindergarten or primary school that helps Roma children in the process of education. It is desirable that the person is from the Roma minority because of the knowledge of the language and of the social position in which are Roma children that are entering formal institutions. The main problem for Roma children is lack of knowledge of Slovene language. There is also an anxiety about the future because their older siblings might have negative experiences with institutions. Main task of the Roma assistant is therefore to help children to overcome their fears, to help them with language and to take care for the connection with the parents of Roma children. Assistant is expected to be present in the Roma community, to accompany children to school and back to their homes, to organise the place and time for children to do their homework and to learn for school. He/she is also connected to non-governmental Roma organisations and together with them tries to improve the inclusion of the Roma children.

Roma assistant is also expected to take care of connecting Roma children with other pupils, to introduce Roma culture to the others and also to give the opportunity to other children to learn Roma language. All those task are performed in coordination with teachers and school or kindergarten staff. To introduce Roma assistants, the state should allocate money for education of assistants, development of the posts, provide legal ground for the introduction of the profession and prepare schools for the new way of working with Roma children.

<sup>60</sup> Mija Repovž, *Isolated in their fears*. Delo, 8. april, 2006, pp. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Source: Ministry of education and sport: *Strategy of education of Roma in Slovenia, 2004*.

### 2. 8. 2 Information and counselling centres for Roma

The aim of such centres is to motivate adult Roma to enter education or training. Information and counselling centre has to be located in or near Roma settlements to increase accessibility. It has to provide information and advice on programmes, possibilities, employment and other areas important for the inclusion of Roma into labour market and the society. It is important to organise language courses, basic education and offer possibilities for vocational training. Roma themselves expressed their wishes for learning skills to be lorry drivers, mechanics and similar.

### 2. 8. 3 Local co-ordinator for the education of Roma people

Adult Roma, especially women, do not have the opportunities to come in touch with the education. They are often illiterate and have no access to information. The main role of the local coordinator is to provide Roma adult with information, helps them in contact with institutions and is organising education and training.

Some of the schools in the area where Roma minority is settled already introduced Roma assistants. There is also information and counselling centre opened in one of the regions of Slovenia. First information on both are very satisfactory but there is no evaluation yet that will give more accurate insight into the implementation of the projects. There are also some problems – because assistants are employed through public works, payment is very low and is not providing enough resources for decent life. Coordinators have also quite high expenses because they travel to the Roma settlements and accompany children and parents to other institutions, like health centres and similar. The other problem is, that some of the coordinators are not Roma themselves and have problems with Roma language. But it is too soon to make any judgement or to express criticism. We also have to emphasise satisfaction with those positions that were expressed by some Roma organisations.

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### 3. Appendix

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